

Drayton Neighbourhood Plan

Preliminary Screening Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment

March 2026

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Key facts

Item	Detail
Neighbourhood Plan	Drayton Neighbourhood Plan Review
Local Planning Authority	Broadland District Council
Plan period	2026–2040
Site allocations	None
Nearest European site	River Wensum Special Area of Conservation
Screening conclusion	SEA not required; HRA Appropriate Assessment not required

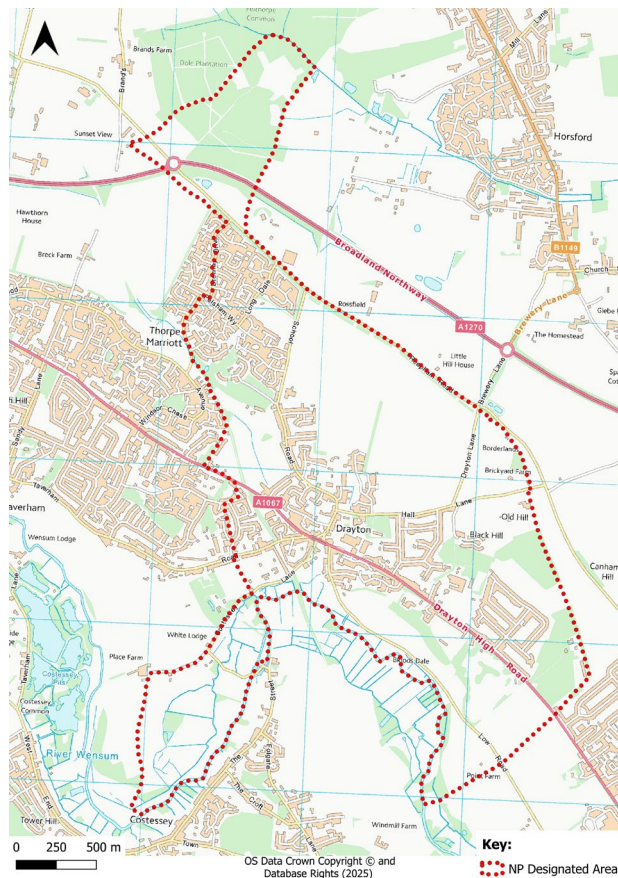
Introduction

1. This report provides a screening assessment to determine whether the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan requires:
 - a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004; and
 - an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
2. Neighbourhood plans must be screened to determine whether their implementation is likely to result in significant environmental effects or likely significant effects on European sites.
3. Where likely significant effects cannot be ruled out, a full SEA or Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment would be required.
4. This screening report has been prepared to support the emerging Drayton Neighbourhood Plan Review and will be submitted to Broadland District Council for determination following consultation with the statutory environmental bodies:
 - Natural England
 - Environment Agency
 - Historic England

Description of the Neighbourhood Plan

5. The Drayton Neighbourhood Plan Review sets out planning policies to guide development within the designated Drayton neighbourhood area for the period 2026–2040.
6. The neighbourhood area covers the parish of Drayton and was originally designated by Broadland District Council in November 2013. The current plan represents a review of the neighbourhood plan that was made in 2016.
7. Once made, the neighbourhood plan will form part of the statutory development plan and will be used alongside the Greater Norwich Local Plan when determining planning applications.
8. The neighbourhood plan is policy-led and does not allocate sites for development. Instead, it focuses on:
 - protecting landscape character and environmental assets
 - guiding the design and integration of development
 - supporting local services and community facilities
 - improving walking and cycling connectivity
 - protecting green infrastructure and biodiversity.
9. Strategic housing growth within Drayton is addressed through the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The neighbourhood plan therefore works within the strategic planning framework rather than introducing additional development.

Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Area



Baseline Information

10. This section summarises key environmental characteristics of the parish based on the neighbourhood plan evidence base.

Natural Environment

11. The River Wensum forms the southern boundary of the parish and is designated as the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to the ecological importance of its chalk river habitat and associated species. The river is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reflecting its national ecological importance.

12. Several County Wildlife Sites are also located within or adjacent to the parish and priority habitats identified in the parish include:

- floodplain grazing marsh
- deciduous woodland
- lowland fens

13. The evidence base also identifies habitat network zones that may be suitable for ecological connectivity and habitat creation.

Figure 2: Wildlife designations

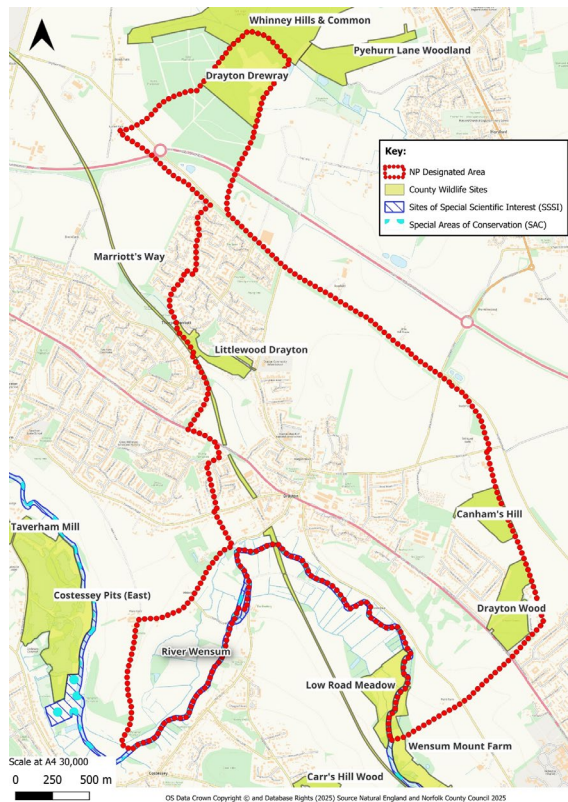


Figure 3: Priority habitats

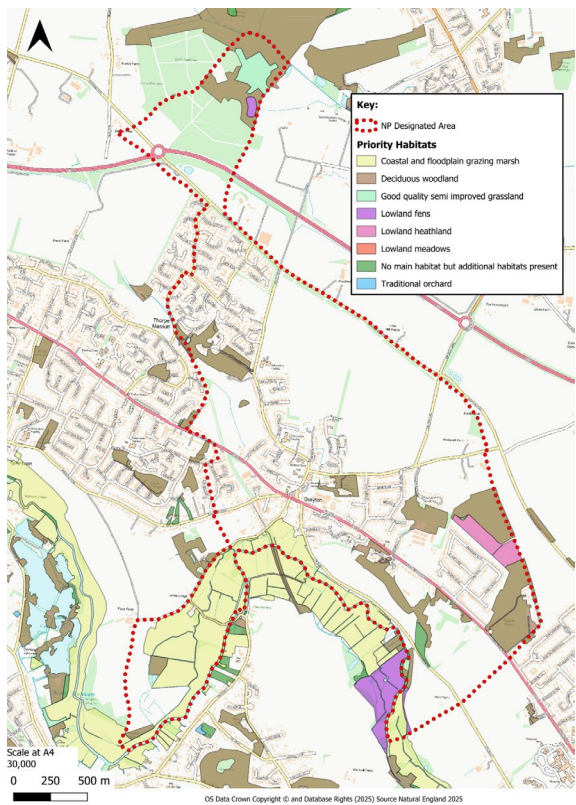
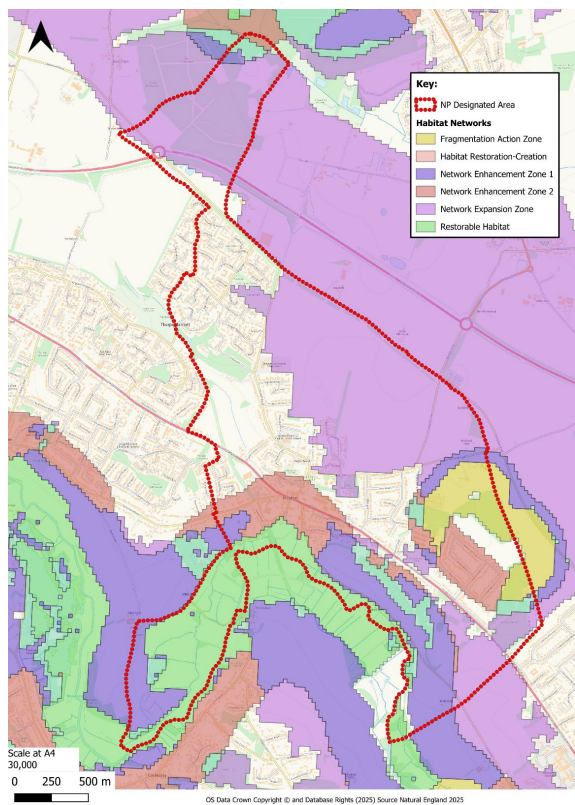


Figure 4: Habitat networks



Flood Risk

14. Flood Zones 2 and 3 occur along the River Wensum corridor. The parish has also been identified as an area with critical drainage issues and experiences a high risk of surface water flooding in certain locations. Development proposals within the parish must therefore consider flood risk and sustainable drainage.

Figure 5: Flood risk from rivers and the sea – Environment Agency



Figure 6 Surface water flood risk in Drayton (yearly) - Environment Agency 2024

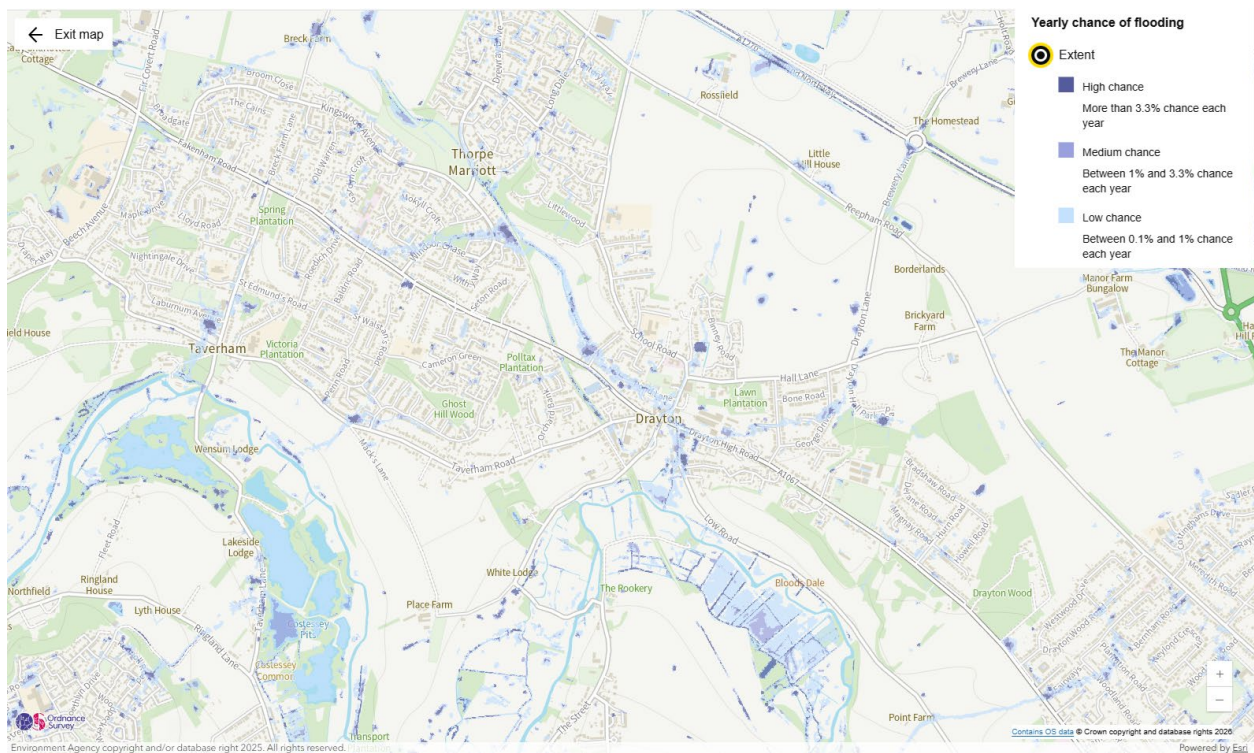
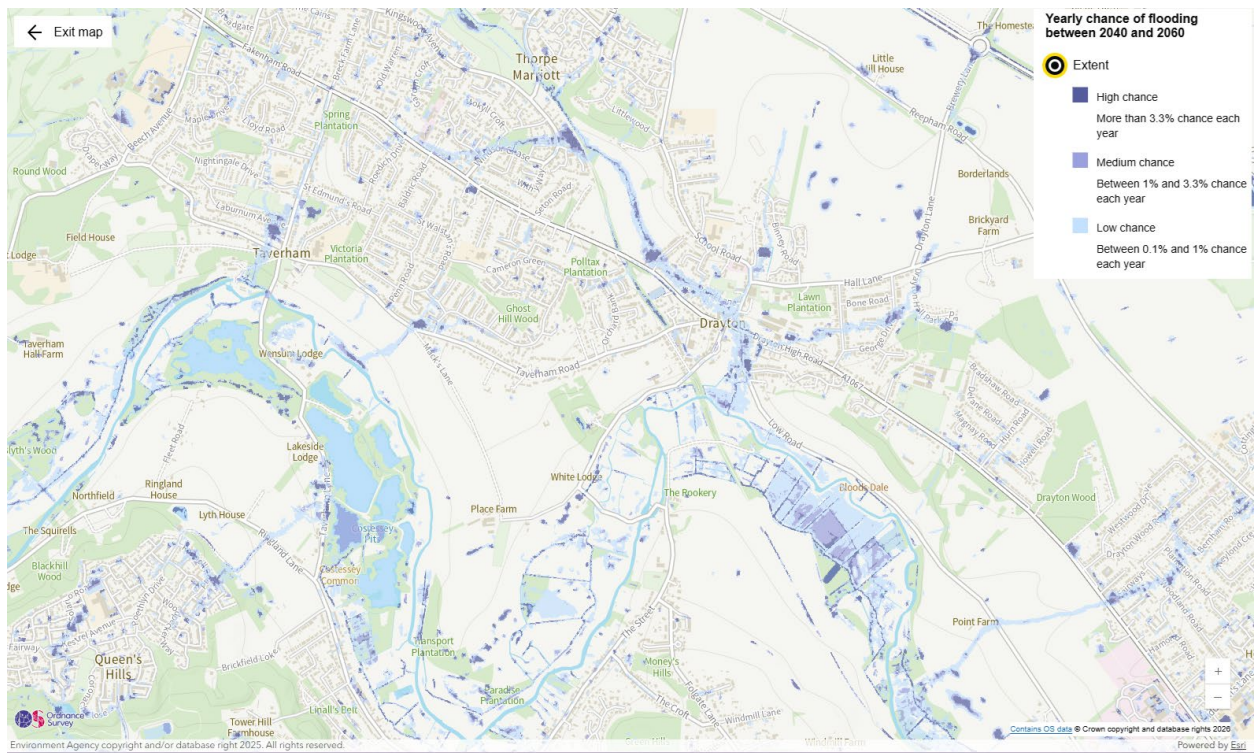


Figure 7: Surface water flood risk in Drayton in the future (yearly) - Environment Agency



15. Flood risk is managed through national planning policy, Environment Agency guidance, and Local Plan policies relating to sustainable drainage and flood risk management.

Historic Environment

16. The parish contains a number of heritage assets including:

- 12 listed buildings
- 2 scheduled monuments
- approximately 80 recorded heritage assets.

Figure 8: Historic assets (Historic England)

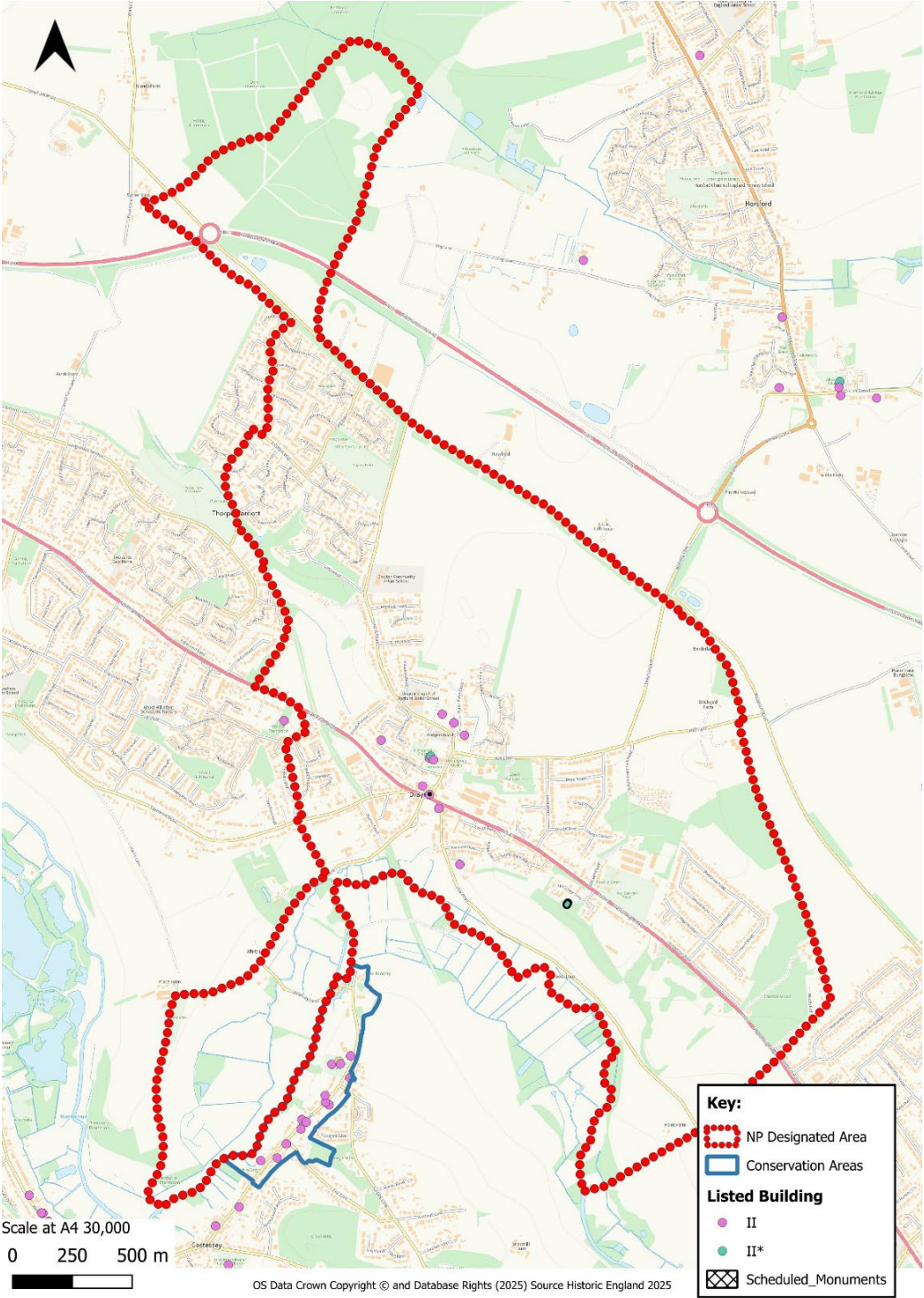
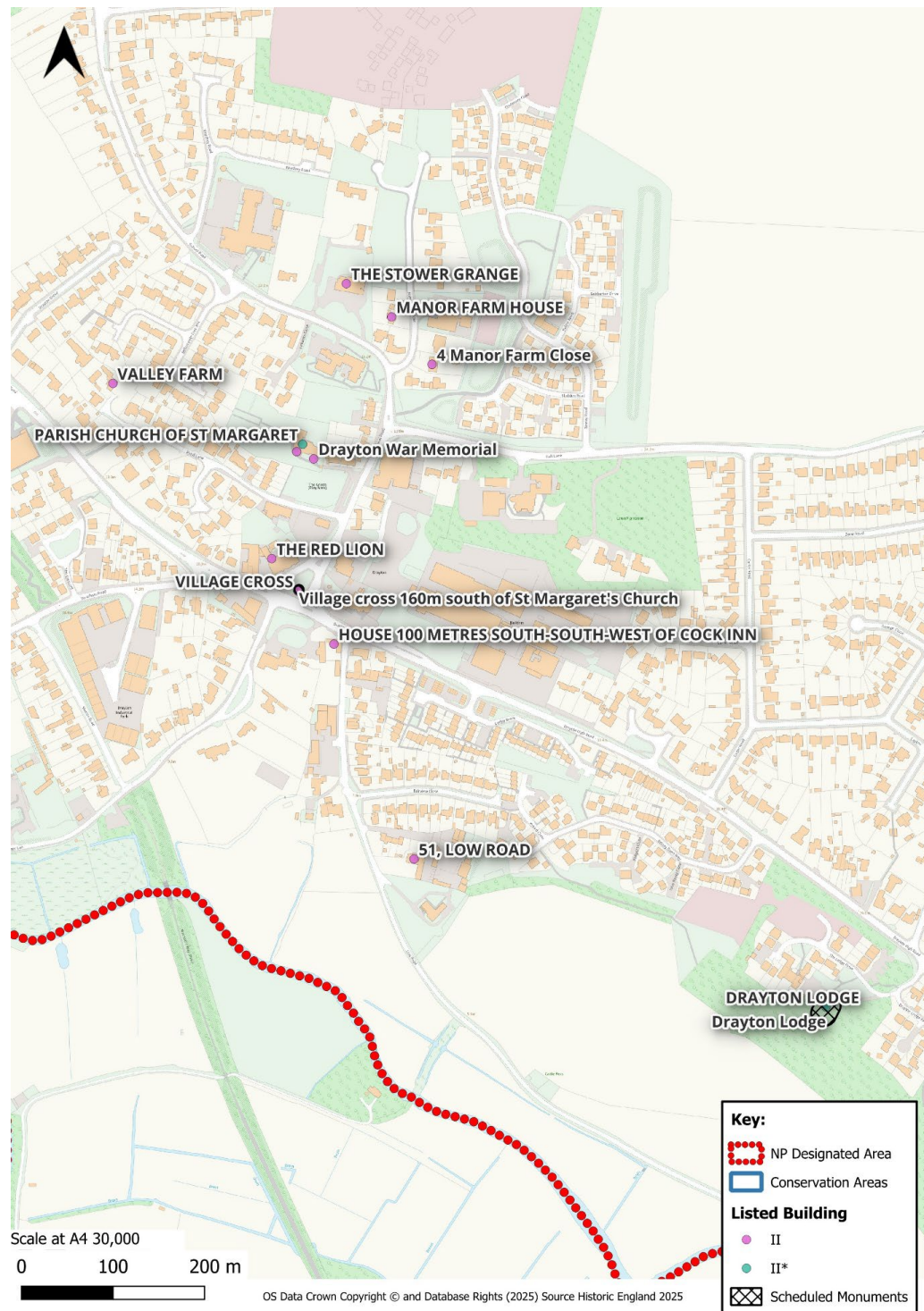


Figure 9: Drayton's listed buildings



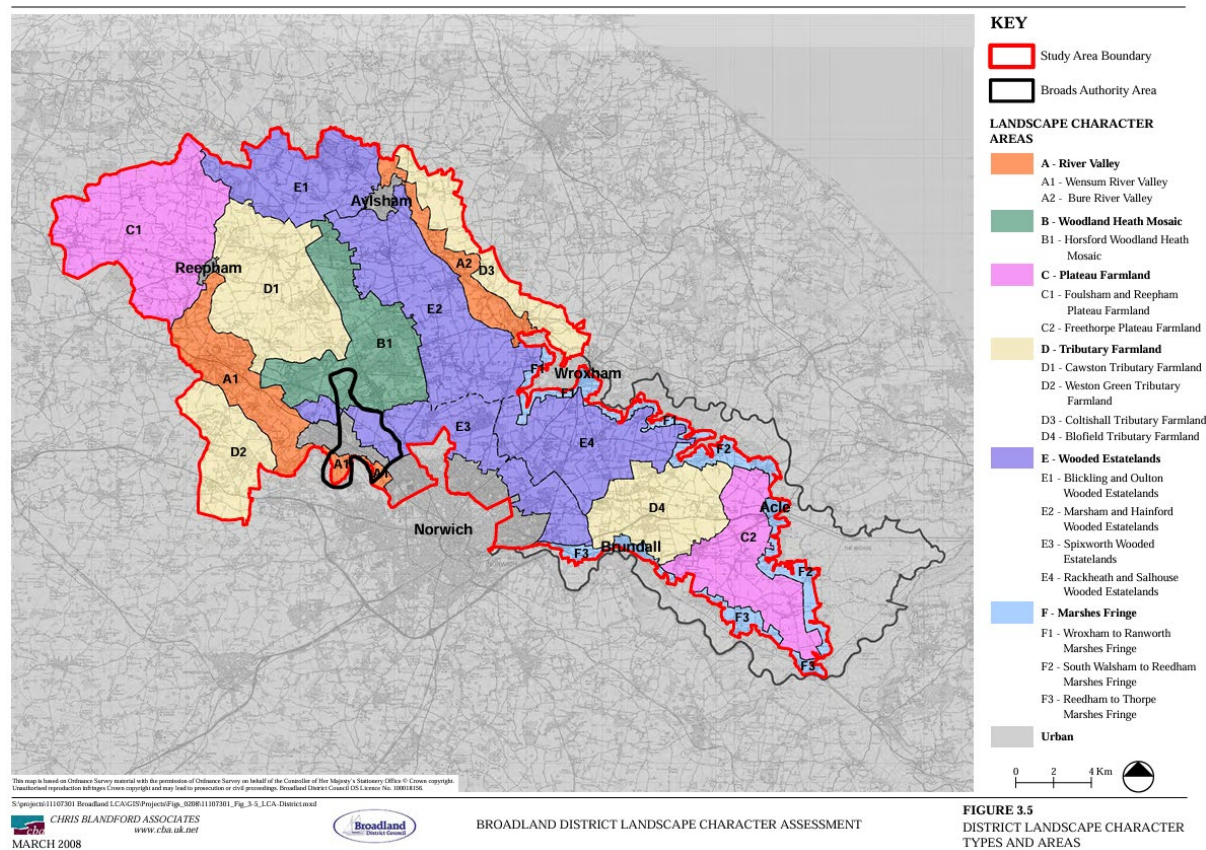
Landscape character

17. The parish lies within several landscape character areas including:

- Wensum River Valley
- Horsford Woodland Heath Mosaic

- Spixworth Wooded Estatelands
 - Urban landscape character areas
18. The landscape is characterised by river valley environments, woodland areas and open farmland.
19. These landscapes contribute significantly to the rural setting of the settlement.

Figure 10 Broadland District Landscape Character Assessment Map (Chris Blanford 2008) rough location of Drayton shown in black outline



SEA Screening

Environmental Context

20. The evidence base for the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan identifies a number of environmental sensitivities within and around the parish, including:
- areas of flood risk associated with the River Wensum and areas of surface water flooding;
 - designated heritage assets including scheduled monuments and listed buildings;
 - priority habitats and ecological networks including woodland and floodplain habitats; and

- internationally important ecological designations including the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation.
21. These environmental assets are already subject to protection through national planning policy, environmental legislation and policies contained within the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The presence of these environmental designations has been taken into account in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan and has informed the policies within it.
 22. The neighbourhood plan does not allocate land for development and does not introduce development beyond that already established through the strategic planning framework.
 23. The policies within the plan are therefore unlikely to result in significant environmental effects

Legislative Background

24. The European Directive 2001/42/EC¹ is the basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation, which was transposed into English secondary legislation by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 otherwise known as the SEA Regulations. A SEA would be required if the implementation of the contents of the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan is likely to cause significant environmental effects.
25. The screening assessment applies the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 when determining the likely significance of effects as shown in **Figure 11**².
26. **Figure 12** presents the flow diagram Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes which is taken from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, published in September 2005³. The table below assesses whether the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA. The questions in the first column are drawn from **Figure 12** which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.
27. To fulfil the legal requirements if likely significant effects will occur with the implementation of a Neighbourhood Plan upon the European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) a screening assessment has been undertaken.

¹ [EUR-Lex - 32001L0042 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUri.do?uri=CELEX:32001L0042:EN)

² [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1631/contents/make)

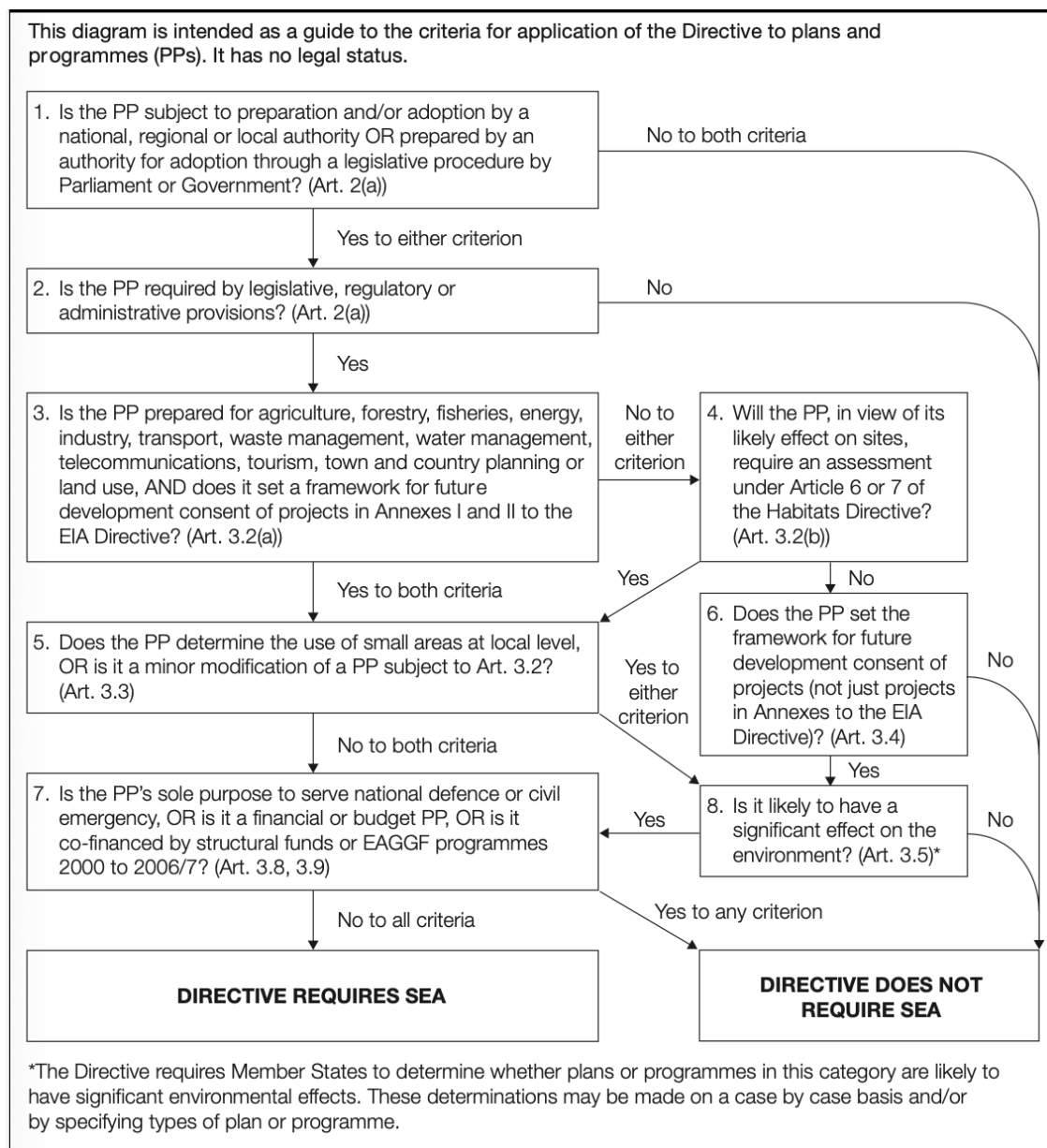
³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguide_sea.pdf

Figure 11 Schedule 1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects. Source: UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

SCHEDULE 1- CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:
 - a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
 - b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
 - c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
 - d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
 - e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of [retained EU law] on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:
 - a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;
 - b) the cumulative nature of the effects;
 - c) the transboundary nature of the effects;
 - d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);
 - e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
 - f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to—
 - (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
 - (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or
 - (iii) intensive land-use; and
 - g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Figure 12 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes. Source: Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, published in September 2005



SEA screening

28. The table below applies the screening questions derived from the SEA Directive guidance to determine whether the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant environmental effects.

	Stage	Y/N	Justification
1	Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is being prepared by Drayton Parish Council who are reviewing their Neighbourhood Plan. The plan will be made

	Stage	Y/N	Justification
	adoption by a national, regional, or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government (Art. 2(a))		by Broadland District Council, subject to the Plan passing an independent examination and local community referendum. Preparation of the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under primary legislation: The Town and Country Planning Act (1990) as amended by the Localism Act (2011). The preparation of NPs is subject to several relevant regulations as shown below (not intend to be a complete list): • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 • the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012 • the Neighbourhood Planning (General)(Amendment) Regulations 2015 • the Neighbourhood Planning (General)and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • the Neighbourhood Planning (General)and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017 GO TO QUESTION 2
2	Is the Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	Whilst it is not a requirement for a Parish to create a Neighbourhood Plan under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) and Localism Act (2011), the NP will eventually be 'made' and form part of the Development Plan for Broadland District Council. This Authority is directed by legislative processes, and it is important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether an SEA is required under the Directive. GO TO QUESTION 3
3	Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport,	Y	Developments that fall within Annex I are 'excluded' development for Neighbourhood Plans (as set out in Section 61(k) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as subsequently

	Stage	Y/N	Justification
	waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2(a))		amended) and the Localism Act 2011 Schedule 9 Part 2 Para 7 Section 38 B (1)(b), (6). A Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for Town and Country Planning and Land use. The Drayton Neighbourhood Plan can include at a neighbourhood level, through different policy areas, the framework for development that would fall within Annex II of the EIA Directive. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared to set out a framework for town and country planning and land use within the parish of Drayton. The intention is to complement the higher order strategic framework that already exists for land use planning across the Broadland area. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to align and be in general conformity with the strategic framework. The Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating any development but anticipates being one of the key tools to manage future development within Drayton. GO TO QUESTION 5
4	Will the Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.3)	N	A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening of the Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken in the next section and has concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on any European site, either alone or in combination. GO TO QUESTION 6
5	Does the Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	A Neighbourhood Plan can determine the use of small areas at a local level. The Drayton Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for development. However, proposes to include a variety of policies to create sustainable development through location, design, and environmental protections such as designating Local Green Spaces.

	Stage	Y/N	Justification
6	Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Y	Although the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development, it includes non-strategic policies against which proposals for development within the parish will be assessed when materially relevant. GO TO QUESTION 8
8	Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	The Neighbourhood Plan: • does not allocate development sites; • does not set a framework for development beyond that established in the Local Plan; • contains primarily protective and design-related policies; • supports environmental protection and sustainable development objectives; and • does not introduce environmental effects beyond those already assessed at the strategic plan level. Any development proposals within Drayton will be determined through the development management process in accordance with national policy and the Local Plan. Given the policy-led nature of the neighbourhood plan and the absence of development allocations, the probability and magnitude of environmental effects arising directly from the plan are considered limited. No significant cumulative effects are anticipated beyond those already assessed through the Local Plan process.

SEA Screening Conclusion

29. The potential for effects on European sites has also been considered through the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening undertaken in the following section of this report. That assessment concludes that the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant effects on any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

30. Given that the neighbourhood plan does not allocate development sites and operates within the strategic framework established by the Greater Norwich Local Plan, the conclusions of the HRA screening support the finding that the plan is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.
31. Having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, it is concluded that the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects. A Strategic Environmental Assessment is therefore not required.

HRA Screening

Purpose of screening

32. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is the process by which a 'competent authority' is required to assess the potential impacts of plans and projects (such as Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans or development proposals put forward in planning applications) on International Sites in accordance with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)⁴. A competent authority, such as the Local Planning Authority, must determine if a plan or project may affect the protected features set out in the Conservation Objectives of an International habitat site before deciding whether to undertake, permit or authorise it.
33. There are three types of International Sites designations:
- Ramsar: Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands⁵.
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC): Areas which have been given special protection for a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats.
 - Special Protection Area (SPA): Identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within EU countries.
34. To fulfil the legal requirements, an initial screening assessment has been undertaken which is the first stage of the HRA process. If the initial screening determines that significant effects on International Sites are likely, then the screening is followed by an Appropriate Assessment (the second stage of the HRA process).
35. The purpose of the Screening stage is to:

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made>

⁵ The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the Convention was signed in 1971. It came into force in 1975.

- Identify all features of the Neighbourhood Plan that would have **no effect** on an International/ European site. These features can be eliminated from further consideration in respect of this and other plans.
- Identify all aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan that would **not be likely to have a significant effect** on an International/European site (i.e. would have some effect because of links/connectivity but the effect is not significant), either alone or in combination with other aspects of the same plan or other plans or projects. These do not require further assessment.
- Identify those aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan where it is **not possible to rule out the risk of significant effects** on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This provides a clear scope for the parts of the plan that will require Appropriate Assessment.

Interpretation of 'likely significant effects'

36. Relevant case law clarifies the meaning of likely significant effects under the Habitats Regulations (2017).
37. In the Landelijke Vereniging tot Behoud van de Waddenzee v Staatssecretaris van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij, the Court confirmed that a plan must undergo appropriate assessment if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it may have a significant effect on a European site.
38. Further interpretation was provided in Peter Sweetman v An Bord Pleanála, which clarified that the requirement for effects to be significant establishes a practical threshold.
39. Screening must also be undertaken without taking mitigation into account, in accordance with People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta.
40. This screening assessment therefore considers whether the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, could result in likely significant effects on any European site.

European sites relevant to screening

41. The River Wensum forms part of the southern boundary of the Drayton parish and is designated as the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to its importance as a chalk river ecosystem.
42. The Wensum is a naturally enriched, calcareous lowland river and represents the largest chalk-fed river system in Norfolk. The upper reaches are fed by springs rising from chalk geology and nutrient-rich calcareous soils, creating conditions that support characteristic chalk stream plant communities. Further downstream, the underlying geology changes to boulder clay and river gravels, resulting in aquatic vegetation typical of slower flowing mixed-substrate rivers.

43. The river and its surrounding floodplain habitats support a mosaic of meadow, marsh and wetland environments which provide habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species.
44. The River Wensum is designated as a Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive due to the presence of important habitats and species including:
- watercourses with floating vegetation characteristic of chalk rivers
 - Desmoulin's whorl snail
 - white-clawed crayfish
 - brook lamprey (fish)
 - bullhead (fish)
45. Natural England has identified that parts of the River Wensum SAC are currently in unfavourable ecological condition, primarily due to historical river modifications, water quality issues and pressures on water flow. These factors continue to influence the ecological health of the river and are relevant considerations when assessing potential impacts on the SAC.
46. Because a European site lies partly within the Neighbourhood Plan area, Habitats Regulations screening is required to determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan could result in likely significant effects.
47. The screening assessment has considered whether land within the neighbourhood area could be functionally linked to European sites, including the River Wensum SAC. Functional linkage refers to land outside a designated site that may support the populations for which the site is designated.
48. Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate development sites or promote land-use change affecting undeveloped habitat, no pathways have been identified through which Neighbourhood Plan policies could affect functionally linked land. Strategic growth affecting land around Drayton is addressed through the Local Plan and its Habitats Regulations Assessment.
49. Accordingly, likely significant effects on functionally linked habitat can be ruled out.
50. European sites beyond the neighbourhood area have also been considered as part of this screening assessment. Given the absence of development allocations and the reliance on the Local Plan strategic framework, no pathways have been identified through which Neighbourhood Plan policies could affect more distant European sites.
51. Strategic growth and infrastructure development affecting the wider area have been assessed through the Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment.
52. Likely significant effects on European sites beyond the neighbourhood area can therefore be ruled out.

53. The policies contained within the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan have been reviewed to determine whether any policy could introduce pathways for likely significant effects on European sites. The policies are primarily protective or design-based in nature and do not allocate land for development or promote land-use change affecting sensitive habitats.
54. As a result, no policies have been identified that would give rise to likely significant effects on European sites either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

HRA screening approach

55. In accordance with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), this assessment considers whether the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan could result in likely significant effects on European sites.
56. The screening assessment has been undertaken without taking mitigation measures into account, in line with the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union in People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (Case C-323/17), which confirmed that mitigation cannot be relied upon when determining whether Appropriate Assessment is required.
57. Each European site is designated for specific ecological features (known as qualifying features), supported by conservation objectives that seek to maintain or restore those features at favourable conservation status.
58. European sites may be affected where there is a credible mechanism by which implementation of a plan could affect those qualifying features. These mechanisms are commonly referred to as impact pathways.
59. For the purposes of this screening assessment, the following potential impact pathways have been considered:
- Habitat loss – physical loss or damage
 - Disturbance (including noise, vibration and light)
 - Air pollution
 - Recreational pressure
 - Changes to hydrology, including water quantity or quality
 - Urbanisation effects
60. These pathways provide the framework for determining whether the Neighbourhood Plan could result in likely significant effects on European sites.

HRA impact screening

61. Each potential pathway has been considered in relation to the neighbourhood plan policies.

Habitat loss	The plan does not allocate sites for development and therefore cannot result in direct habitat loss within the River Wensum SAC.
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Disturbance	The plan does not promote development close to sensitive habitats and therefore is unlikely to increase disturbance.
Pollution	The plan does not introduce development beyond the scale already assessed through the Greater Norwich Local Plan.
Recreation	Population growth will be determined through strategic allocations already assessed through the Local Plan HRA.
Hydrology	The plan does not propose development affecting the hydrological regime of the River Wensum.
Urbanisation	The plan does not allocate sites for development and does not introduce development beyond that already planned through the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The plan therefore does not promote urban expansion or new development that could result in increased urban pressures on the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation.

In-Combination Effects

62. The neighbourhood plan sits within the framework of the Greater Norwich Local Plan which has already been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment. That assessment considered the potential effects of strategic housing and infrastructure growth across the Greater Norwich area, including potential impacts on the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation.
63. The neighbourhood plan does not allocate additional development sites or increase the scale of development beyond that already provided for within the Local Plan. The neighbourhood plan therefore does not introduce additional pathways for effects on European sites beyond those already considered through the Local Plan HRA.

HRA Screening conclusion

On the basis of this screening assessment and having regard to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant effects on any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required.