

**Mepal
Neighbourhood Plan
2022-2031**

**STRATEGIC
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT**

**SEA Screening Report
September 2023**



Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

SEA Screening Report September 2023

Submission of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with Regulation 15 of Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004



The Parish Council received professional planning support from NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK during the production of this Neighbourhood Plan.



NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK

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Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



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Introduction

1. Mepal Parish Council have undertaken this SEA screening statement report. It is the role of East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to produce a determination statement of the Neighbourhood Plan to determine whether or not the contents of the Mepal Neighbourhood Development Plan require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Screening

2. Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 the issue of SEA becomes applicable at the submission stage under Regulation 15 (e) where one of the following documents must be included with a neighbourhood plan when it is submitted to the local planning authority:
 - an environmental report prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or
 - a statement of reasons for a determination under regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 that the proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
3. The SEA determination statement will be produced by East Cambridgeshire District Council, as 'responsible authority', to meet the requirements of Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
4. This screening report has been produced following consultation with the three designated environmental bodies, namely the Environment Agency; Natural England; and Historic England. It has been produced to assist the LPA to prepare the SEA determination statement. Once the determination statement has been produced, both this screening report and the determination statement form part of the submission documents under Regulation 15 the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ready for subsequent consultation and examination.
5. There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have a sustainability appraisal as set out in section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. However, a qualifying body must demonstrate how its plan or order will contribute to achieving sustainable development. In some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a SEA.
6. Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This initial assessment process is commonly referred to as a 'screening' assessment and the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. If it is concluded that strategic environmental assessment is required, an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
7. To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, it needs to be assessed (screened) according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency).

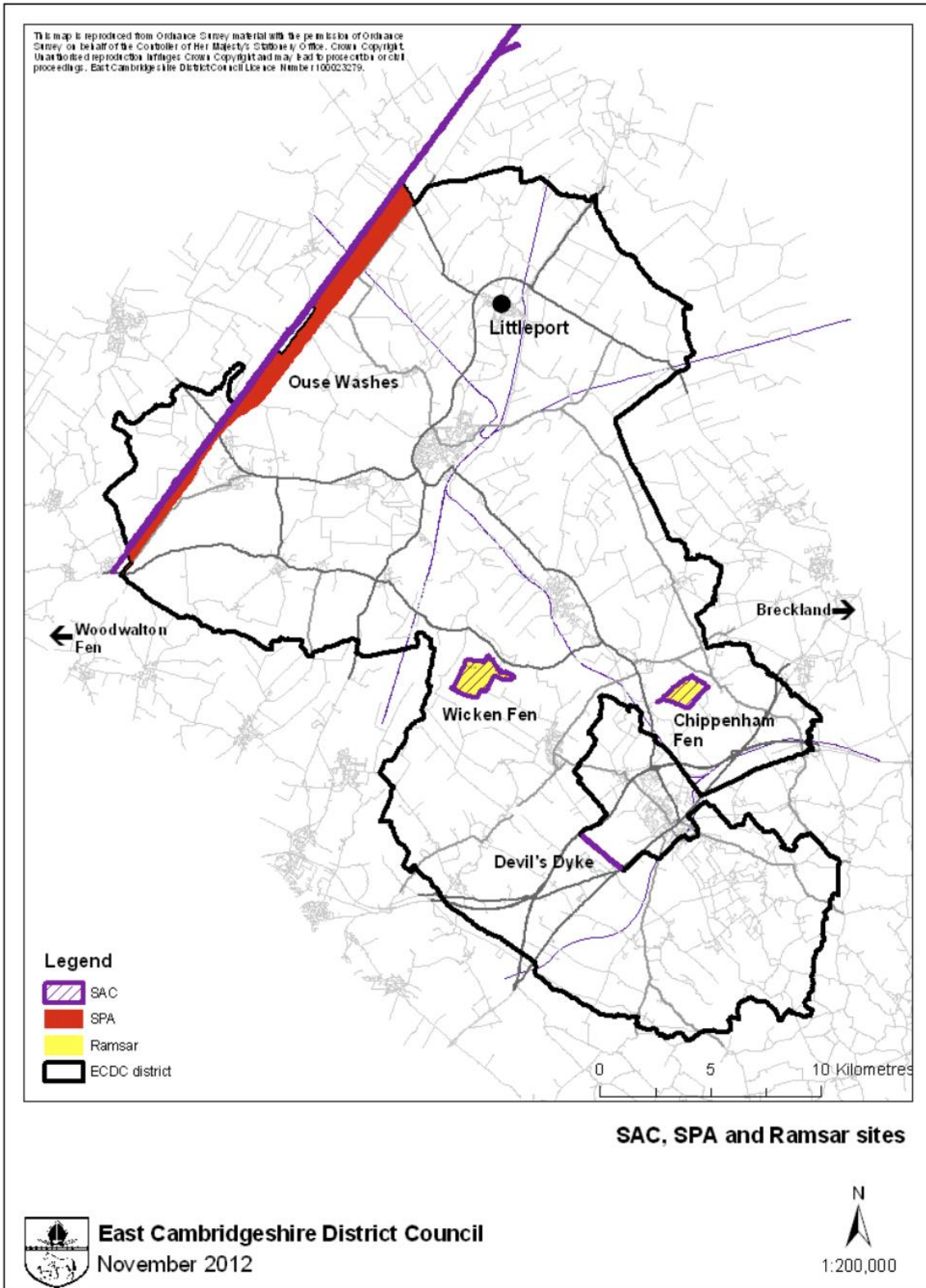
Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

8. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will need to be undertaken for certain development plans that would have a significant environmental effect. An SEA may be required for a Neighbourhood Plan, dependant on what the plan is proposing. Regulation 6 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is clear that a plan or programme which determines the use of a small area at local level; or is a minor modification to a plan or programme does not require an environmental report unless it has been determined under regulation 9(1) that the plan, programme or modification, as the case may be, is likely to have significant environmental effects.
9. The local planning authority must decide whether the neighbourhood plan proposal is compatible with relevant legal obligations including SEA and HRA at later stages: when it takes the decision on whether the neighbourhood plan should proceed to referendum under Regulations 17A and 18 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; and when it takes the decision on whether or not to make the neighbourhood plan (which brings it into legal force) under Regulation 18A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
10. The Localism Act 2011 (Schedule 9) introduced neighbourhood planning into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The 1990 Act, as amended by Schedule 10 of the Localism Act 2011, requires that neighbourhood development plans meet a set of basic conditions, one of which being that the making of the plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, Retained EU obligations.
11. Where a proposed plan is likely to have a significant effect on the National Sites Network), consisting of areas designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA's) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; this will also trigger the need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Consideration of the internationally designated Ramsar sites is also necessary; many Ramsar sites are also SACs or SPAs.
12. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 require that the need for an SEA is to be determined by a screening process. This must meet the criteria of Schedule 1 of the Regulations (Appendix 2).
13. This SEA screening report comprises of two parts: part one assesses the Neighbourhood Plan against the steps that should be taken to determine the need for SEA in accordance with the Directive and associated regulations, part two assesses the likely significant effects on the environment of the Neighbourhood Plan.

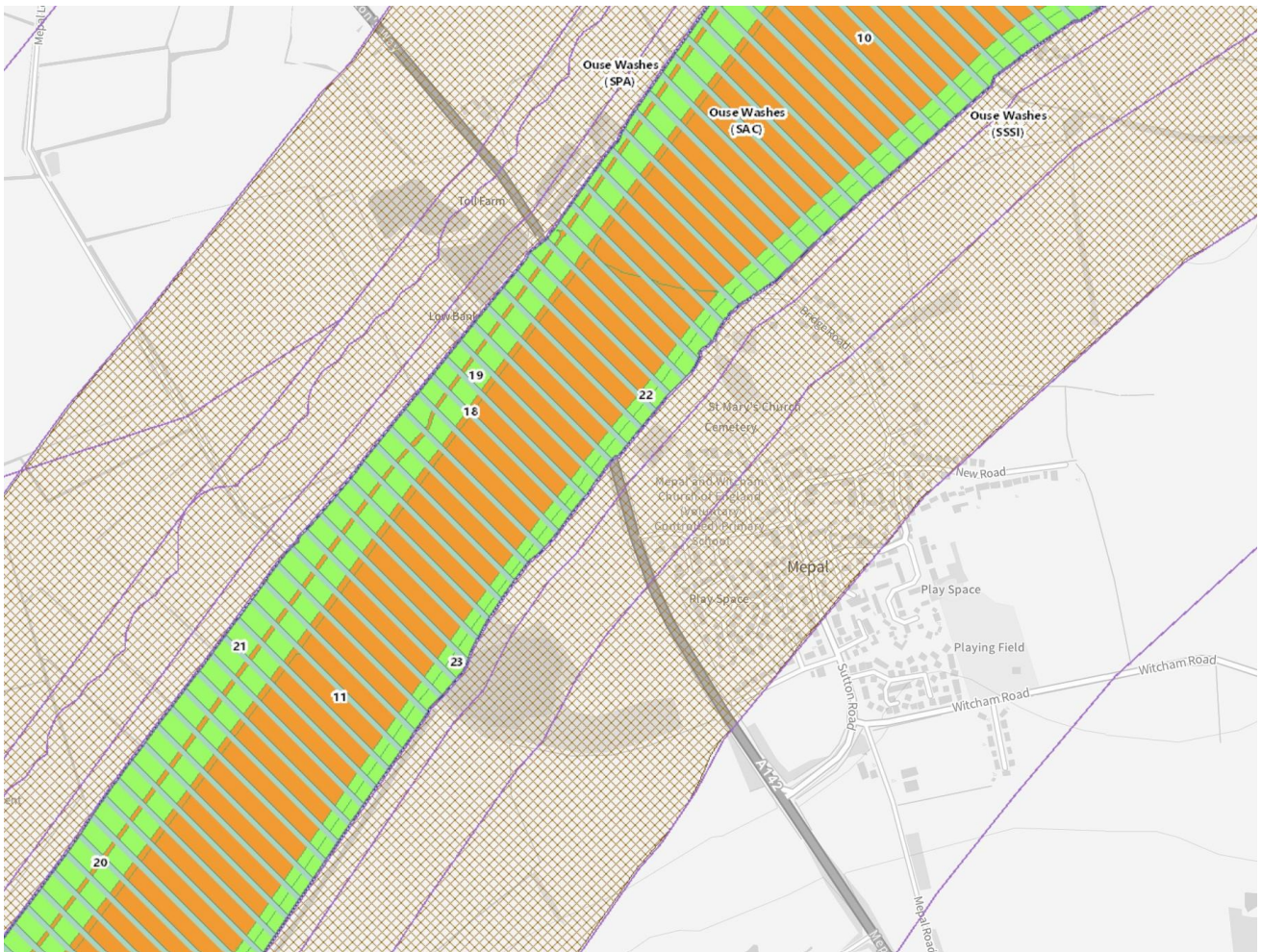
National Sites Network

14. In the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan area lie the Ouse Washes SAC, the Ouse Washes SPA and the Ouse Washes Ramsar sites these are part of the 'National Sites Network'. The Ouse Washes SPA and Ramsar designations are contiguous and also cover the SAC area; the SAC covers a narrower corridor. The Ouse Washes is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
15. In the wider vicinity of the Neighbourhood Plan area the 'National Sites Network' of interest are the Orton Pit SAC (Peterborough); Nene Washes SAC; Portholme SAC (Huntingdon/Godmanchester); Upper Nene Valley SAC/Upper Nene Valley Ramsar (Rushden); Fenland SAC/Woodwalton Fen Ramsar; Fenland SAC/Chippenham Fen Ramsar; Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar; Devils Dyke SAC; and Breckland SAC/Breckland SPA/Rex Graham Reserve SAC.
16. The closest site in the 'National Sites Network' but outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area is the Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar lying approximately 15km to the south-east.

17. Internationally designated wildlife sites in the 'National Sites Network' are accorded the highest level of protection under UK legislation. The purpose of the screening assessment is to ascertain whether there is potential for implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan to have significant effect on any such site. Therefore, following the advice of Natural England on other Neighbourhood Plans we consider it appropriate to consider the potential effects of any proposed development on these important habitats.



18. The Figure above shows the relevant designated sites within East Cambridgeshire. Within a 15km radius of the Neighbourhood Area boundary are the Ouse Washes SAC, the Ouse Washes SPA and the Ouse Washes Ramsar sites and the Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar site.
19. The data on Magic.gov.uk does not include impact zones for the SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations per se. However, it does illustrate impact zones for the SSSI which covers the entire area covered collectively by the SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations within the Parish of Mepal. These impact zones are illustrated on the maps below:



Extract from Magic.gov.uk website © Defra

— SSSI Impact Zones



Extract from Magic.gov.uk website © Defra

— SSSI Impact Zones (Labels A, B, C & D have been added by us purely for identification)

20. The details of the impact zones do actually confirm that they are to be used to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites. The details of the impact zones are detailed below:

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

SSSI Impact Risk Zones - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites (England)

1. DOES PLANNING PROPOSAL FALL INTO ONE OR MORE OF THE CATEGORIES BELOW?
2. IF YES, CHECK THE CORRESPONDING DESCRIPTION(S) BELOW. LPA SHOULD CONSULT NATURAL ENGLAND ON LIKELY RISKS FROM THE FOLLOWING:

All Planning Applications

ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS - EXCEPT HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATIONS.

Infrastructure

Wind & Solar Energy

Minerals, Oil & Gas

Rural Non Residential

Residential

Rural Residential

Air Pollution

Combustion

Waste

Composting

Discharges

Water Supply

Notes 1



New housing developments will require an assessment of recreational pressure on relevant SSSIs and measures to mitigate adverse impacts e.g. alternative open space provision. For further advice contact Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service.

Notes 2

GUIDANCE - How to use the Impact Risk Zones

[/Metadata_for_magic/SSSI IRZ User Guidance MAGIC.pdf](#)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England) - points

No Features found

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

No Features found

SSSI Impact Risk Zones - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites (England)

1. DOES PLANNING PROPOSAL FALL INTO ONE OR MORE OF THE CATEGORIES BELOW?
2. IF YES, CHECK THE CORRESPONDING DESCRIPTION(S) BELOW. LPA SHOULD CONSULT NATURAL ENGLAND ON LIKELY RISKS FROM THE FOLLOWING:

All Planning Applications

All planning applications (except householder) outside or extending outside existing settlements/urban areas affecting greenspace, farmland, semi natural habitats or landscape features such as trees, hedges, streams, rural buildings/structures.

Infrastructure

Pipelines and underground cables, pylons and overhead cables. Any transport proposal including road, rail and by water (excluding routine maintenance). Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.

Wind & Solar Energy

Solar schemes with footprint > 0.5ha, all wind turbines.

Minerals, Oil & Gas

Planning applications for quarries, including: new proposals, Review of Minerals Permissions (ROMP), extensions, variations to conditions etc. Oil & gas exploration/extraction.

Rural Non Residential

Large non residential developments outside existing settlements/urban areas where net additional gross internal floorspace is > 1,000m² or footprint exceeds 0.2ha.

Residential

Residential development of 10 units or more.

Rural Residential

Any residential developments outside of existing settlements/urban areas with a total net gain in residential units.

Air Pollution



Any development that could cause AIR POLLUTION or DUST either in its construction or operation (incl: industrial/commercial processes, livestock & poultry units, slurry lagoons & digestate stores, manure stores).

Combustion

All general combustion processes. Incl: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/ combustion.

Waste

Mechanical and biological waste treatment, inert landfill, non-hazardous landfill, hazardous landfill, household civic amenity recycling facilities construction, demolition and excavation waste, other waste management.

Composting

Any composting proposal. Incl: open windrow composting, in-vessel composting, anaerobic digestion, other waste management.

Discharges

Any discharge of water or liquid waste that is discharged to ground (ie to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream.

Water Supply

Large infrastructure such as warehousing / industry where net additional gross internal floorspace is > 1,000m² or any development needing its own water supply .

Notes 1

New housing developments will require an assessment of recreational pressure on relevant SSSIs and measures to mitigate adverse impacts e.g. alternative open space provision. For further advice contact Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service.

Notes 2

GUIDANCE - How to use the Impact Risk Zones

[/Metadata_for_magic/SSSI IRZ User Guidance MAGIC.pdf](#)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England) - points

No Features found

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

No Features found

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

SSSI Impact Risk Zones - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites (England)

1. DOES PLANNING PROPOSAL FALL INTO ONE OR MORE OF 2. IF YES, CHECK THE CORRESPONDING DESCRIPTION(S) BELOW. LPA SHOULD CONSULT NATURAL ENGLAND ON LIKELY RISKS FROM THE FOLLOWING:

All Planning Applications

All planning applications (except householder) outside or extending outside existing settlements/urban areas affecting greenspace, farmland, semi natural habitats or landscape features such as trees, hedges, streams, rural buildings/structures.

Infrastructure

Pipelines and underground cables, pylons and overhead cables. Any transport proposal including road, rail and by water (excluding routine maintenance). Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.

Wind & Solar Energy

Solar schemes with footprint > 0.5ha, all wind turbines.

Minerals, Oil & Gas

Planning applications for quarries, including: new proposals, Review of Minerals Permissions (ROMP), extensions, variations to conditions etc. Oil & gas exploration/extraction.

Rural Non Residential

Large non residential developments outside existing settlements/urban areas where net additional gross internal floorspace is > 1,000m² or footprint exceeds 0.2ha.

Residential

Residential development of 50 units or more.

Rural Residential

Any residential developments outside of existing settlements/urban areas with a total net gain in residential units.

Air Pollution

Any development that could cause AIR POLLUTION (incl: industrial/commercial processes, livestock & poultry units, slurry lagoons & digestate stores, manure stores).

Combustion

All general combustion processes. Incl: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/ combustion.

Waste

Mechanical and biological waste treatment, inert landfill, non-hazardous landfill, hazardous landfill, household civic amenity recycling facilities construction, demolition and excavation waste, other waste management.

Composting

Any composting proposal. Incl: open windrow composting, in-vessel composting, anaerobic digestion, other waste management.

Discharges

Any discharge of water or liquid waste that is discharged to ground (ie to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream.

Water Supply

Large infrastructure such as warehousing / industry where net additional gross internal floorspace is > 1,000m² or any development needing its own water supply .

Notes 1

New housing developments will require an assessment of recreational pressure on relevant SSSIs and measures to mitigate adverse impacts e.g. alternative open space provision. For further advice contact Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service.

Notes 2

GUIDANCE - How to use the Impact Risk Zones

[/Metadata_for_magic/SSSI IRZ User Guidance MAGIC.pdf](#)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England) - points

No Features found

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

No Features found



Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

SSSI Impact Risk Zones - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites (England)

1. DOES PLANNING PROPOSAL FALL INTO ONE OR MORE OF 2. IF YES, CHECK THE CORRESPONDING DESCRIPTION(S) BELOW. LPA SHOULD CONSULT NATURAL ENGLAND ON LIKELY RISKS FROM THE FOLLOWING:

All Planning Applications

All planning applications (except householder) outside or extending outside existing settlements/urban areas affecting greenspace, farmland, semi natural habitats or landscape features such as trees, hedges, streams, rural buildings/structures.

Infrastructure

Pipelines and underground cables, pylons and overhead cables. Any transport proposal including road, rail and by water (excluding routine maintenance). Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.

Wind & Solar Energy

Solar schemes with footprint > 0.5ha, all wind turbines.

Minerals, Oil & Gas

Planning applications for quarries, including: new proposals, Review of Minerals Permissions (ROMP), extensions, variations to conditions etc. Oil & gas exploration/extraction.

Rural Non Residential

Large non residential developments outside existing settlements/urban areas where net additional gross internal floorspace is > 1,000m² or footprint exceeds 0.2ha.

Residential

Residential development of 50 units or more.

Rural Residential

Any residential developments outside of existing settlements/urban areas with a total net gain in residential units.

Air Pollution



Any industrial/agricultural development that could cause AIR POLLUTION (incl: industrial processes, livestock & poultry units with floorspace > 500m², slurry lagoons & digestate stores > 200m², manure stores > 250t).

Combustion

General combustion processes >20MW energy input. Incl: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/ combustion.

Waste

Landfill. Incl: inert landfill, non-hazardous landfill, hazardous landfill.

Composting

Any composting proposal with more than 500 tonnes maximum annual operational throughput. Incl: open windrow composting, in-vessel composting, anaerobic digestion, other waste management.

Discharges

Any discharge of water or liquid waste of more than 2m³/day to ground (ie to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream.

Water Supply

Large infrastructure such as warehousing / industry where net additional gross internal floorspace is > 1,000m² or any development needing its own water supply .

Notes 1

New housing developments will require an assessment of recreational pressure on relevant SSSIs and measures to mitigate adverse impacts e.g. alternative open space provision. For further advice contact Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service.

Notes 2

GUIDANCE - How to use the Impact Risk Zones

[/Metadata for magic/SSSI IRZ User Guidance MAGIC.pdf](#)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England) - points

No Features found

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

No Features found

21. The impact zones, using the labels that we have added only for ease of identification can be summarised as follows in relation to new housing, which is the most common land use:

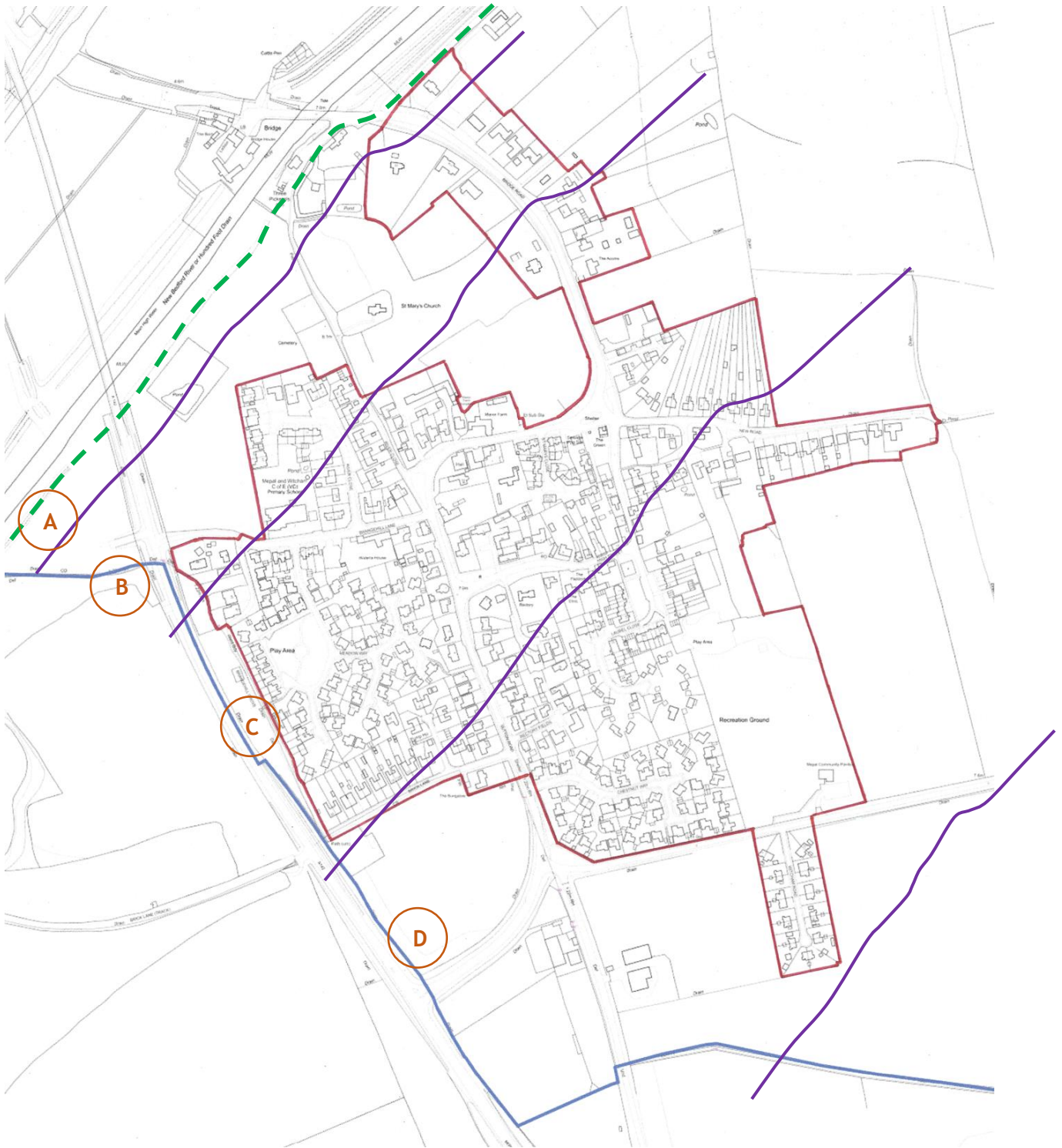
A - Any new housing

B - Residential development of 10 units or more in settlements or any new housing outside of settlements

C - Residential development of 50 units or more in settlements or any new housing outside of settlements

D - Residential development of 50 units or more in settlements or any new housing outside of settlements

22. The map below illustrates the approximate alignment of these impact zones overlaid on the settlement boundary in the Neighbourhood Plan:



Map - Settlement Boundary
© Crown Copyright

- Settlement Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary
- SSSI Impact Zones
- SSSI Boundary

Designated Heritage Assets

23. Heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, landscapes and townscapes which have historic or architectural significance; collectively they help make the historic environment.

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The protection of individual heritage assets is important not only to safeguard the significance of the asset itself but also to protect the wider historic environment.

24. In terms of designated heritage assets, Mepal Parish contains a Scheduled Monument, the Parish also contains a Grade II* Listed Building and eight Grade II Listed Buildings as follows:



Listed Buildings © Historic England

Scheduled Monument

- Bowl barrow 250m ESE of Common Farm: part of a dispersed round barrow cemetery in Block Fen

Grade 1

None

Grade II*

- Church of St Mary

Grade II

- Mepal House, 1 High Street
- 3 High Street

- 8 High Street
- 15 High Street
- The Round House, 1 School Lane
- Ash Cottage, 2 School Lane
- Grove House, Bridge Road
- Wisteria House, Brangehill Lane

The Neighbourhood Plan Context

25. The map shows that the existing built development around the Three Pickerels public house has been left out of the settlement boundary. The methodology for the settlement boundary has used the following exclusion criterion: ‘Land within the designated ‘National Sites Network’ consisting of areas designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA’s); together with areas within the internationally designated Ramsar sites or are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).’
26. The overlay shows that the zone labelled A by us for identification where any housing development needs to be assessed for impact, within the settlement boundary covers part of the garden of 13 Bridge Road on the western side together with 40 Bridge Road and adjacent land which is plot 2 on the eastern side that obtained planning consent under 18/00909/OUT for 4 dwellings. 40 Bridge Road was plot 1 of that site which then obtained full planning permission under 19/00627/FUL. In this area within the settlement boundary there is no reasonable prospect of additional housing coming forward beyond that already permitted.
27. The zone labelled B by us for identification where housing development of 10 or more units needs to be assessed for impact, covers the area going from plot 3 that obtained planning consent under 18/00909/OUT for 4 dwellings and 34 Bridge Road that was plot 4 of that site which then obtained full planning permission under 19/01728/FUL; through to land adjacent 16 Bridge Road on the eastern side. On the western side it goes from 13 Bridge Road to land adjacent to 7 Bridge Road that has planning permission under 22/00189/FUL to erect a dwelling. In this area within the settlement boundary there are a number of sites that already have planning permission, beyond that which already has been granted there is likely only to be a reasonable prospect of one or two additional infill housing proposals that could theoretically come forward beyond that already permitted. This is significantly under the threshold of 10 dwellings for triggering impact assessment.
28. The remainder of the village is covered by zones labelled C and D by us for identification, where housing development of 50 or more units needs to be assessed for impact. Within the settlement boundary the green spaces are protected as Local Green Spaces where built development is unacceptable in principle. Elsewhere within the settlement boundary there is likely to be a reasonable prospect of some additional infill housing proposals that could theoretically come forward beyond that already permitted. However, this is individually and cumulatively likely to be significantly under the threshold of 50 dwellings for triggering impact assessment.

Designation of Mepal Parish as a Neighbourhood Planning Area

29. A formal [application](#)¹ was made by Mepal Parish Council as a ‘relevant body’ under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) for the designation of a neighbourhood area in order to develop a neighbourhood plan. The area of the Neighbourhood Plan is based upon the parish boundary, which was seen as appropriate as this area is recognised as the distinct community of Mepal. The request was that the Parish

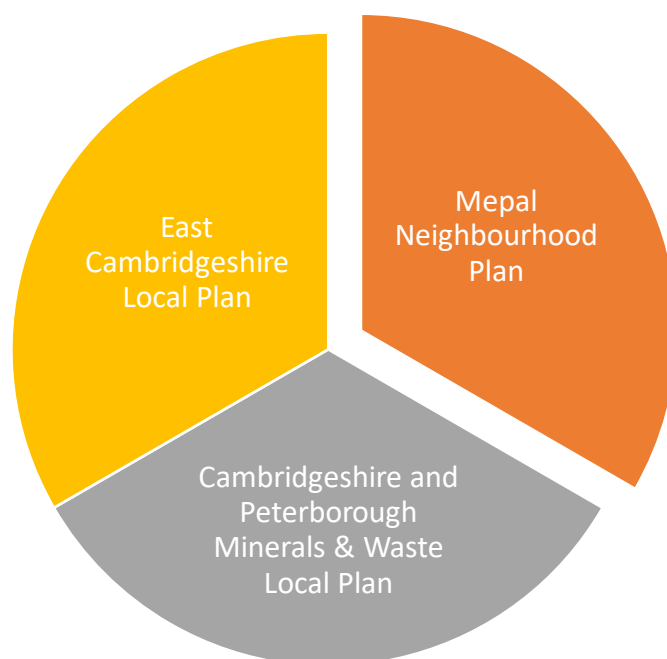
¹ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning>

be recognised as a Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of producing a neighbourhood plan, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

30. The Parish was [designated](#)² a Neighbourhood Area on the 28 February 2022.
31. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Mepal Parish Council, a qualifying body, (Section 38A (12) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004) for the Neighbourhood Area covering the Parish of Mepal, as designated by East Cambridgeshire District Council. The name of the neighbourhood area is the 'Mepal Neighbourhood Area'. It does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area.
32. The policies described in the Neighbourhood Plan relate to the development and use of land in the designated Neighbourhood Area only. The document sets out the period of the Neighbourhood Plan which is from 2022 to 2036.

The Development Plan

33. The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out the vision, objectives spatial strategy and policies for the future development of the district. It also identifies land and allocates sites for different types of development, such as housing and employment, to deliver the planned growth for the district to 2031.
34. The preparation of the Local Plan was informed through several stages of public consultation. The [Local Plan](#)³ was adopted by the Council on 21 April 2015, it covers the plan period up to 2031. In April 2020 the Council determined that it was necessary to review the Local Plan through what is known as a 'Single Issue Review' and addresses the housing requirement for the same plan period up to 2031.
35. The 'Development Plan' for Mepal is made up of 3 main components as follows:



² <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Mepal%20NA%20Map%20A4%20prt.pdf>

³ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015>

36. Consultation on the Proposed Submission version of the ‘Single Issue Review’ of the Local Plan was carried out between 3 May and 13 June 2022. Two earlier consultations also took place on a draft document, during 2021. On 19 July 2022, the Council submitted its proposed [Single Issue Review Local Plan](#)⁴ to the Planning Inspectorate, so that an independent examination of the proposal can take place. The Examination of the Local Plan Review is underway, and the hearing sessions were held in November 2022. As part of that Examination process the Local Plan Review has recently undertaken consultation on modifications during July and August 2023. Neither the existing East Cambridgeshire Local Plan nor the Single-Issue Review Local Plan allocate sites for development in Mepal.

Strategic policies for the purposes of neighbourhood planning

37. The system of neighbourhood planning allows Parish and Town Councils to produce neighbourhood plans to guide development at a local level. One of the requirements of such plans is that they should be in line with the 'strategic policies' of the adopted development plan for the local area.
38. East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority defines which policies are to be considered 'strategic' with regard to the production of a neighbourhood plan. However, the Local Plan does not explicitly state which policies within the Local Plan are to be considered 'strategic' for the purposes of neighbourhood planning.

Summary of Mepal Neighbourhood Plan Policies and Proposals

39. A summary of the Policies and Proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan is as follows:

Sustainable Development

Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)

This policy updates the settlement boundary to reflect the existing built footprint of the village including land with planning consent for housing, but it excludes existing built footprint that lies within the Ouse Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar/SSSI. It also defines land outside the settlement boundary as countryside.

Policy 2 - Community Assets

Looks to protect existing community assets and support the improvement or additional provision of community assets.

Policy 3 - Allotments

Sets out a policy framework to protect the existing allotments and for future expansion when required.

Policy 4 - Highway Impact

Requires development to incorporate sufficient refuse provision and electric vehicle charging. It also sets out a framework to look to resolve the access visibility issues at Mepal Community Pavilion.

⁴ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/local-plan-review>

Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation

Sets out a framework for installing renewable or low-carbon energy generation on existing premises and for proposals for small-scale or community-scale renewable energy generation that are community led.

Natural and Built Environment

Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a number of locally important buildings and structures as non-designated heritage assets.

Policy 7 - Views and Vistas

This policy identifies a number of important views and vistas to be protected.

Policy 8 - Local Character

This policy includes an overall framework for development to reflect local character and it identifies particular areas for protection as: Important Undeveloped Sutton Road Village Gateway; Important Verdant Open Areas Which Contribute to the Character and Setting of the Village; and Area Sensitive to Change and Intensification.

Policy 9 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm

Looks to protect boundary treatments, landscaping, hedgerows or trees which make a positive contribution to the streetscene and/or the public realm or make an important contribution to biodiversity habitat.

Policy 10 - Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan designates a number of sites across Mepal as Local Green Spaces. These Local Green Spaces provide opportunities for formal or informal recreation and/or are demonstrably special for other reasons such as beauty, historical significance, tranquillity or wildlife richness.

Stage One: Establishing the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment

40. The Government published Planning Practice Guidance states there is no legal requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan to have a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) as set out in section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. However, a qualifying body, in this case Mepal Parish Council, must demonstrate how its plan or order will contribute to achieving sustainable development. Planning Practice Guidance also states, in some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment.
41. Draft Neighbourhood Plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. Consequently, a SEA screening report has been undertaken by the Parish Council using guidance from the Government published advice in 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (2005).
42. The document 'A Practical Guidance to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' was published by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It sets out guidance on how to comply with the European Directive 2001/42/EC known as the Strategic Environmental

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Assessment (SEA) Directive that applied at that time. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 embeds the same aspects into UK law. Figure 2 of this practical guidance shows the Directive's field of application in the form of a diagram (Appendix 2), which provides an outcome of whether a plan does or does not require an SEA.

43. Mepal Parish Council as the qualifying body need to consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. In order to do this, we are providing an assessment of the NDP against the diagram provided in Appendix 2 to set out in whether an SEA is required in the view of the Parish Council. Each stage of the diagram provides a criterion which a 'yes' or 'no' response is required to progress to the next stage.
44. The table below shows the assessment undertaken by the Parish Council. The questions below are drawn from the diagram in Appendix 2 which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Table 1: Establishing the Need for SEA

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or 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))	Yes to criterion 1	The preparation of and adoption of the plan is allowed under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The NDP is prepared by Mepal Parish Council (as the 'qualifying body') and will be 'made' by East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority. The preparation of the NDP is subject to The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	No	Communities, such as Mepal have a right to be able to produce a Neighbourhood Plan (formally called a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)). The plan is not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. Instead, if 'made' the plan would form part of the statutory development plan. Therefore, it is considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine further if an SEA is required.

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

Stage	Y/N	Reason
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, 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))	Yes to criterion 1 No to criterion 2	The NDP is prepared to set out for town and country planning purposes; the NDP set out policies which will influence future development within the Parish of Mepal, including development of housing, employment and community land uses. However, the plan will be used as a tool which manages the design details of development rather than the principles of land use. The NDP does not allocate any sites for housing or employment development. It does however safeguard land for open space, local green space and for community use. Furthermore, the NDP will not be a tool to manage development of the scale and nature envisaged by Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	No	A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report produced by the Parish Council has considered the potential impacts of the NDP on sites covered by the Habitats Regulations. This HRA screening report concludes that the Parish Council consider that a HRA is not required for the NDP.
5. Does the PP 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)	Yes	The NDP does determine the land uses within Mepal although it contains no land allocations for built development. Notwithstanding this, the NDP does provide details of the community's preferential locations for local green space and community use at local level.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Yes	Once the NDP is 'made' by East Cambridgeshire District Council it will form part of the statutory development plan against which planning applications will be determined.
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	No	The NDP does not deal with any of these issues.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No (see stage 2 below)	Stage 2 of this SEA Screening Statement will consider the potential effects of the NDP on the environment. This considers the effects of the NDP against the criteria referred to in Article 3.5 of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC.

Stage Two: Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

45. The table below shows the assessment of the potential significant effects of the environment, as required by Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive.

Table 2: Assessment of the likely significant effects of the environment.

SEA Directive Criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Assessment Commentary	Likely Significant effect? (Y/N)
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard 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	<p>The NDP would form part of the Statutory Development Plan and therefore would set a framework for future development projects in Mepal. However, the plan sits within a wider framework set out by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.</p> <p>The policies of the NDP are in general conformity with the NPPF and the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. In addition, the projects for which the NDP contributes to setting a planning framework are very local in nature.</p>	No
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The NDP has a low hierarchical position within a number of statutory development plans, therefore the NDP will respond to rather than influence other plans or programmes. Policies set out in the NDP are in conformity with the NPPF and the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.	No
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of The TSP will work to protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape of the plan area	<p>The NDP will work positively to protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape of Mepal, including statutory environmental designations. The policies of the NDP provide protection for areas of high environmental value, including Local Green Space. The NDP will work to protect and enhance the natural environment of Mepal, including statutory environmental designations. The policies of the NDP will not affect the protection for areas of high environmental value, including the SACs, SPAs or Ramsar sites both within and outside of but within the catchment of the plan area. The built environment of Mepal is also sought to be protected through the NDP.</p> <p>A number of NDP policies will contribute to the social sustainability of Mepal as a distinct community. Therefore, the NDP will provide</p>	No

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

	<p>socially sustainable development as defined in the NPPF.</p> <p>Through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), new residential development is seen as essential to fund important services required for socially sustainable development.</p> <p>Therefore, it is considered that the NDP will have a positive impact on local environmental assets and therefore will promote sustainable development.</p>	
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	<p>There are no environmental problems directly relevant to this plan. There will be a possible increase in the number of houses in the village as a result of new development allowed for within the strategic context of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan through windfall proposals within the settlement boundary set out in the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>However, the NDP will help to positively address wider environmental problems as highlighted in the NPPF at a local level, including provision of green space and community facilities.</p>	No
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	<p>The NDP is not directly relevant to the implementation of retained European legislation. This legislation is taken into account by the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan with which the Neighbourhood Plan complies. The policies of the NDP have taken into account retained European legislation and will not affect the protection for areas of high environmental value, including the SACs, SPAs or Ramsar sites both within and outside of but within the catchment of the plan area.</p>	No
SEA Directive Criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Assessment Commentary	Likely Significant effect? (Y/N)
<p>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p>		
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>The NDP will result in positive environmental effects through policies that seek to protect the built heritage character and green spaces. The plan will result in positive social effects through policies which seek to support the development of community facilities.</p> <p>The duration of the positive effects outlined above are likely to be long term. However, due to the small scale and nature of the issues considered in the NDP, it is considered that any effects will be low in frequency and reversible.</p>	No
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	<p>A combination of this neighbourhood plan which seeks to protect and enhance the character,</p>	No

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

	<p>environment and setting of Mepal, and wider environmental policy of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, is likely to have cumulative positive environmental effects will have cumulative positive benefits for the area of Mepal.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, as the NDP deals with issues which are of a small scale and nature, it is considered that the impact of the neighbourhood plan will be limited.</p>	
(c) the trans boundary nature of the effects	All effects will be very local in impact, having negligible impacts on neighbouring areas.	No
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	There are no significant risks to human health or the environment. Instead, the plan aims to enhance the environment and to provide the infrastructure required to meet the social needs of local residents; thereby looking to have a positive impact.	No
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Neighbourhood Plan relates to an area of approximately 744ha. This is a relatively modest geographical area with a population estimate ⁵ of approximately 980 in 420 households. Therefore, the magnitude and spatial extent of the plan is small.	No
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or - intensive land-use	<p>The Parish of Mepal contains no National Nature Reserves. The Plan area contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Ouse Washes SSSI. The SSSI within the Parish includes more than one parcel and is recorded as being in both favourable condition and unfavourable - no change condition.</p> <p>In the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan area lie the Ouse Washes SAC, the Ouse Washes SPA and the Ouse Washes Ramsar sites these are part of the 'National Sites Network'. The Ouse Washes SPA and Ramsar designations are contiguous and also cover the SAC area; the SAC covers a narrower corridor.</p> <p>In the wider vicinity of the Neighbourhood Plan area the 'National Sites Network' of interest are the Orton Pit SAC (Peterborough); Nene Washes SAC; Portholme SAC (Huntingdon/Godmanchester); Upper Nene Valley SAC/Upper Nene Valley Ramsar (Rushden); Fenland SAC/Woodwalton Fen Ramsar; Fenland SAC/Chippenham Fen Ramsar; Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar; Devils Dyke SAC; and Breckland SAC/Breckland SPA/Rex Graham Reserve SAC.</p> <p>The closest site in the 'National Sites Network' but outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area is the Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar lying approximately 15km to the south-east.</p>	No

⁵ This is the 2021 Census figure (rounded to the nearest 10)

	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan includes no site allocations for development which would in combination with other site allocations in the Development Plan result in a potentially cumulative effect on any 'National Sites Network' or Ramsar sites including those within the Neighbourhood Plan area, namely the Ouse Washes SAC, the Ouse Washes SPA and the Ouse Washes Ramsar sites. The Neighbourhood Plan is local in nature and scope, its policies are in conformity with National Planning Policy and the strategic policies of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. As already highlighted any likely windfall development within the settlement boundary will fall outside Natural England's Ouse Washes Functional Land IRZ and therefore can be screened out in that context. The likely level of windfall housing will be significantly under the thresholds identified for assessment under the relevant impact zones. As such the level of windfall housing that might come forward over the Neighbourhood Plan period would not individually or cumulatively result in a potentially cumulative effect on any 'National Sites Network'.</p> <p>The plan area contains a Scheduled Monuments and 9 Listed Buildings (no Grade I; 1 Grade II*; and 8 Grade II). There is no Conservation Area. These heritage assets will also be protected by higher tier documents, such as the NPPF, and the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan looks to identify Non-Designated Heritage Assets.</p> <p>Therefore, it is considered that the NDP will have a positive impact on local environmental and heritage assets and therefore will promote sustainable development</p>	
<p>(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, Community or international protection status</p>	<p>The Parish of Mepal contains no National Nature Reserves. The Plan area contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Ouse Washes SSSI. The SSSI within the Parish includes more than one parcel and is recorded as being in both favourable condition and unfavourable - no change condition.</p> <p>In the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan area lie the Ouse Washes SAC, the Ouse Washes SPA and the Ouse Washes Ramsar sites these are part of the 'National Sites Network'. The Ouse Washes SPA and Ramsar designations are contiguous and also cover the SAC area; the SAC covers a narrower corridor.</p> <p>In the wider vicinity of the Neighbourhood Plan area the 'National Sites Network' of interest are the Orton Pit SAC (Peterborough); Nene Washes SAC; Portholme SAC (Huntingdon/Godmanchester); Upper Nene Valley SAC/Upper Nene Valley Ramsar (Rushden); Fenland SAC/Woodwalton Fen Ramsar;</p>	<p>No</p>

	<p>Fenland SAC/Chippenham Fen Ramsar; Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar; Devils Dyke SAC; and Breckland SAC/Breckland SPA/Rex Graham Reserve SAC.</p> <p>The closest site in the ‘National Sites Network’ but outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area is the Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar lying approximately 15km to the south-east.</p> <p>The NDP contains policies aimed at protecting open space outside of designated sites such as the SAC and SSSIs to help reduce visitor pressure on the SAC. In this respect the NDP will have positive impacts.</p>	
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Consultation and Conclusion

46. As a result of the assessment undertaken above, based on Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive, Mepal Parish Council consider that there would be no significant environmental effects arising from the NDP. As such, in the view of the Parish Council the NDP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.
47. Consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents took place during the period from Wednesday 1 March 2023 to Wednesday 12 April 2023 and included a draft of this SEA Screening Report. Consultation was undertaken as set out in the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations and included consultation with East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority; and the Environment Agency; Natural England; and Historic England as the three statutory environmental bodies. None of the three statutory environmental bodies made any specific comments on the Neighbourhood Plan or supporting documents. The statutory environmental bodies tend to rely upon providing general advice on Neighbourhood Plans rather than providing bespoke responses.
48. In order to be absolutely certain as to whether the three statutory environmental bodies had any specific views on the SEA Screening Report, East Cambridgeshire District Council suggested that we specifically re-ask the statutory environmental bodies to confirm if they have any comments or not on the SEA Screening Report which was done in June and July 2023. Copies of the consultation and the responses received are in Appendix 3.
49. Historic England confirmed that they considered that SEA was not required. The Environment Agency did not explicitly answer the question but did indicate that they did not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan.
50. Natural England indicated that: *“It is Natural England’s advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:*
 - *significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,*
 - *significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.”*
51. The Parish Council has duly considered the responses of the three statutory environmental bodies and has given their views great weight in coming to its final view. Therefore, following consultation relating to the conclusions in relation to SEA and HRA screening, the Parish Council remains satisfied that there would be no significant environmental effects

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

arising from the NDP. As such, it remains the view of the Parish Council that the NDP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

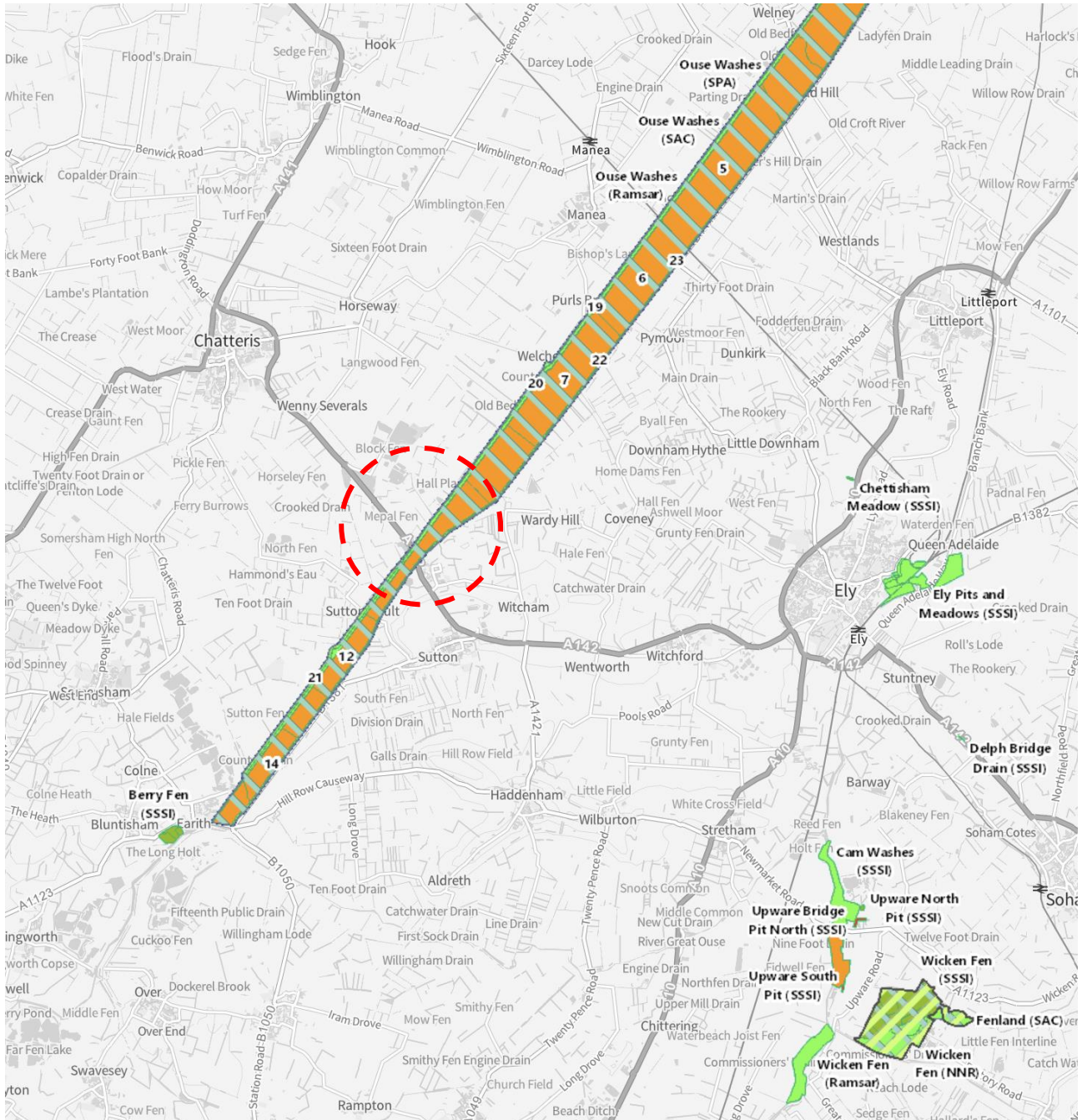
52. East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority will, following receipt of this Screening Report which supports the Neighbourhood Plan will produce a SEA determination statement as 'responsible authority', to meet the requirements of Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. In making their SEA determination they will have regard to the consultation undertaken with the Environment Agency; Natural England; and Historic England as the three statutory environmental bodies as to whether a SEA is or is not required.
53. Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 the SEA determination statement produced by East Cambridgeshire District Council then forms the statement of reasons for a determination under regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 that forms part of the submission under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

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Appendix One: Environmental and Heritage Assets

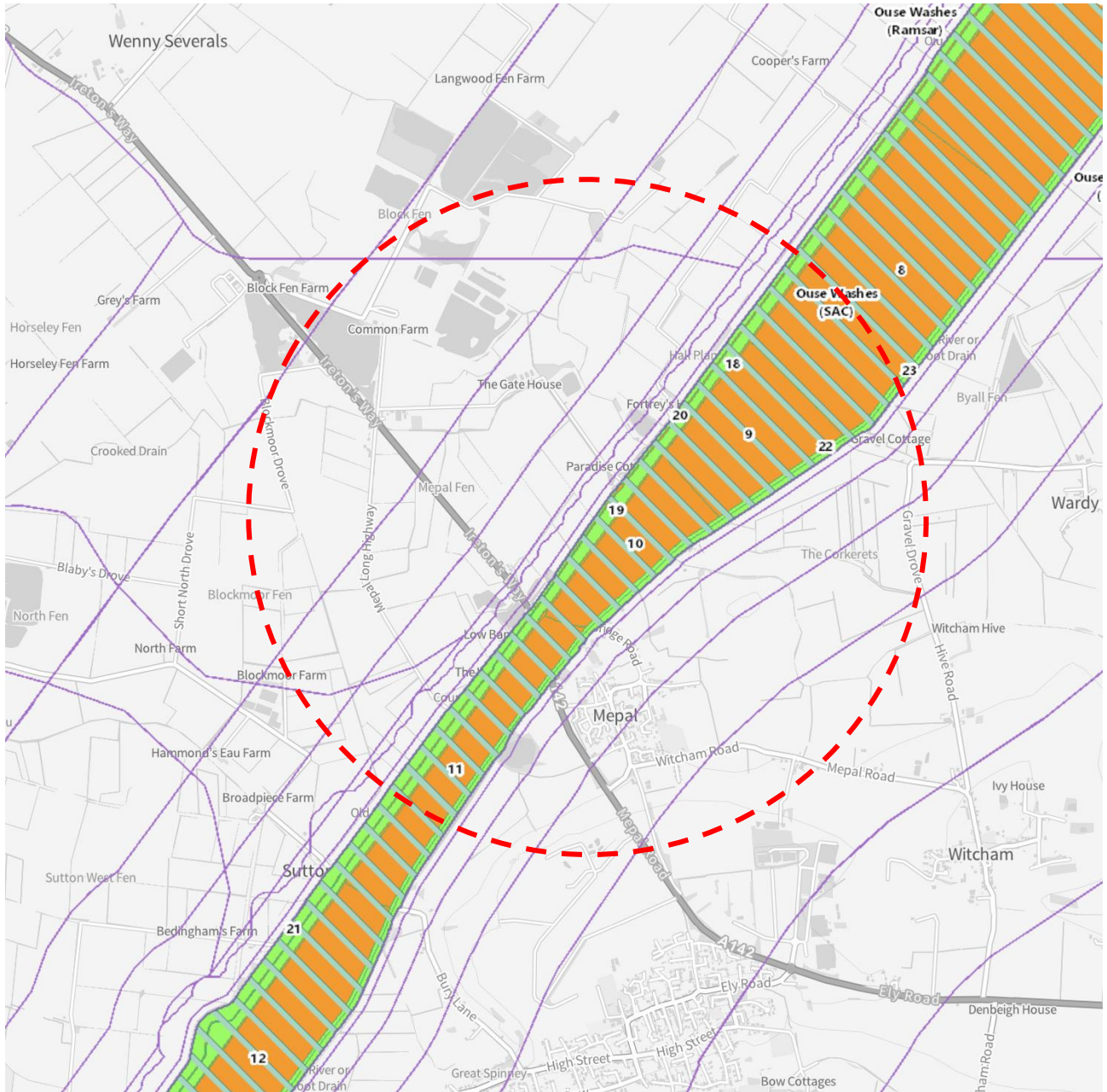
Nature Conservation Sites




Extract from Magic.gov.uk website © Defra

 Broad Area of Mepal Parish

Nature Conservation Sites

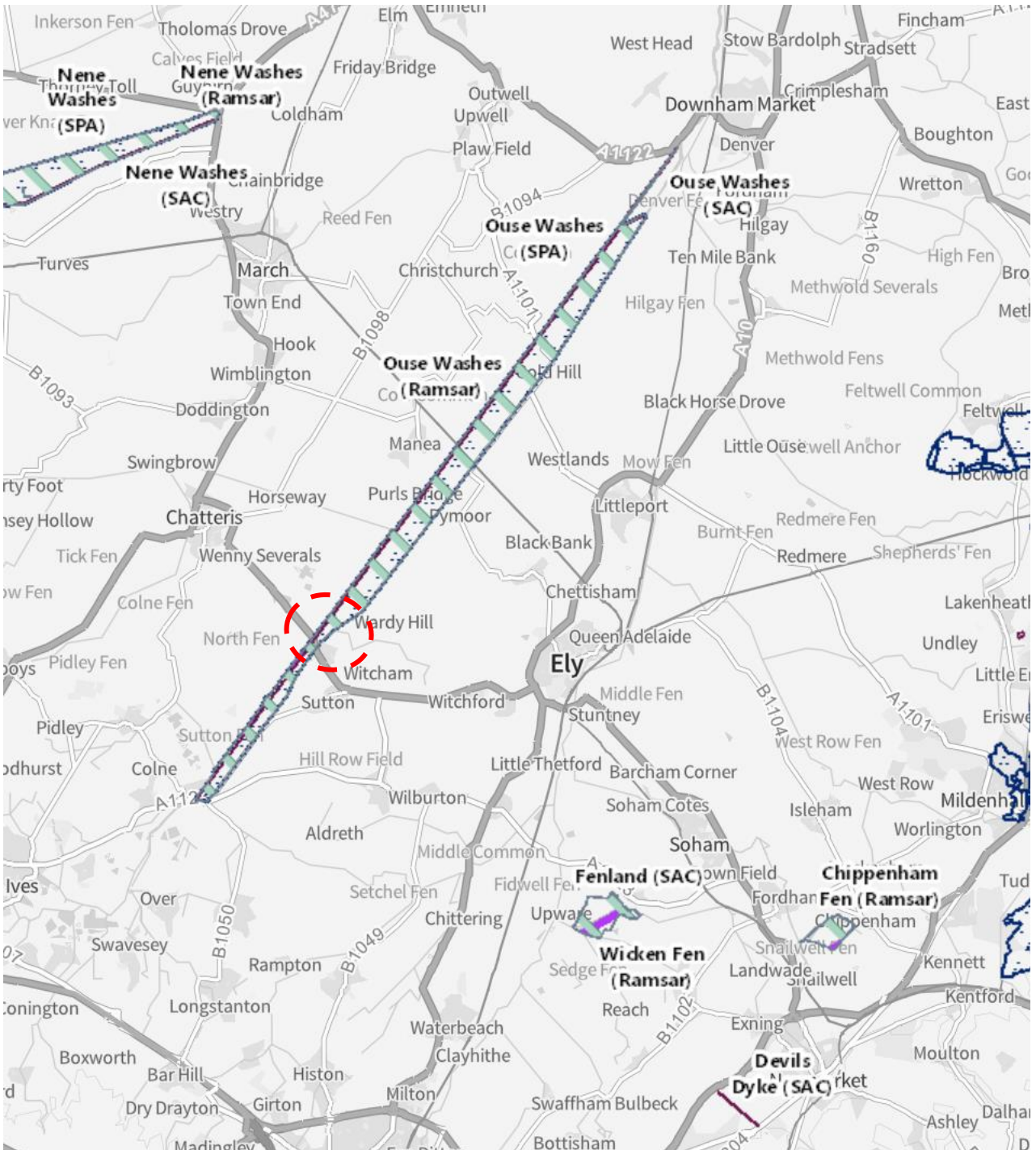


Extract from Magic.gov.uk website © Defra


 Broad Area of Mepal Parish

Natural England defines Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for SSSIs and has undertaken amendments across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to the IRZs to introduce a recreational pressure 'zone of potential risk' for SSSIs of either 2km or 5km.

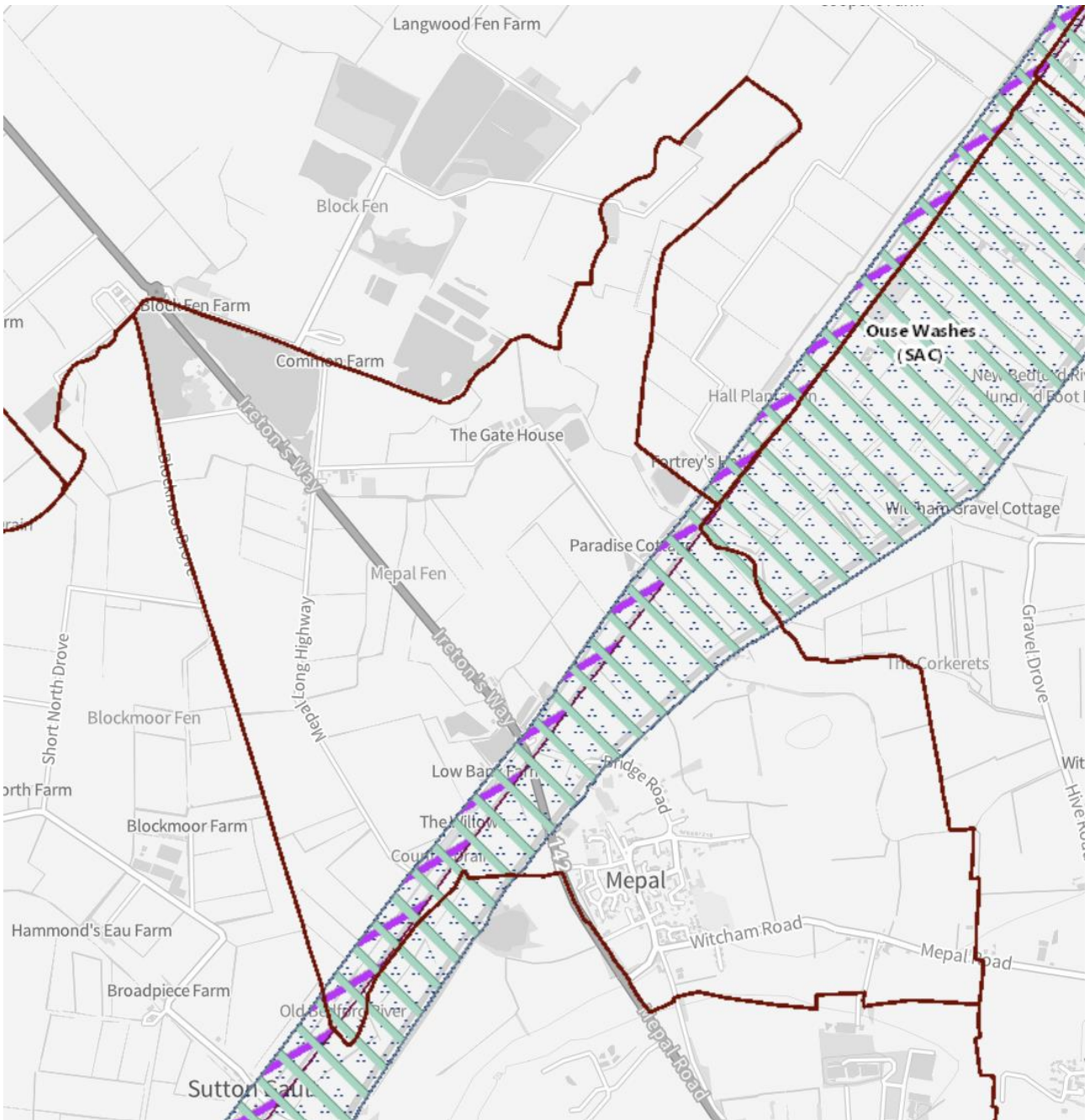
Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report



National Sites Network - Extract from Magic.gov.uk website © Defra

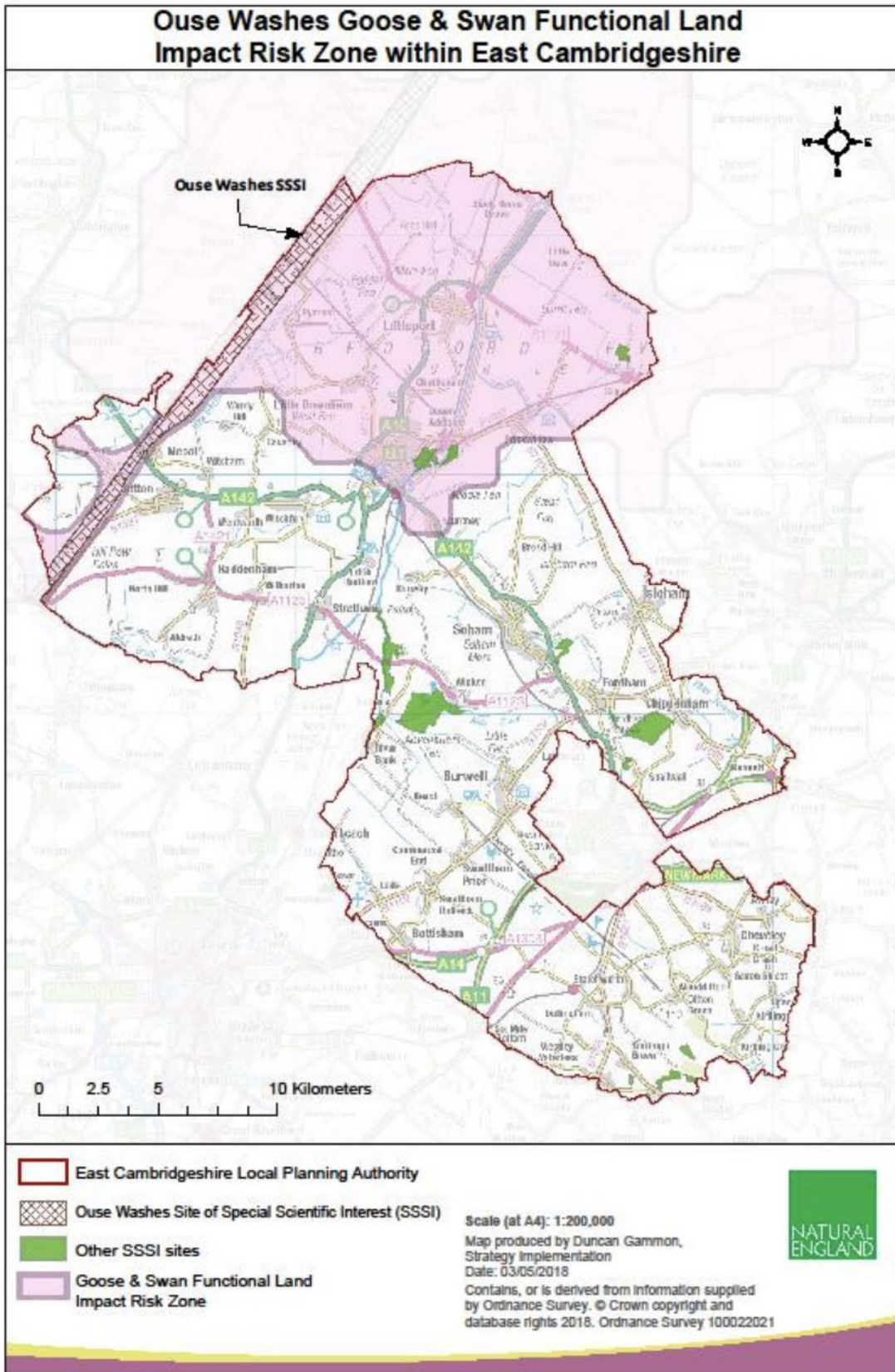
 Broad Area of Mepal Parish

- Parishes (GB)
- Ramsar Sites (England)
-  Special Areas of Conservation (England)
-  Special Protection Areas (England)

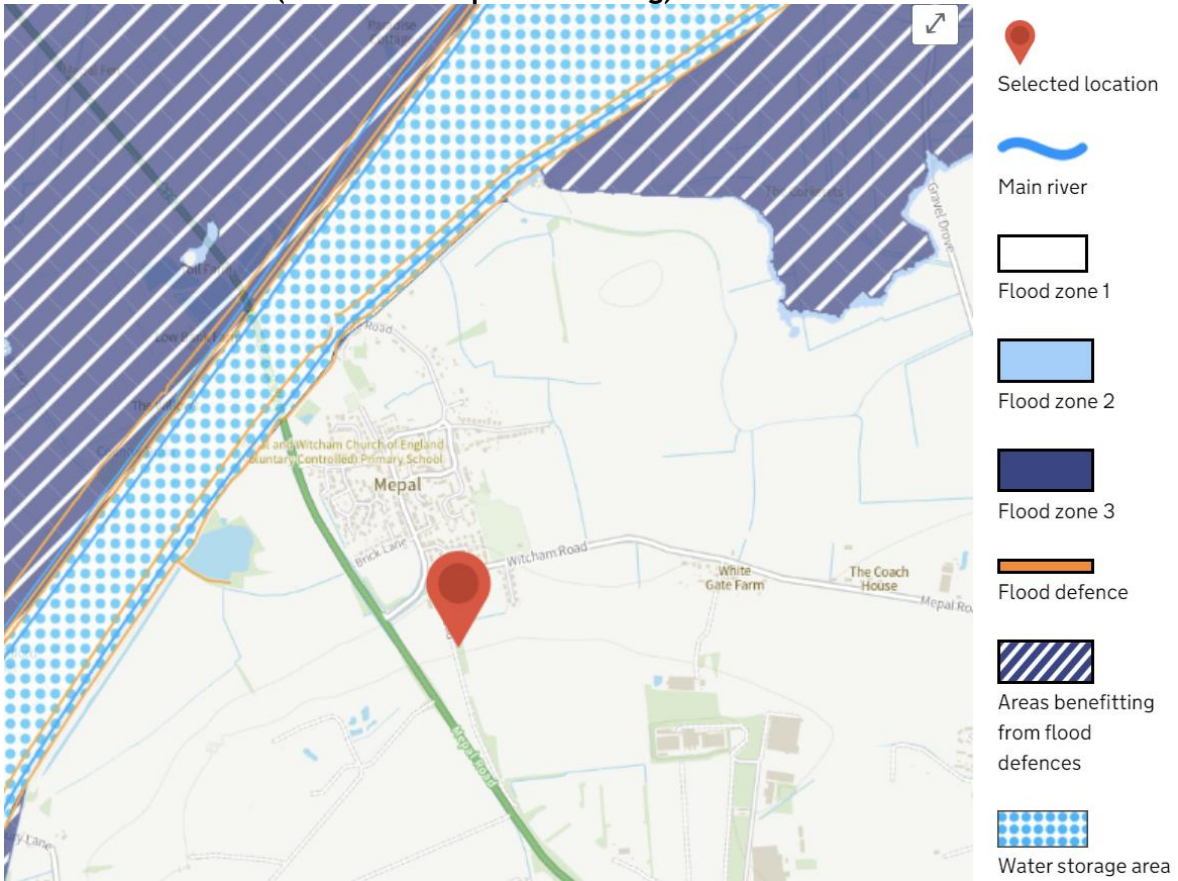


National Sites Network - Extract from Magic.gov.uk website © Defra

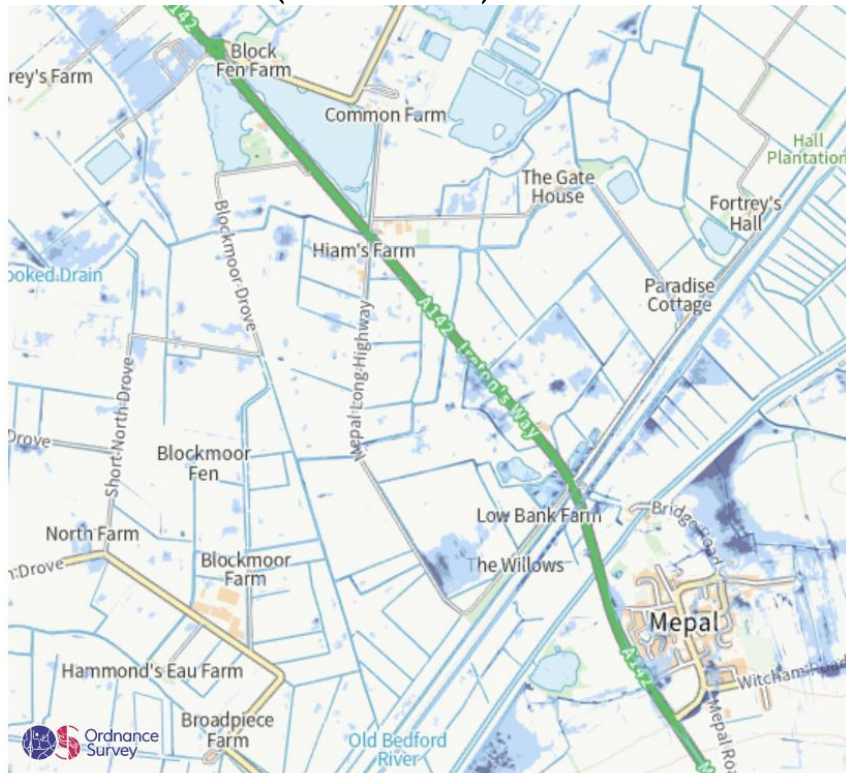
- Parishes (GB)
- Ramsar Sites (England)
- Special Areas of Conservation (England)
- Special Protection Areas (England)



Areas of Flood Risk (Flood Risk Map for Planning)



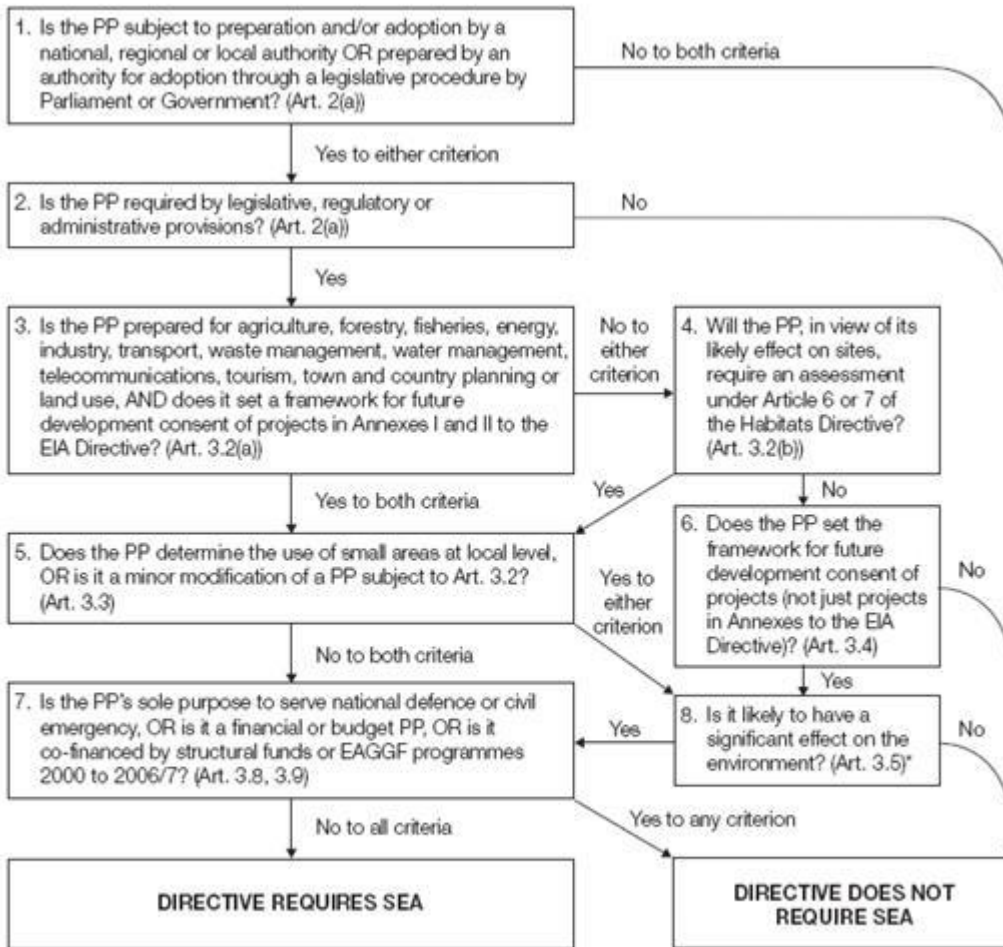
Areas of Flood Risk (Surface Water)



Extent of flooding from surface water
 ● High ● Medium ● Low ○ Very Low

Extract from Flood Maps © Environment Agency

Appendix Two: Diagram of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

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Appendix Three: Responses From Statutory Environmental Bodies

54. As indicated earlier in order to be absolutely certain as to whether the three statutory environmental bodies had any specific views on the SEA Screening, East Cambridgeshire District Council suggested that we specifically re-ask the statutory environmental bodies to confirm if they have any comments or not on the SEA Screening which was done in June and July 2023. Below are the responses received:

Historic England

From: James, Edward

Sent: Tuesday, June 27, 2023 11:37 AM

To: clerk@mepalparish.org

Cc: EastPlanningPolicy <eastplanningpolicy@HistoricEngland.org.uk>; McGivern, Ross

Subject: RE: Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening

Dear Karen,

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation again. Unfortunately we did not have capacity to respond in detail to the original consultation, owing to a period of parental leave. However, as the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. Therefore we welcome this further opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development.

On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is **not required**.

The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

If you have any queries about this consultation response, please contact eastplanningpolicy@historicengland.org.uk.

For future queries relating to your neighbourhood plan, please contact my colleague Ross McGivern (cc'd), who will be responsible for providing our advice on neighbourhood plans from the 1st July 2023 onwards.

Kind regards,

Edward



Historic England

Work with us to champion heritage and improve lives. Read our Future Strategy and get involved at historicengland.org.uk/strategy.

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Environment Agency

From: "EastAnglia, Planning" <Planning.EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Date: 25 July 2023 at 11:06:11 BST

To: clerk@mepalparish.org

Subject: RE: Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening

Dear Karen

Thank you for consulting us on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan.

Flood Risk

Based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee, we find that there are areas of fluvial flood risk and watercourses within the neighbourhood plan area. In particular, we note that the boundary does extend into areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3 of the designated main River Great Ouse.

On the basis that no additional growth is proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless, we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to cover the management of flood risk. Allocation of any sites and any windfall development delivered through the Plan period should follow the sequential approach. [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) paragraph 161 sets this out.

Biodiversity

We note the Neighbourhood Plan area includes the Ouse Washes, designated as a SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar site. As no growth is proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless, we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to protect designated sites.

Water Quality

We have identified that the Plan area boundary includes the Water Recycling Centre Mepal, which is currently operating close to or exceeding its permitted capacity. Providing the Plan does not allocate sites for growth development across the Plan period, we do not have any significant concerns. We would still expect to see consideration for any windfall developments captured in a relevant policy for Water Quality in the catchment of the Plan Area and serving WRC.

Informative:

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment. For your information, together with Natural England, Historic England and Forestry Commission we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: [How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)

We hope this information is of assistance. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Alison Craggs

Sustainable Places Advisor

East Anglia Area (West)

Environment Agency, Bromholme Lane, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE28 4NE

Tel: 02084745242

Mob: 07467335963

Direct dial: 02077140285



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Natural England

Date: 28 July 2023
Our ref: 439571
Your ref: Mepal Neighbourhood Plan



Ms Karen Peck
Mepal Parish Council

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

BY EMAIL ONLY
clerk@mepalparish.org

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Peck

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA & HRA Screening Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 26 June 2023.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
- significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected

¹ Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

Copy Email Sent to The Three Environmental Bodies

From: clerk@mepalparish.org <clerk@mepalparish.org>

Sent: Monday, June 26, 2023 3:09:46 PM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London

To: SM-NE-Consultations (NE) <consultations@naturalengland.org.uk>; Anglian Central, Planning_Liaison <planning.brampton@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@HistoricEngland.org.uk <[REDACTED]@HistoricEngland.org.uk>; eastplanningpolicy@HistoricEngland.org.uk <eastplanningpolicy@HistoricEngland.org.uk>

Subject: Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

We consulted you back at the end of February 2023 on the draft of the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan under Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. Alongside the Neighbourhood Plan we also invited comments on the suite of supporting documents which included the draft of the SEA Screening Request and the draft of the HRA Screening Request. The consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents ran from Wednesday 1 March 2023 to Wednesday 12 April 2023.

In response to that consultation the Environment Agency customer services team provided acknowledgement (dated 7th March 2023) but no comments followed; both Natural England and Historic England indicated that they didn't have any specific comments (dated 13th March 2023 and 3rd March 2023 respectively). As none of the three statutory environmental bodies said anything on the SEA and HRA Screening documents, in order to be absolutely certain as to whether the three statutory environmental bodies had any specific views on the SEA Screening and HRA Screening; East Cambridgeshire District Council has suggested that we specifically re-ask the statutory environmental bodies to confirm if they have any comments or not on the SEA Screening and HRA Screening?

Attached is the draft of the SEA Screening that will in due course accompany the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan which is anticipated to take place in September 2023. This document forms our statement of reasons for a determination under regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 that the proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and therefore that SEA is not required. Following submission then a determination statement will need to be produced by East Cambridgeshire District Council, as 'responsible authority', to meet the requirements of Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Also attached is the draft of the HRA Screening that will in due course accompany the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan which as indicated is anticipated to take place in September 2023. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, regulation 106 identifies that for a Neighbourhood Plan submission under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 is the trigger point for considering HRA and it is then for the competent authority (at that point ECDC) to then decide under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 whether the land use plan (which specifically includes Neighbourhood Plans) will have a significant effect individually or cumulatively on a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site which forms part of the National Sites Network.

In the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan area lie the Ouse Washes SAC, the Ouse Washes SPA and the Ouse Washes Ramsar sites these are part of the 'National Sites Network'. The Ouse Washes SPA and Ramsar designations are contiguous and also cover the SAC area; the SAC covers a narrower corridor. The Ouse Washes is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Within both

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Report

documents is a summary of the policies and proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for built development.

I would be grateful if you could reply within 5 weeks of the date of this email, even if this is simply to confirm that you have no response or comments to make.

Best wishes

Karen Peck
Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Mepal Parish Council

Telephone: 01353 741066

Email: clerk@mepalparish.org

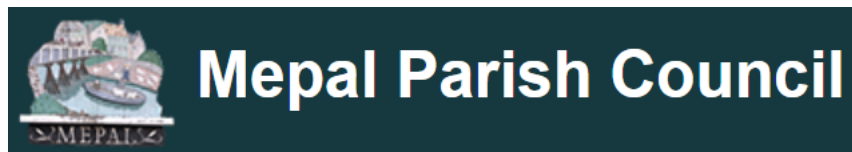
I work part-time and will usually only be available, in the office, Monday and Tuesday between 9am-5pm. Therefore there may be a delay in my response.

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Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

SEA Screening Report September 2023

The Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Mepal produced in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012



<https://www.mepalparish.org/mepal-neighbourhood-plan/>

NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK 

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