

DRAFT STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Crowmarsh Parish
Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2035

Meadow View
OX10 9QW

The
Chilterns
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Cover picture: Roundabout on the A4074, Crowmarsh Gifford

Appendix 7c

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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Crowmarsh Parish Council

January 2021

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

An Initial Screening Opinion on the determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was issued on 9 January 2018. This initial screening opinion determined that the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan did not require a SEA. However, the three statutory consultees all determined that a SEA was required and the final Screening Statement confirmed the consultees observations that a SEA was required. The need to allocate land for housing in the Parish has since been negated as current planning approvals now exceed the number of new dwellings stipulated for the Parish. An allocation of land for employment use is made at the Howbery Park employment use site.

The Scoping Report for the SEA was based on the Screening Statement and the consultee responses along with issues raised within the Parish, and submitted to the Statutory Consultees in June 2018. The responses highlighted concerns regarding protected landscape particularly the Chilterns AONB, and the Thames Corridor, and their settings, enhancing biodiversity, protecting the settings of Listed Buildings and identifying those at risk, and the occurrence and management of Flood Zones 2 and 3 within the parish. These messages are brought forward to the SEA Assessment and Reporting phase.

The objective of the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan is to provide planning policies that will help sustain vibrant communities in a rural setting. The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan proposes to contain policies relating to: village boundaries and infill development, future housing mix and tenure, allocation of land for employment use, conservation and the environment and heritage (listed buildings), and recognition of green spaces. The plan is supported by evidence studies: Appendices 1 to 5 attached to the Plan document.

Background to Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 'seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes'. The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan needs to be compatible with the SEA Directive which is transposed into UK Law as the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations and requires the likely effects on the environment of implementing a programme or plan to be identified, described and assessed.

The assessment process involves an evaluation of the environmental impacts of the Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Plan Policies, alternative sites for employment use allocation, and alternative policies. A straightforward assessment procedure has been adopted as the Plan no longer needs to allocate housing development land and sustainability assessment of individual sites is not required other than for employment use.

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

The Vision for the Neighbourhood Plan is to conserve the rural nature of the Parish while allowing necessary development of housing and employment opportunities.

The Objectives of the proposed Planning Policies are to promote Crowmarsh Gifford, Mongewell and North Stoke villages as home to a thriving, working community that is strongly linked to its

environment and to its neighbours, including the town of Wallingford, a Parish which has its own identity and in which any future development adds to the character of the villages and to the quality of life of the residents.

The Plan strives to preserve the rural character of the Parish and to uphold relevant national and regional strategies and policies for the countryside. The proposed Policies prescribe the conservation of the rural aspects of the Parish and the rural setting of its communities and their valued landscapes, while pre-allocated growth of housing stock satisfies the housing needs for the tenure of the Plan.

Local Environmental Characteristic and Issues

Crowmarsh Parish borders Benson Parish to the north, Nuffield to the east, Ipsden to the south east, South Stoke to the south; across the River Thames is Cholsey Parish to the south west and Wallingford Town to the west.

Crowmarsh Gifford is designated as one of the 'Larger Villages' within South Oxfordshire District Council. Crowmarsh Parish includes part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the River Thames Corridor and the Central Vale Fringes. Crowmarsh Gifford enjoys access to the market town of Wallingford via the ancient river bridge, but is proudly independent of that town.

North Stoke is a smaller rural village, much of it within a Conservation Area. Mongewell is a hamlet centred on Mongewell Spring which includes the buildings of the former Carmel College Jewish Independent School.

Crowmarsh Gifford village currently consists of 542 dwellings, mainly comprising detached and semi-detached houses, maisonettes and some flats; North Stoke has 100 dwellings and Mongewell has just 47. There are 48 listed buildings in the Parish, two of which are Grade I and three Grade II*, the remainder being Grade II.

The Parish hosts a large scientific campus at Howbery Park which is the home of HR Wallingford, with UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology on an adjacent site. On the new bypass to the south of Crowmarsh, is CABI. These employers collectively occupy in excess of 600 technical and support staff.

The Parish contains riverside meadows that sustain important grassland for cattle. To the east the higher ground offers areas of Grade II Agricultural land which supports arable cultivation. A small part of the Parish is given over to woodland providing a diverse environment and a range of habitats. The Parish lies beneath the scarp slope of the Chiltern Hills in the Thames river flood plain (Flood Zones 2 and 3). During prolonged wet weather parts of Crowmarsh and Mongewell may flood, with a very shallow water table beneath some residential areas.

Crowmarsh Gifford and Mongewell lie in full view of the Chiltern Downs and care is needed to ensure that any development is sympathetic to the guidelines controlling this defined Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Assessment Framework

The scoping report identified the environmental constraints and issues, and these alongside the aims and objectives of the community were used to create the initial SEA framework. Following consultation, the views of the statutory consultees, the Chilterns Conservation Board and the community were taken on board to refine the SEA assessment framework.

Table 1 below shows the final SEA objectives as a result of the consultation. By assessing the objective and policies of the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan using these SEA objectives we aim to produce the most sustainable version of a neighbourhood plan which has the least impact on the environment:

Table 1 SEA Objectives

Key Messages from Scoping Stage	SEA (Sustainability) Objective
<i>Improve the mix of housing size and tenure</i>	To help ensure suitable homes are available to all sectors of the community – ensure there will be a supply of affordable homes, and homes suitable for the elderly as well as homes suitable for families – encourage infill development accordingly.
<i>Preservation and enhancement of the rural landscape and sense of place</i>	To conserve and enhance the rural nature of the parish and particularly areas within the AONB which is a nationally protected landscape. To protect and maintain the network of rights of way. To protect and maintain important views, including those from the main settlements. To conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area at North Stoke. To achieve a net gain in biodiversity, support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks/corridors, and support access to green open spaces and nature
<i>Flood Risk Hazard</i>	To ensure flood risk from all sources, including groundwater flooding, is managed effectively and sustainably and that no new developments are built on Flood Zones 2 and 3 - does a proposal impact land liable to flood, if so what mitigation is proposed?
<i>Threats to biodiversity and opportunities to enhance it</i>	To conserve and enhance biodiversity and offer protection to species under threat - will the policy/proposal protect and enhance priority habitats and the habitats of protected species?
<i>Heritage assets and the historic environment as irreplaceable resources</i>	To conserve and enhance the Parish's heritage for its historic significance, character and appearance and important contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place. How many heritage assets at risk, what percentage of planning applications required archaeological investigations prior to approval, and, what percentage of planning applications required archaeological mitigation strategies to be developed and implemented?
<i>Improved traffic management within and through the Parish</i>	To benefit the wellbeing of the community by the management of traffic congestion – does a proposal encourage walking and cycling or public transport instead of a short car journey?
<i>Enhance the setting of new housing and conservation of rural setting</i>	To retain existing trees and hedgerows and design new landscaping to conserve and enhance the established character of the surrounding area - is the site sufficiently screened; does the site impact on important views into and out from the AONB or its setting?

With regard to the Heritage Objective, all recent major housing planning applications have required archaeological investigations, but none have required archaeological mitigation strategies.

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

The Objectives of the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed against the SEA Objectives:

- Promote Crowmarsh Parish as home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment and to its neighbours, including the town of Wallingford; *has a positive impact on all the SEA Objectives save for Landscape and Traffic where there is no impact and which have a neutral effect.*
- Develop a Parish which has its own identity in which any future housing and employment use development adds to the quality of life of its residents; *has a positive impact on all the SEA Objectives other than traffic on which there is a neutral effect.*
- Preserve the rural character of the Parish, and of its two smaller villages, North Stoke and Mongewell, and uphold relevant national and regional strategies and policies for safeguarding the countryside; *has a positive influence on the SEA Objectives apart from housing mix and traffic which have a neutral effect.*
- Promote the development of housing suitable for those on modest budgets and for the elderly; *has a neutral impact on all the SEA Objectives.*
- Preserve the green spaces within Crowmarsh Gifford; *has a positive impact on the SEA objectives, other than on housing and traffic for which the effect is neutral.*

The Plan objectives are entirely sustainable and suitable for inclusion in the Plan Objectives. No reasonable alternative objectives have been identified that provide a better collective impact on the SEA Objectives.

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The Proposed Plan Policies of the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed against the SEA Objectives:

- Policy 1: Village boundaries and infill development; *has a positive effect on SEA Objectives landscape, flooding, biodiversity and conservation and has a neutral impact on housing mix and traffic. There is a risk of adverse impact on the settings of listed buildings so there is also a small potential negative impact.*
- Policy 2: Housing mix and tenure; *has a neutral impact on the SEA Objectives, save for the housing objective which has a positive effect.*
- Policy 3: Employment use land at Howbery Park, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford; *has a neutral impact on housing mix, landscape and conservation of the environment and negative impacts on the remainder of the SEA Objectives: flooding, biodiversity, heritage and traffic.*
- Policy 4: Conservation of the environment; *has a positive impact on the SEA Objectives other than housing mix and traffic which has a neutral effect.*
- Policy 5: Locally listed buildings; *has a positive impact on SEA Objective for heritage and for conservation and is otherwise a neutral impact.*
- Policy 6: Green spaces; *has a positive effect on the SEA Objectives other than a neutral impact on housing mix, flooding and traffic.*

Mitigation of the negative impact of village boundaries, Policy 1 is proposed by adding suitable wording to the policy that any development would enhance the setting of any nearby listed building. Similarly, mitigation of the negative impact of Policy 3, allocation of employment use land, is proposed by adding wording to this policy:

- That a flood risk assessment and sustainable drainage strategy (SUDS) can demonstrate how the development will not increase surface water or fluvial flood risk on any adjoining land.
- That a biodiversity strategy is prepared which delivers a 'net gain' in overall biodiversity value on site.
- That development enhances the significance of the setting of the listed buildings in close proximity to the site.
- That a transport assessment is prepared with the development plan to satisfactorily manage its traffic effects on the road network and to encourage and enable improvements to sustainable transport methods.

Allocation of land for employment use considers two sites at Howbery Park. Both impact the SEA Objectives in a similar way with potential negative impacts on flooding, biodiversity, heritage and traffic. One of the two sites has a negative impact on landscape when viewed from the Thames Path and is neither currently available nor deliverable. The other site, land north of Red Kite House, is, therefore, taken forward to the Plan as the preferred site. Mitigation of the negative impacts is built into the Policy 3 as described above under assessment of Plan Policies.

Assessment of Reasonable Plan Alternatives

Alternative and additional policy statements considered for inclusion in the Parish Plan have also been assessed against the SEA Objectives. There were two such alternative policies:

- Additional housing land allocation; *has a negative impact on landscape and traffic which cannot easily be balanced against the positive gain of additional housing in the Parish over the number already approved.*
- Parish Development Needs - including traffic management; *has an overall neutral impact other than on the Traffic Objective which is positive.*

Neither alternative policy is taken forward to the Plan: additional housing due to its negative impacts, and traffic management because this is incorporated in other Plan Policies.

Cumulative effects of Policies

The negative impact on the SEA traffic objective caused by Policy CRP 3, allocation of land for employment use, is caused by a likely increase in single vehicle journeys to and from site of possibly between 150 and 200. This may not seem a lot of journeys but when the cumulative impact of traffic is assessed from already approved major housing development in and around Crowmarsh Gifford and the return of the Local Authority to its site in Benson Lane during the likely tenure of the Plan, an overall increase in journeys could amount to some 1200 single trips, many during the morning and evening ingress and egress from the area. This may cause an adverse effect on the wellbeing of the community but this is outweighed by the positive benefits of increased employment opportunities.

Some mitigation will be developed through inclusion in the Policy wording regarding sustainable alternative transport options.

Summary of Assessment

The impact from the Objectives of the Plan against the SEA Objectives are either positive or neutral, and thus sustainable and beneficial to the residents of the Parish. The positive impacts reflect a thriving community interacting with, and respecting its environment; the Plan Objectives are entirely sustainable and there are no objectives for the Plan that have a negative impact on the environment.

The impact of the proposed and preferred Policies for the Plan mainly have a positive or neutral impact on the SEA Objectives. There are potential negative impacts from Policy CRP1 and Policy CRP3 and mitigation is proposed by suitable wording incorporated within the Policies. Two alternative Policies have been assessed, that of allocating additional housing land has negative impacts on landscape and traffic volumes whereas that regarding traffic is already incorporated in the proposed policies. Neither are taken forward to the Plan.

The cumulative impact of traffic is assessed. Increased vehicle journeys due to approved major housing development in and around Crowmarsh Gifford and the return of the Local Authority to its site in Benson Lane, plus the likely increased journeys to and from the employment use site at Howbery Park could amount to some 1200 single trips adding stress on the local road network.

Monitoring the Assessment

Monitoring will be undertaken through the monitoring indicators identified in the Adopted Development Plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Initial Screening Opinion on the determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was issued on 9 January 2018. The Screening Opinion accords with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC. In this initial screening opinion, South Oxfordshire District Council determined that the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan did not require a SEA. However, the three statutory consultees determined that a SEA was required:

- Environment Agency because the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area includes large areas of Flood Zone 2/3 and has a large portion of the River Thames Corridor which forms the western boundary.
- Historic England because the Plan could have significant effects on the historic environment in addition to the likely effect on the Chilterns AONB.
- Natural England because there are designated sites or protected landscapes within the impact zones of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

1.2 The response from Natural England specifically noted the requirement to conserve biodiversity and provide a net gain in biodiversity through planning policy (Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, and section 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework). Natural England requested that any development policy include wording to ensure 'all development results in a biodiversity net gain for the parish'. The evaluation of Flood Zones 2 and 3 has also included groundwater flooding which is prevalent in the lower elevation parts of the Parish. A final Screening Statement was made available to the public through the Local Authority web site; the statutory consultees strengthened their earlier arguments in response to this statement.

1.3 This Strategic Environmental Assessment for Crowmarsh Parish focuses on the concerns of the three statutory consultees and of the residents of the Parish. Much of the Parish lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; three major housing allocations have been approved within that area and a fourth within the setting of the AONB. The current planning approvals now far exceed the number of new dwellings stipulated for the Parish by the Local Authority; the need to allocate further land for housing in the Parish is thus negated. The SEA does not need to assess the environmental impact of approved housing allocations as these assessments were undertaken as part of the respective planning reports within the normal course of the planning process. However, an assessment of the cumulative effect of these allocations is made to illustrate the effect they have on the environment (Section 6 of this report). An allocation of land for employment use is made at the Howbery Park employment use estate. Two sites are assessed but both have the similar impacts on the environment although one has a small negative impact on the landscape when viewed from the River Thames. This site is also not currently available and deliverable. The other site is available and deliverable and this site is taken forward to the Plan.

1.4 Using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations, a Screening Statement determines whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects (Report 7a attached to the Plan). The extract from 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' in Appendix 1 provides a flow diagram to demonstrate the SEA screening process. The final Screening Statement states '*The Crowmarsh NDP does require a Strategic Environmental Assessment*'. This report fulfils that requirement.

1.5 Part of the screening process is the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2 of the Screening Statement, and the assessment of likely significant effects on the environment, which can be found in Appendix 3. The Local Authority is the ‘competent authority’ under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance, also referred to as Natura 2000. The Screening Report concludes that ‘*The Crowmarsh NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an appropriate assessment is not needed*’. The Statutory Consultees have not objected to this conclusion.

1.6 A Scoping Report for the SEA (Report 7b attached to the Plan) was prepared based on the Screening Statement, consultee responses to that statement and community concerns raised during public consultation, including questionnaires and exhibitions. It was submitted to the Statutory Consultees in June 2018. Responses underlined those already made by the Statutory Consultees, i.e. concerns regarding protected landscape particularly the Chilterns AONB, and the Thames Corridor, and their settings, enhancing biodiversity, protecting the settings of Listed Buildings and identifying those at risk, and the occurrence of Flood Zones 2 and 3 within the parish. Specific requests which have been incorporated in the final scoping report and built into the Assessment Framework (Table 2) are:

“will the policy/proposal protect and enhance priority habitats and the habitats of protected species (NPPF para. 174); achieve a net gain in biodiversity (NPPF paras. 170, 174, 175); support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks /corridors (NPPF paras. 170, 171); support access to green open spaces and nature?”

These have been added to the Assessment Objectives under *Preservation and enhancement of the rural landscape and sense of place and Threats to biodiversity and opportunities to enhance it*.

“is the development site within a protected landscape or its setting; is the site sufficiently screened; does the site impact on important views into and out from the AONB or its setting?” (NPPF para 172)

These have been added to the Assessment Objectives under *Enhance the setting of new housing and conservation of rural setting*.

“assess the number and percentage of different heritage assets at risk; the percentage of planning applications where archaeological investigations were required prior to approval; and, the percentage of planning applications where archaeological mitigation strategies were developed and implemented.”

These have been added to the Assessment Objectives under *Heritage assets and the historic environment as irreplaceable resources*. The North Stoke Henge and Ring Ditch site is the only site listed is on the at-risk heritage register; all recent major housing planning applications have required archaeological investigations, but none have required archaeological mitigation strategies.

The consultation comprised:

Who: Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England, Chilterns Conservation Board

How: Email exchange between LNP Steering Group and consultees and publication of relevant documents on the Parish Council web site and described in Crowmarsh News (delivered to every household in the Parish) within the consultation period 21 June to 23 August 2018

Issues raised: see Table 1 below

How issues addressed: see Table 1 below

Issues raised during the subsequent Regulation 14 consultation and how the comments were addressed is dealt with in the table of the consultation statement on pages 20 to 34.

Table 1 Consultation issues raised and how issues addressed

STATUTORY CONSULTEE: NATURAL ENGLAND			
Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/recommendation	Action taken
1.	General comment	As the Neighbourhood Plan area is largely within the Chilterns AONB, Natural England advises that you use national and local policies, together with local landscape expertise and information to make this assessment. Alongside national policy you should also apply landscape policies set out in your development plan, or appropriate saved policies. The statutory purpose of the AONB is to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty. You should assess whether the Plan policies would have a significant impact on or harm that statutory purpose.	National and local policies, including saved documents, have been applied within the SEA documents and brought forward to the Plan. Plan policies are assessed as advised.
2.	Threats to Biodiversity	Threats to biodiversity and opportunities to enhance it (in Table 2). We advise adding criteria here to assess the Plan's policies and development allocations. More specific criteria are needed to fully assess the potential impacts on the natural environment. Criteria include: "will the policy/proposal protect and enhance priority habitats and the habitats of protected species (NPPF para. 174); achieve a net gain in biodiversity (NPPF paras. 170, 174, 175); support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks /corridors (NPPF paras. 170, 171); support access to green open spaces and nature?"	The Assessment Framework (Table 2) was modified by the inclusion of specific criteria as requested to the section.
3.	Conserving and Enhancing Chilterns AONB	We recommend specifically mentioning conserving and enhancing the Chilterns AONB (Table 2) in an objective and advise you add specific	The specific criteria were brought forward into the SEA and criteria added to Table 2.

		criteria or assessment questions to ensure great weight is given to protecting the Chilterns AONB, in line with Paragraph 172 of the revised NPPF. Criteria would include: “is the development site within a protected landscape or its setting; is the site sufficiently screened; does the site impact on important views into and out from the AONB or its setting?”	
STATUTORY CONSULTEE: HISTORIC ENGLAND			
Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/recommendation	Action taken
1.	General comment	We are disappointed to see no mention of the historic environment of the parish in the Vision but welcome the third key objective in principle. However, we would prefer “conserve and enhance” which are the words used in the National Planning Policy Framework and “significance, character and appearance” (“significance” is what is important about a heritage asset).	Wording amended as requested.
2.	North Stoke Conservation Area	We believe that the North Stoke Conservation Area is also within the parish and we would therefore welcome the inclusion of a reference to conserving and enhancing the special interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area, either within the third objective or as a new objective. When was the Conservation Area designated? What is its special interest (the reason for its designation?) Is there a Character Appraisal and/or Management Plan for the Conservation Area? If not, then this should also be identified as a gap in the baseline, and this could be another project to contribute to the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan.	The Conservation Area was added to the Assessment Framework and brought forward to the SEA. However, little is known of the details as the documentation was lost in an Office fire.

3.	Characterisation Study	Historic England considers that Neighbourhood Development Plans should be underpinned by a thorough understanding of the character and special qualities of the area covered by the Plan. We therefore suggest a characterisation study as a precursor to neighbourhood plans as such a study can help inform locations and detailed design of proposed new development, identify possible townscape improvements and establish a baseline against which to measure change.	The character and special qualities of the Parish are described in the Baseline Report and have not been pursued further within the SEA exercise.
4.	Listed Buildings	We welcome paragraph 2.7 in principle. However, we consider that it should be a more comprehensive picture of the historic environment in the parish. For example, it could note that there are 48 listed buildings in the parish, two of which are Grade I and three Grade II*.	Additional information has been added including the recommended text.
5.	Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record	Reference should be made to the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record for details of archaeological finds in the parish, some of which may be of national importance.	Reference has been included.
6.	Built Heritage	We welcome the sustainability objective: <i>“To conserve and enhance the Parish’s built heritage for its historic significance and important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place”</i> , although we would suggest omitting “built” as not all heritage is built.	Done.
7.	Indicators	We would expect the Scoping Report to set out the indicators or measures by which the policies and proposals of the Plan can be assessed against the objectives and sub-objectives. The Historic England advice on Strategic Environmental Assessments and the Historic Environment contains a range of possible indicators for assessing and monitoring the performance of	The recommended indicators have been added to the discussion in the SEA on the Assessment Framework.

		<p>the policies and proposals of the Plan against a historic environment objective. Not all of these will be relevant, but we suggest that the following be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number and percentage of different heritage assets at risk; • the percentage of planning applications where archaeological investigations were required prior to approval; and • the percentage of planning applications where archaeological mitigation strategies were developed and implemented. 	
STATUTORY CONSULTEE: ENVIRONMENT AGENCY			
Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/recommendation	Action taken
1.	General comment	No comments	None.
CONSULTEE: CHILTERNES CONSERVATION BOARD			
Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/recommendation	Action taken
1.	General advice	<p>1. Refer to the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, using it to identify and describe the landscape areas within Crowmarsh Parish (LCA 4 River Thames Corridor and LCA 6 Central Vale Fringes.</p> <p>2. Add mapping to show AONB boundary and other designations in the Parish.</p> <p>3. Add more emphasis on the Ridgeway National Trail and Grim's Ditch as nationally important recreation opportunities and historic environment assets.</p>	<p>1. Done</p> <p>2. Done</p> <p>3. Done</p>
2.	Assessment Framework	In Table 2 Assessment Framework expand the landscape objective to refer to AONB as a nationally protected landscape. It is not just a	Done

		vital lung for the parish and its neighbours as it currently states.	
3.	(Old) Policy CRP6	Policy CRP6 beware of policy wording supporting new single dwellings “at” North Stoke and Mongewell, this could cause outwards settlement creep. Add “within the existing settlements of North Stoke and Mongewell, housing development for infill, single dwellings...”	This has been amended.
4.	Cumulative Effects	The SEA will need to assess the cumulative effects of other planned developments e.g. at Wallingford and Cholsey.	This has been added.
COMMUNITY AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS			
1.	General Comments	Little feedback received but all was positive and encouraging.	No action required.

1.7 The objective of the Crowmarsh NDP is to provide planning policies that will help sustain vibrant communities in a rural setting. The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan contains policies relating to: village boundaries and infill development, future housing mix and tenure, allocation of land for employment use, conservation and the environment and heritage – listed buildings, and recognition of green spaces. The plan is supported by evidence studies including a housing needs assessment and a landscape survey and impact assessment (Appendices 1 to 5 attached to the Plan).

2. BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

2.1 A key condition of the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan is that it 'does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations'. One of these obligations is Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'. This is often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. The SEA Directive 'seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes'. The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan needs to be compatible with the SEA Directive which is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (the 'SEA Regulations').

2.2 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations require the likely effects on the environment of implementing a development proposal to be identified, described and assessed. The information to be given includes:

The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

Interrelationships between factors affecting the environment and cumulative effects therefrom are assessed in Section 6 of this report.

2.3 The assessment process involves a simple evaluation of the environmental impacts of the Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and the proposed Plan Policies:

- An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan, and relationship with other relevant plans or programmes.
- The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment, highlighting any aspects currently under threat.
- The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected by the Plan.
- Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
- The environmental protection objectives, established at international, community or national levels, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.
- The likely significant effects on the local environment.
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan.
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information.
- A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

2.4 The methodology for the assessment is intended to be proportionate to the task of assessing the development proposals of a Neighbourhood Plan in a rural Parish. A summary of the process, as derived from the 2004 guidance is contained in Table 2. This report deals with sections 1 to 6 in Stage B and the preparation of the SEA report, Stage C, to form the draft SEA report.

Table 2 The SEA process

<p>Scoping</p>	<p>STAGE A: This stage sets the context of the assessment by identifying the baseline data and establishing the scope of the assessment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of relevant plans, policies and programmes. Any existing requirements that need to be taken into account or incorporated into the plan are identified. 2. Review of baseline information. Data about environmental, social and economic issues is collected, together with an indication as to how this may change in the future without the plan or programme under preparation. 3. Identification of Sustainability Issues. The review of plans and policies, together with the baseline information are used to identify the key sustainability issues which could impact the plan. 4. Development of the SEA Framework. The assessment criteria used to assess the impact of the plan or programme. 5. Identification of initial plan options. Taking into account best practice initial identification of options and reasonable alternatives undertaken. 6. Consultation. On the scope and alternatives for assessment it is necessary to consult statutory consultees, that is Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>STAGE B: This stage involves the assessment of the any likely significant effects of the plan policies (and any reasonable alternatives) on the key sustainability issues identified.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finalisation of the Plan options and alternatives for testing. 2. Testing the Plan Objectives against the SEA Framework. The Plan Objectives are tested to ensure compliance sustainability principles. 3. Evaluation of plan options and alternatives. The SEA Framework is used to assess various plan options by identifying the potential sustainability effects of the plan and assist in the refinement of the policies. 4. Predicting and evaluating the effects of the plan. To predict the significant effects of the plan and assist in the refinement of the policies. 5. Consideration of ways to mitigate adverse effects and maximise beneficial effects. To ensure that all potential mitigation measures and measures for maximising beneficial effects are identified. 6. Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Plan. To detail the means by which the sustainability performance of the plan can be assessed and monitored. <p>This assessment is used to feed into the development of a plan or programme to help ensure the most sustainable option is selected. The SEA framework is also used to access the sustainability implications of the draft policies and the results used to inform policy development.</p>
<p>Reporting</p>	<p>STAGE C: Preparation of the SEA Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings of the assessment together with how it has influenced the development of the plan are identified and set out in a draft environmental report together with the recommendations on how to

	<p>prevent, reduce, or offset any significant negative impacts arising from the plan.</p> <p>STAGE D: Consultation – seek representations from consultation bodies and the general public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an ongoing process. Consultation of the draft SEA/SA Report is undertaken and used to influence further iterations of the sustainability appraisal process.
Adoption and monitoring	<p>STAGE E: Monitoring</p> <p>Following adoption of the Plan, the significant effects of implementing the plan are measured and any adverse effects are responded to. The results are fed into the future plans and sustainability appraisals.</p>

3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OBJECTIVES AND OTHER PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan vision is to conserve the rural nature of the Parish while allowing necessary development of housing and employment opportunities.

THE PARISH VISION

The Parish is a rural area with three settlements: Crowmarsh Gifford, North Stoke and Mongewell. The population of Crowmarsh Gifford and the hamlet of Mongewell will grow because of the housing developments already approved, most yet to be built; these will double the housing stock within the Parish. There will be increased availability of local employment opportunities on land allocated for this purpose at Howbery Park, Crowmarsh Gifford. New infill housing within the designated village footprints will focus on social housing and apartment type housing for the elderly. The managed landscape of the greater part of the Parish is not developed for housing because it is within, or it is overseen by, the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or it lies within the Thames Corridor flood plain. Heritage is protected and the setting of listed buildings and other heritage assets enhanced through any new development. Similarly, new development will provide an increase in biodiversity.

3.2 The Objectives of the proposed Planning Policies are to promote Crowmarsh Gifford, Mongewell and North Stoke villages as home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment and to its neighbours, including the town of Wallingford, a place which has its own identity and in which any future development adds to the character of the village and to the quality of life of its residents. The Plan strives to preserve the rural character of the Parish and to uphold relevant national and regional strategies and policies for the countryside. The Policies prescribe the conservation of the rural aspects of the Parish and the rural setting of its communities and their valued landscapes, while allowing growth of housing stock to satisfy the current housing needs. Available and deliverable land is allocated for employment use.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

- Promote Crowmarsh Parish as home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment and to its neighbours, including the town of Wallingford.
- Develop a Parish which has its own identity in which any future housing and employment use development adds to the quality of life of its residents.
- Preserve the rural character of the Parish, and of its two smaller villages, North Stoke and Mongewell, and uphold relevant national and regional strategies and policies for safeguarding the countryside.
- Promote the development of housing suitable for those on modest budgets and for the elderly.
- Preserve the green spaces within Crowmarsh Gifford and enhance heritage protection within the Parish.

3.3 The proposed Plan Policies are:

- **Policy 1: Village boundaries and infill development**

To provide a solid curtilage to the three villages in the Parish within which infill and change of use can occur but outside which future major development needs to be appropriate to a countryside location and comply with the requirements of the Chilterns Conservation Board. The boundaries exclude Flood Zones 2 and 3, and are respectful of Listed Buildings.

- **Policy 2: Housing mix and tenure**

To provide a clear preference for 2 bed dwellings and one bed apartment style homes.

- **Policy 3: Land at Howbery Park, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford**

To allocate 2.1 ha of land at Howbery Park for employment use.

- **Policy 4: Conservation of the environment**

To preserve the rural character of the Parish with particular regard to the Chilterns AONB, the Thames Corridor and the North Stoke Conservation area.

- **Policy 5: Locally listed buildings**

To locally list three buildings in the Parish which are of special merit.

- **Policy 6: Green spaces**

To designate Riverside Meadows, below Wallingford Bridge, as a Local Green Space and designate three Areas within Crowmarsh Gifford village as Community Green Spaces.

3.4 In the absence of such a Plan, development could proceed piecemeal without any vision of a coherent and sustainable outcome. The Plan is designed to ensure that the Parish remains sustainable and as robust as it can be in order to face the next 15 years and ensure the wellbeing and welfare of its parishioners.

3.5 Pressures from adjacent parishes and from the proposed expansion of the housing stock in Wallingford Town, Benson and Cholsey could impact the sustainability of Crowmarsh Parish. Conversely over-development of Crowmarsh Parish could impact neighbouring areas, notably Wallingford. These developments will put pressure on infrastructure and the environment, e.g. increased traffic congestion, air quality, impact on landscape particularly in the setting of the Chilterns AONB and the adjacent North Wessex AONB located west of the River Thames.

4. LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS AND ISSUES

4.1 Crowmarsh Parish (Figure 1) borders Benson Parish to the north, Nuffield to the east, Ipsden to the south east, South Stoke to the south; across the River Thames is Cholsey Parish to the south west and Wallingford Town to the west. Wallingford Town traverses the river at Wallingford Bridge into what would otherwise be Crowmarsh Parish with a small bridgehead and the adjacent Riverside Park area which was gifted to Wallingford Town Council.

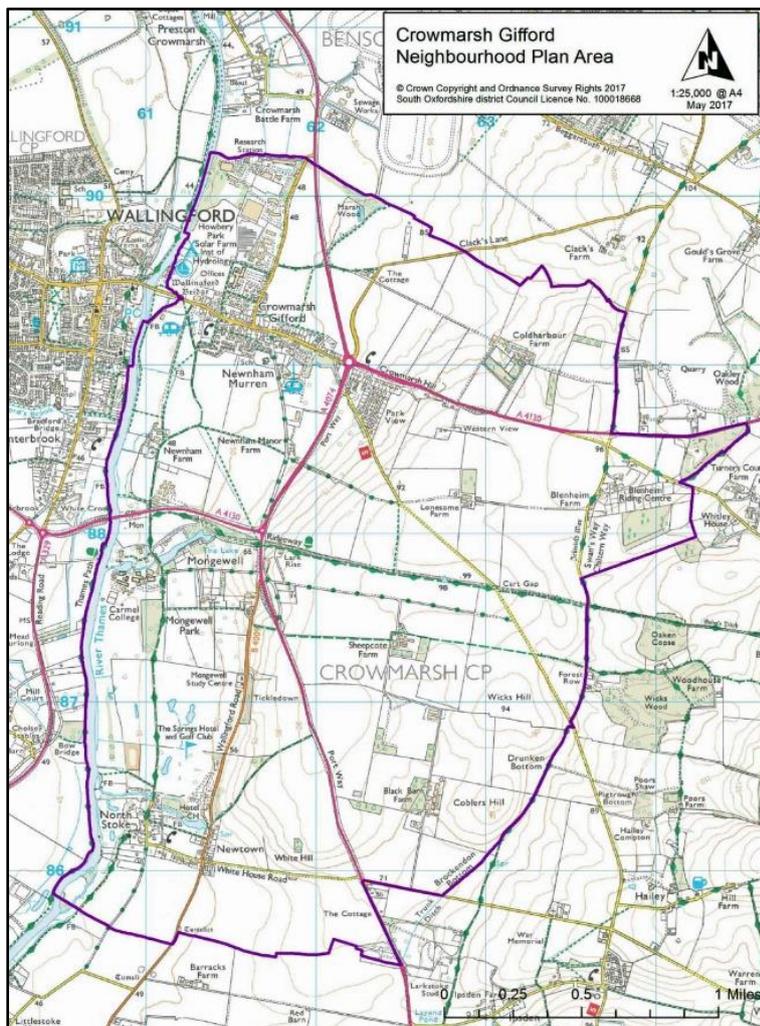


Figure 1 Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan designated area [Ordnance Survey Rights 2019: CPC Licence Number 100050856]

4.2 Crowmarsh Gifford is designated as one of the ‘Larger Villages’ within the curtilage of South Oxfordshire District Council. Crowmarsh Parish includes part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the River Thames Corridor and the Central Vale Fringes. Crowmarsh Gifford enjoys access to the market town of Wallingford via the ancient river bridge, but is proudly independent of that town. A landscape character assessment of some of the sites adjacent to Crowmarsh Gifford was carried out in 2015 and provides valuable supporting evidence to the Plan (see <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies>). A landscape character assessment was carried out in 2017

http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=788092192&CODE=4650A3652852911819269B1BB795E501 .

4.3 North Stoke is a smaller rural village, much of it within a Conservation Area, also adjacent to the river. Mongewell is a hamlet centred on Mongewell Spring which includes the buildings of the former Carmel College Jewish Independent School; one building of which is now owned and occupied by Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), the remainder are largely unoccupied. The Parish lies midway between Reading and Oxford.

4.4 Crowmarsh Gifford developed from the cross roads of the north-south Oxford to Reading road and the east-west Henley to Wallingford road which continues west towards Didcot. Only two of several pubs survive in the village, both near the cross roads, The Bell and the Queen's Head. The Street is the main east-west highway, carrying traffic from Wallingford Bridge uphill towards a busy roundabout crossing the A4074, the Oxford to Reading road, which also separates the Crowmarsh Hill settlement from the rest of the village.

4.5 Crowmarsh Gifford village currently consists of 542 dwellings, mainly comprising detached and semi-detached houses and maisonettes and some flats; North Stoke has 100 dwellings and Mongewell has just 47. There are 48 listed buildings in the Parish, two of which are Grade I and three Grade II*, the remainder being Grade II. None of them are known to be at risk. The key population statistics for Crowmarsh Gifford (2011 census) were:

All residents	1207
Number of households	483
Average household size	2.53
Residents in households	1199
Residents in communal living	8
Average age	39.8 years

The distribution of dwelling types according to the number of bedrooms was:

1 bedroom	15
2 bedrooms	115
3 bedrooms	210
4 bedrooms	110
5 or more bedrooms	33

4.6 The Parish hosts a large scientific campus at Howbery Park which is the home of HR Wallingford and which now hosts a large contingent of staff from the Environment Agency as well as other smaller, mainly scientific units. Next door, also in Benson Lane, is the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology with staff from the British Geological Survey and the Meteorological Office embedded within it. On the new By Pass to the south of Crowmarsh, Nosworthy Way, is CABI. Collectively these scientific institutions employ in excess of 600 technical and support staff. However, few of these people live in the Parish with most staff commuting in from surrounding towns, principally, Didcot, Reading and Oxford.

4.7 Crowmarsh Gifford has two builders' merchants, both located in The Street, and an agricultural merchant situated in the middle of Lower Betts Field on the west side of the A4074. Crowmarsh Gifford also has a village shop. It is otherwise dependent on retail facilities in Wallingford, Benson and Cholsey though many residents prefer to use larger supermarkets in Didcot and elsewhere or order their

weekly shop via the internet. Crowmarsh Gifford is seen in planning terms is sometimes seen as part of Greater Wallingford, a concept fiercely opposed by villagers

4.8 Until January 2015 Crowmarsh Gifford was also home to the South Oxfordshire and Vale District councils at which time, they were forced to move out of their premises in Benson Lane due to an arson attack. They plan to return to a new building at some time in the future.

4.9 Crowmarsh Gifford has a primary school and two pre-schools. The school currently enjoys an OFSTED 'Good' status, and as such makes the Crowmarsh Gifford School catchment a desirable place to live for families with young children. Most of the primary school children progress to secondary school in Wallingford. The primary school is situated on a confined site with no room for further expansion. Parking is a problem during the morning and afternoon arrival and departure of children accompanied by parents.

4.10 The village of Crowmarsh Gifford has a recreation ground with a large pavilion and a village hall. These are under the ownership and management of Crowmarsh Parish Council or trusts and committees. The village hall is a popular venue for a variety of social activities ranging from Beavers to U3A, exercise activities as well as children's parties, occasional wedding receptions and an annual music festival. The recreation ground offers a childrens' play area, tennis courts, and a basketball square and is home to Crowmarsh Youth Football Club which hosts an annual summer Six-a-Side Tournament weekend, and to the village cricket team. The pavilion not only offers changing facilities but has a large meeting room which is popular with a variety of social groups such as the Photography Club as well as exercise clubs. Adjacent to the recreation ground is a nature area with good footpath access. North Stoke has a village hall and a recreation area. Other leisure facilities at North Stoke include The Springs Golf Club which currently has a membership of over 400.

4.11 Tourism focuses on visitors to both Wallingford and the Chiltern Hills. Some tourists arrive by boat via the river, the majority by road. Crowmarsh Gifford offers two non-residential caravan and camping sites, both close to Wallingford Bridge and a third at Newnham Manor. There is currently one bed and breakfast address in Crowmarsh Parish but no hotels.

4.12 The closest mainline railway station is Cholsey. However, Didcot, Goring, Henley, Reading and Oxford can all be reached by bus transfer via Wallingford; there is a half hourly bus service through Crowmarsh to Reading, hourly to Henley, and every 20 minutes to Oxford during weekdays, hourly on Sundays.

4.13 The Parish contains riverside meadows that sustain important grassland for cattle. To the east the higher ground offers areas of Grade II Agricultural land which supports arable cultivation. A small part of the Parish is given over to woodland providing a diverse environment and a range of habitats.

4.14 Much of Crowmarsh Parish lies beneath the scarp slope of the Chiltern Hills in the Thames river flood plain. During prolonged wet weather groundwater draining through the chalk beneath the hills backs up in the flood plain as the river level rises. This makes certain areas of Crowmarsh and Mongewell liable to flood, with an unacceptably shallow water table beneath some residential areas. The school at Crowmarsh is on a particularly wet site, exacerbated by a nearby storm drain in Old Reading Road which occasionally overflows towards the school grounds. There is an ephemeral spring in The Street at the top end of Crowmarsh village adjacent to house number 119. This flows down a ditch and then onto the pavement and down the road gully.

4.15 The river flood plain comprises gravel deposits bound in sands, silts and clays with local clay lacustrine lenses. It is an important area not only from a habitat perspective but it is used by the

Environment Agency as a preferred area of flooding during periods of high river stage. Up to a certain level the river can be controlled by closing the weir at Goring allowing the river to rise overbank up to Benson Lock. This provides a safeguard for housing within the flood plain in lower reaches of the river, notably at Purley-on-Thames. No housing or other infrastructure is at risk in the Goring to Benson stretch of the river, including those parts of the flood plain within Crowmarsh Parish. It is essential, therefore, that this area is maintained as meadow for this purpose.

4.16 Local fauna include hedgerows of blackthorn and hawthorn, a range of indigenous trees, including black poplar; few elm trees survived the recent Dutch Elm Disease outbreak. A particular feature in the area is the occurrence of large balls of mistletoe slung high up on selected species. The riverside area is home to muntjac deer, whereas the larger deer are a common sight within the Chilterns. Foxes and badgers are distributed across the Parish area, foxes now particularly keen on the waste bins at the Riverside Park area at Crowmarsh Gifford during the early hours of the morning. Bats are commonplace and there is a wide variety of bird life including the now common red kite, while the much rarer kingfisher and heron work the river. There are many other species common to the area.

4.17 The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty secures the protection of a large area of Chalk Downland, most of which lies outside the Parish. The majority of the Parish lies within the AONB and those parts of the Parish not in the AONB are likely to be in the setting of the AONB (Figure 2). The Chilterns AONB is a generally an enclosed or wooded landscape and the Chilterns escarpment in South Oxfordshire is particularly impressive, while the beech woods are justifiably famous.

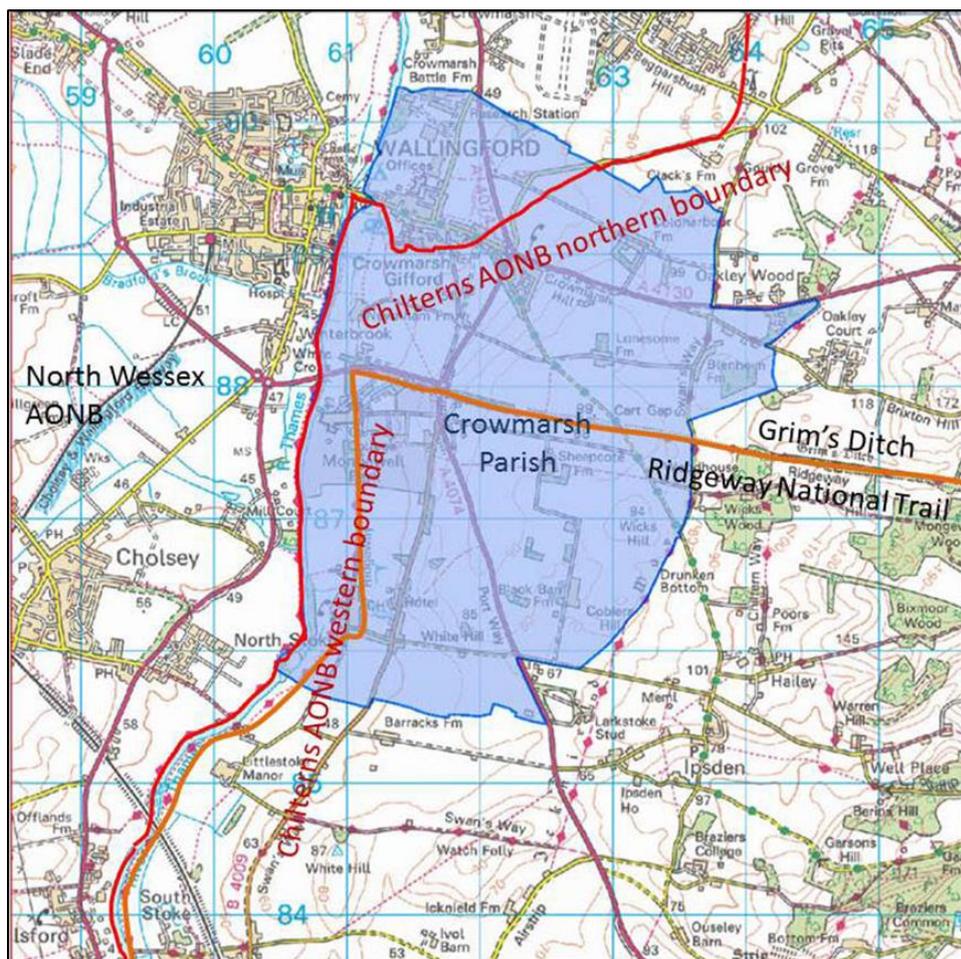


Figure 2 Chilterns AONB, Ridgeway National trail and Grim's Ditch [Ordnance Survey Rights 2019: CPC Licence Number 100050856]

4.18 Crowmarsh Gifford and Mongewell lie in full view of the Downs and great care is needed to ensure that any development in these areas of the Parish is sympathetic to the guidelines controlling this defined Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, land within the controlled area that can be designated as degraded, i.e. part brownfield, or in need of redevelopment can be considered for development if this would increase its visual and amenity appearance (Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019, Policy D5).

4.19 Crowmarsh Gifford has a long and exciting history. After the Norman Conquest of England most of the land was granted to Walter Giffard, later Earl of Buckingham (hence Crowmarsh Gifford). In due course, it came into the possession of William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke and remained with his heirs until later passing back to the Crown. Nearby Newnham Manor was originally granted by William the Conqueror to Miles Crispin, but by 1428 was owned by Thomas Chaucer. After his death it was passed to his daughter Alice, wife of William de la Pole, 4th Earl of Suffolk. In 1139 King Stephen built a wooden fort in Crowmarsh Gifford. This was the first of a series of forts built to oppose Wallingford Castle, which supported his cousin Matilda during the civil war known as The Anarchy. The forts were probably dismantled as a result of the Treaty of Wallingford of 1153. The fort at Crowmarsh Gifford included a 20 m wide ditch surrounding an enclosure measuring 50 by 35 m.

4.20 The Church of England parish church of Saint Mary Magdalene was built in about 1120. The north door, south door, three windows in the south wall, chancel arch and font are all Norman. A north transept with a pointed arch was added in about 1200. The building was restored in 1836 and 1868. Musket holes in the back (east door) are said to result from Cromwell ousting members of the Wallingford garrison from sanctuary in the church during the siege of Wallingford Castle. There are also two redundant churches of note in the Parish, although that at Newnham Murren is still consecrated.

4.21 In 1701 agriculturist Jethro Tull invented his revolutionary seed drill at Howbery Farm. In 1770 Mongewell Park was acquired by Shute Barrington, then Bishop of Llandaff. He was buried in Mongewell Church. The Jacobean country house Howbery Court (Howbery Park) was built in about 1850 for local MP William Seymour Blackstone.

4.22 North Stoke is a small village of approximately 100 homes, the majority of which are situated between the B4009 and the River Thames. There is a small amount of ribbon development along the B4009. It is not on mains drainage and all dwellings have cesspits. It has a small village hall, a playing field and a church, but no other community facilities.

4.23 Mongewell is a hamlet with no facilities. The former Jewish public school of Carmel College, which closed in the early 1990s occupies the majority of the hamlet. The ancient Grim's Ditch transverses the hamlet. There are a number of listed buildings in the college grounds. The majority of the 47 homes are the former staff accommodation for the college. In 2016 South Oxfordshire District Council approved an application for 166 residential units to redevelop the former college. Work on this site has yet to start.

4.24 The Parish is rich in artefacts that reflect its important heritage. Grim's Ditch, which forms part of the Ridgeway National Trail, is a scheduled ancient monument. The Ridgeway National Trail and Grim's Ditch are nationally important recreation opportunities and historic environment assets. Guidelines and policy statements from the various guardians of the countryside protect the land primarily for agricultural use and recreation.

5. THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

5.1 The Plan Objective and proposed Plan Policies are evaluated against an assessment framework. The spatial strategy preferred for the allocation of employment use land at Howbery Park, for example, is assessed with this framework (see Site Assessment Crowmarsh Gifford report - Appendix 5 attached to the Plan). There are two reasonable alternatives available at present; additional land may be put forward at Howbery Park in the future.

5.2 The environmental impact of the Plan can be assessed with the SEA Framework. This in turn leads to the identification of initial plan options taking into account best practice, and testing reasonable alternatives to derive an optimum degree of sustainability coupled with least impact on the environment. To assess the sustainability performance of the Plan, an outline framework that best satisfies the concerns of the statutory consultees and of the community has been developed (Table 3) during the scoping stage of the assessment (Appendix 7b attached to the Plan).

5.3 This framework is intended to target each policy message and review the sustainability objective for each one. The Framework enables a number of comparisons to be made to identify positive and negative impacts. However, issues of infrastructure such as schooling and medical provision are expected to keep pace with development and are not considered further in terms of sustainability.

5.4 Note that no attention has been paid to climate change in the assessments because the likely impact on the Parish remains uncertain, although flood frequency and duration are both predicted to increase in the future.

Table 3 Assessment framework

Key Messages from Scoping Stage	SEA (Sustainability) Objective
<i>Improve the mix of housing size and tenure</i>	To help ensure suitable homes are available to all sectors of the community – ensure there will be a supply of affordable homes, and homes suitable for the for the elderly as well as homes suitable for families – encourage infill development accordingly.
<i>Preservation and enhancement of the rural landscape and sense of place</i>	To conserve and enhance the rural nature of the parish and particularly areas within the AONB which is a nationally protected landscape. To protect and maintain the network of rights of way. To protect and maintain important views, including those from the main settlements. To conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area at North Stoke. To achieve a net gain in biodiversity, support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks/corridors, and support access to green open spaces and nature

<i>Flood Risk Hazard</i>	To ensure flood risk from all sources, including groundwater flooding, is managed effectively and sustainably and that no new developments are built on Flood Zones 2 and 3 - does a proposal impact land liable to flood, if so what mitigation is proposed?
<i>Threats to biodiversity and opportunities to enhance it</i>	To conserve and enhance biodiversity and offer protection to species under threat- will the policy/proposal protect and enhance priority habitats and the habitats of protected species?
<i>Heritage assets and the historic environment as irreplaceable resources</i>	To conserve and enhance the Parish's heritage for its historic significance, character and appearance and important contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place. How many heritage assets at risk, what percentage of planning applications required archaeological investigations prior to approval, and, what percentage of planning applications required archaeological mitigation strategies to be developed and implemented?
<i>Improved traffic management within and through the Parish</i>	To benefit the wellbeing of the community by the management of traffic congestion – does a proposal encourage walking and cycling or public transport instead of a short car journey?
<i>Enhance the setting of new housing and conservation of rural setting</i>	To retain existing trees and hedgerows and design new landscaping to conserve and enhance the established character of the surrounding area - is the site sufficiently screened; does the site impact on important views into and out from the AONB or its setting?

6. ASSESSMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OBJECTIVES

6.1 The likely impact of the basic Objectives of the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan are assessed against the Sustainability Objectives identified in the Assessment Framework (Table 2). The Plan objectives are:

- Promote Crowmarsh Parish as home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment and to its neighbours, including the town of Wallingford.
- Develop a Parish which has its own identity in which any future housing and employment use development adds to the quality of life of its residents.
- Preserve the rural character of the Parish, and of its two smaller villages, North Stoke and Mongewell, and uphold relevant national and regional strategies and policies for safeguarding the countryside.
- Promote the development of housing suitable for those on modest budgets and for the elderly.
- Preserve the green spaces within Crowmarsh Gifford and enhance heritage protection within the Parish.

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives	SEA Objectives						
	Housing mix	Landscape	Flooding	Biodiversity	Heritage	Traffic	Conserve
Thriving community	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Identity and quality	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Rural character	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Housing mix	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Green spaces and heritage	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green

6.2 Each of the Plan Objectives have been assessed against the SEA Objectives to test their sustainability through the likely impact the Plan Objectives will have on the environment. These are: positive impact (green), neutral impact (yellow) and, negative impact (red). Some negative impacts can be mitigated, for example, screening of new housing sites to protect the setting of the AONB and the Thames Corridor. The assessment provides assessments for all possible sub-divisions likely to influence the SEA Objectives; conservation, for example, considers protected landscape, trees and hedgerows, and other flora, fauna, setting of the AONB and feel of place, whereas flooding can be

subdivided into flood occurrence defined by the Flood Zone and historical evidence regarding likely groundwater flooding and impacts thereon. The final assessment is an aggregate of the of the sub-component assessments.

6.3 Plan Objective a thriving community strongly linked to the environment, has a positive impact on all the SEA objectives save for landscape and traffic where there is no impact as it is likely to be neutral. The positive impacts reflect a thriving community interacting with, and respecting its environment.

6.4 Plan Objective parish identity and quality, has a positive impact on all the SEA objectives as the Parish has its own identity and the plan objective requires that any new development should add to the wellbeing of the community.

6.5 Plan Objective preservation of the rural character, effects a largely positive influence on the SEA objectives other than on housing and traffic which are not impacted and, therefore, have a neutral effect. The positive impacts reflect conservation of the rural landscape and protection of the flood zones and their respective diverse fauna and flora, conservation of the setting of heritage assets and the setting of the villages.

6.6 Plan Objective housing mix has a neutral impact on the SEA objectives being a social rather than environmental objective.

6.7 Plan Objective designation of green spaces has a largely positive impact on the SEA objectives, with some of the area allocated as some of the designated Local Green Spaces and Community Green Spaces are in areas of flood risk, their designation is likely to have the additional benefit of retaining areas at risk of flooding as green land. The Local Green Space is sympathetic to the Wallingford Bridge and Wallingford Conservation area. Housing and traffic are unaffected and are, therefore, neutral. Part of the recreation ground Community Green Space is used to promote biodiversity.

6.8 The overall impacts are all neutral (yellow) or positive (green). It is concluded that the Plan objectives are entirely sustainable and that there are no objectives for the plan that will have a negative impact on the environment. Thus, the Plan Objectives are all suitable for inclusion with regard to the sustainability of the environment within the Parish. No mitigation of the plan objectives needs to be identified.

7. ASSESSMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

7.1 The preferred policies of the Plan are designed to avoid any significant, negative environment effects and contribute, in overall terms, to achieving a sustainable pattern of growth and consolidation for the parish, and for Crowmarsh Gifford village. Not all the Plan policies have positive effects. Village boundaries may cause an adverse impact on heritage due to competition for land to develop within the boundaries. Allocation of land for employment use has a small negative impact on traffic; an impact likely to be exacerbated by existing approved developments for housing within and around the Parish. We have tested alternative policies to identify if better sustainability outcomes can be achieved, but those selected have the most favourable outcomes.

Policy Number	Neighbourhood Plan Policies	SEA Objectives							
		Housing mix	Landscape	Flooding	Biodiversity	Heritage	Traffic	Conserve	
1	Village boundaries	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green
2	Housing mix and tenure	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
3	Land at Howbery Park	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow
4	Conservation of environment	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
5	Locally listed buildings	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
6	Green spaces	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green

7.2 The impacts of Policy 1 are positive (green) or neutral (yellow) while the impact on heritage is both positive and negative. Designation of village boundaries, has a positive effect on the SEA objective for landscape by constraining the built areas, on flooding because the boundaries exclude Flood Zones 2 and 3, on conservation of the rural setting of the Parish. There is a positive impact on Heritage because the boundaries respect existing listed buildings and their settings. However, infill development could put pressure on land within the boundaries and consequently could negatively impact listed buildings and their settings, hence the contrary shared negative impact against Heritage – possible remedial action is identified in para 7.8 below. Plan 1 does not impact housing mix and traffic and they are show as neutral effect.

7.3 Policy 2, housing mix and tenure, has a neutral impact on the environmental SEA Objectives, and for the housing mix objective the policy specifies a mix of housing and tenure which was composed to meet this objective.

7.4 Policy 3, allocation of employment use land at Howbery Park has a neutral impact on SEA objectives for housing mix (a social objective) and a neutral impact on landscape and conservation because the preferred site is well screened from viewpoints in the adjacent AONB and elsewhere.

Impact on flooding of adjacent land is potentially negative due to runoff from hard standings and roofs on the site, loss of biodiversity is potentially negative due to reduced green space, heritage is negative because there is a potential risk of adversely impacting the setting of Howbery Manor, and traffic is negative due to increased workforce commuting into and off the site; remedial action is described in the Policy to counter these impacts (see para 7.8 below).

7.5 Policy 4, conservation of the environment has no impact on the housing mix or traffic objectives for which it is neutral. Conservation has a positive effect on the remaining SEA objectives: landscape because conservation will protect it, flooding because conservation of woodlands inhibits overland flow and delays recharge to groundwater, biodiversity because conservation protects existing ecology and habitat, heritage because conservation helps safeguard the setting of listed buildings, and this policy was written to satisfy the conservation objective.

7.6 Policy 5, locally listed buildings adds to the safeguarding of local heritage and has a positive impact on SEA Objective for heritage because the settings of these buildings of local special merit will be protected and for conservation for the same reason. The impacts are otherwise neutral – the policy has no impact on housing mix, landscape, flooding, biodiversity and traffic.

7.7 Policy 6, designation of green spaces has a neutral effect on SEA Objectives housing mix and traffic but a positive effect on the other SEA Objectives: landscape because they add to the open areas within and surrounding built areas, flooding because the Local Green Space and the playing fields at Crowmarsh Gifford (Community Green Space) both include Flood Zones 2 and 3 and protect them from development which could inhibit flood water transport, biodiversity by preserving the water meadows of the Local Green Space and the wildlife part of the recreation ground, heritage because the Local Green Space respects the Wallingford Conservation Area and the ancient bridge, and conservation due to the protection of the water meadows and the wildlife area of the recreation ground.

7.8 Mitigation of the potential risk of degrading the settings of listed buildings in the villages by competition of land caused by the designated village curtilage will be required. A clause within Policy 1 needs to state:

- That development enhances the significance of the setting of the listed buildings in close proximity to the site.

7.9 Mitigation of the negative effects of employment use land allocation can be made through clauses included in Policy 3 to ensure:

- That a flood risk assessment and sustainable drainage strategy (SUDS) can demonstrate how the development will not increase surface water or fluvial flood risk on any adjoining land.
- That a biodiversity strategy is prepared which delivers a 'net gain' in overall biodiversity value on site.
- That development conserves and enhances the significance of the setting of the listed buildings in close proximity to the site.
- That a transport assessment is prepared with the development plan to satisfactorily manage its traffic effects on the road network and to encourage and enable improvements to sustainable transport methods.

7.10 The employment use sites available at Howbery Park (Figure 3), (see Appendix 5 attached to the Plan for details) have also been tested against the SEA Objectives. There are two sites from the SHLAA and SHELAA exercises known as CRO3 and CRO4. The southern part of CRO3 and the whole of CRO4

are the sites preferred for industrial use development by Howbery Park Estate (Figure 3). However, only the 0.28 ha portion of CRO3 denoted by a blue rectangle is assessed as this size of allocation is compatible with the Emerging Local Plan 2034.



Figure 3 Potential employment use sites CRO3 and CRO4, Howbery Park

	Available employment use sites	SEA Objectives						
		Housing mix	Landscape	Flooding	Biodiversity	Heritage	Traffic	Conserve
1	CRO3 southern portion blue rectangular area	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
2	CRO4 Solar panel farm	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow

7.11 Both impact the SEA Objectives in a similar way. The potential sites have a neutral impact on SEA objectives for housing mix (a social objective) and at CRO3 a neutral impact on landscape and conservation because this site is well screened from viewpoints in the adjacent AONB, the river and elsewhere. At site CRO4, however, there is a negative impact on landscape as the site is overlooked from the river and the Thames Path. In addition, both sites are within the setting of the Grade II listed building Howbery Manor, CRO3 especially so. Impact on flooding of adjacent land is potentially negative at both sites due to runoff from hard standings and roofs, loss of biodiversity is potentially negative due to reduced green space, traffic is negative due to increased workforce commuting into and off the site, and conservation is potentially negative due to loss of green space.

7.12 Overall site CRO3 is preferred as it is not overlooked from the river Thames. The sites otherwise have the same impact on the SEA objectives although special attention needs to be given for development within CRO3 in order to conserve and enhance the setting of Howbery Manor. Site CRO3, the blue rectangular area in Figure 3, is available and deliverable. Site CRO4 is occupied by a solar panel farm operated outside the direct control of the landowner and is neither available nor deliverable during the tenure of the Plan. Site CRO3 is, therefore, taken forward to the Plan as the available employment use site.

7.13 Mitigation of possible negative impacts on the SEA objectives caused by the development of site CRO3 will be enabled by insertion of intended and expected outcomes in Policy 3 as described in para 7.9 above.

8. ASSESSMENT OF REASONABLE POLICY ALTERNATIVES

8.1 Alternative and additional policy statements considered for inclusion in the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan have also been assessed against the SEA Objectives. There were two such policies:

Housing land allocation in the AONB at Crowmarsh Gifford, south of Newnham Manor. This was assessed as having a negative impact on the landscape objective with particular regard to the setting of the AONB. There is potential for mitigation so the assessment becomes neutral by requiring screening by trees and provision of a net increase in biodiversity through preservation of green spaces. Potential negative impacts on biodiversity and conservation could be reduced to neutral by retention of green spaces and planting of trees at selected locations. The site has subsequently been approved for development by a Planning Inspector incorporating suitable mitigation. However, additional housing allocation over the number already granted approval is also likely to have a negative impact on the Traffic SEA Objective due to increased overall road journeys to and from the new dwellings. A positive impact was likely for housing mix.

Parish development needs including traffic management These had little or no impact on the environment but which had a positive impact against the SEA Objective for traffic management in particular with regard to the well-being of the community. The concept of traffic management, however, is incorporated within Polic3 with regard to employment use land allocation and the need for a traffic impact assessment and the encouragement of sustainable transport methods.

Policy alternatives	SEA Objectives						
	Housing mix	Landscape	Flooding	Biodiversity	Heritage	Traffic	Conserve
More housing	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	Green
Parish needs	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow

8.2 More Housing has a definite negative impact on landscape and traffic which cannot easily be balanced against the positive gain of additional housing in the Parish, bearing in mind that the housing stock is set to double in size within the Parish from existing planning consents for major developments. Given these potential negative impacts this policy is not taken forward to the Plan.

8.3 Parish Needs, regarding traffic management and sustainable transport, has an overall neutral impact other than on the Traffic Objective. As these needs are incorporated in the preferred Plan Policies this specific Policy adds nothing to the overall Plan and is discarded.

8.4 It is concluded that the proposed and preferred Plan Policies are the optimum policies that reflect the needs voiced both by the community and by the Statutory Consultees while also fitting the strictures of the various regulations and guidelines controlling local plan making.

9. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF POLICIES

9.1 Negative impacts have been identified in Policy 1 village boundaries and Policy 3, allocation of employment use land at Howbery Park. Mitigation of the potential negative impact on Listed Buildings caused by Policy 1 has been written into Policy 1, so reducing the impact to neutral. In the case of Policy 3, employment use allocation, mitigation has been included in the policy wording to reduce the impact of development on flooding, biodiversity and heritage to provide a neutral impact on these SEA Objectives. However, the impact on the traffic objective cannot be entirely mitigated in a similar manner other than by the encouragement of sustainable transport opportunities written into the Policy.

9.2 The increase in road journeys to and from the allocated development site is likely to be small, probably of the order of hundreds, perhaps 150 to 200 vehicle movements per day. However, the cumulative addition to anticipated new traffic caused by approved major housing development projects in the Parish could be more significant.

9.3 The 2011 Census states that only 45 households (9%) in Crowmarsh Gifford did not own or have access to a car or van in the 2011 census, while 42% of households had one car, 35% had two cars and the remaining 14%, 17 households in total, had 3 or more cars or vans, i.e. each household on average had access to 1.54 vehicles, a number that is likely to have increased subsequently.

9.4 New housing developments approved and under construction in and around Crowmarsh Gifford within the Parish amount to some 550 new dwellings. The new households could bring at least 825 new vehicles to the area at 1.5 vehicles per dwelling. If each household generates one journey for each vehicle per day, that amounts to an additional 825 journeys. Add this to the new traffic generated by development of allocated land for employment use provides a cumulative increase in journeys of between 975 and 1025 additional journeys. This impact on the present road traffic use will be exacerbated further when the Local Authority return to their site in Benson Lane at Crowmarsh Gifford during the tenure of the Plan, perhaps an additional 200 journeys. Thus, an overall cumulative increase in vehicle journeys in and around Crowmarsh Gifford could amount to about 1200 single trips, many of which will occur at peak usage between 8 and 9 am and between 4.30 and 5.30 pm on weekdays.

9.5 The impact of the additional traffic on local roads has not considered housing development in adjacent parishes and in the town of Wallingford. The impact of this development will likely be considerable on both the main Oxford and Reading road, the Portway bypass and on The Street and Benson Lane in Crowmarsh Gifford village which are used by traffic between Benson and Wallingford.

9.6 It is likely that improved traffic management will be required in order to keep traffic moving through the village of Crowmarsh Gifford along the main Oxford and Reading road through the existing roundabouts at Crowmarsh Gifford, and at the Portway bypass roundabout. Management options are, however, beyond the scope of the Local Neighbourhood Plan but are nevertheless likely to adversely impact the wellbeing of local residents. This adverse impact can be balanced against the various positive impacts on most of the SEA objectives through the Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and the Plan Policies. It is considered that these effects cumulatively have a greater weight than the negative impact caused by increased traffic. Besides, improved traffic management and the increased use of sustainable transport methods will help towards mitigating the impact of increased vehicle traffic.

10. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

10.1 The impact from the Objectives of the Plan against the SEA Objectives are either positive or neutral, and thus sustainable and beneficial to the residents of the Parish. There are no negative impacts. All the Plan Objectives offer some positive impacts. The positive impacts reflect a thriving community interacting with, and respecting its environment. It is concluded that the Plan Objectives are entirely sustainable and that there are no objectives for the Plan that have a negative impact on the environment.

10.2 The impact of the proposed and preferred Policies for the Plan mainly have a positive or neutral impact on the SEA Objectives. There is a potential negative impact on listed buildings from Policy 1 due to competition for building land within village boundaries which could adversely impact the setting of listed buildings. By way of mitigation a requirement to improve the setting in such cases will be written into the Policy. Allocation of land for employment use at Howbery Park, Policy 3, has a potential negative impact on flooding, biodiversity and heritage. Again, appropriate wording to mitigate all three impacts will be incorporated in the Policy. There will be an increase in traffic to and from the new site and partial mitigation is proposed in the Policy by the need for a traffic assessment to manage development and by promoting the use of alternative sustainable transport methods.

10.3 Two alternative Policies have been assessed, the first on allocating additional housing land and a second policy focussing on traffic management and sustainable modes of travel. The first, that of allocating additional land for housing has a negative impact on the landscape and on traffic SEA objectives. The site has since attained planning approval for housing development, therefore, this policy is not taken forward to the Plan. The second alternative policy, traffic management and travel is already incorporated in the preferred policies, has a neutral impact on the SEA Objectives other than traffic and is, therefore, redundant. Neither alternative policy provides a reduced impact on the environment than the preferred Policies and it is the preferred policies that are, therefore, taken forward to the Plan.

10.4 Allocation of land for employment use considers two sites at Howbery Park. Assessment of the two sites against the SEA Objectives shows them to have a similar impact on the environment. One of the two sites has a negative impact on landscape when viewed from the Thames Path and is neither currently available nor deliverable. The other site, land north of Red Kite House, is, therefore, taken forward to the Plan as the preferred site.

10.5 The negative impact on the SEA traffic objective caused by Policy 3, allocation of land for employment use, is caused by a likely increase in vehicle journeys to and from site of between 150 and 200. This may not seem a lot of journeys but when the cumulative impact of traffic is assessed from already approved major housing development in and around Crowmarsh Gifford and the return of the Local Authority to its site in Benson Lane, an overall increase in journeys could amount to some 1200 single trips, many during the morning and evening ingress and egress from the area.

11. MONITORING THE ASSESSMENT

11.1 Monitoring will be undertaken through the monitoring indicators identified in the Adopted Development Plan. Measures that might be taken to monitor the effects highlighted by this Assessment include:

- Housing delivery; housing delivery in rural areas; range of housing types; and affordable housing
- Access to services and facilities of current and future residents; educational attainment; loss of community facilities; new community facilities provided; loss of open space; new open space provided
- Travel to work patterns; average journey times by mode; transport and strategic improvements; traffic bottle necks
- Health profile
- Provisions of new employment; number of employees providing on the job training
- Condition of BAP species
- Number of Listed Buildings at risk (all grades); number of Scheduled Monuments at Risk; number of conservation areas at risk
- Air Quality (PM10, PM2.5 and NOx); quantity of noise complaints due to construction and operation of new developments
- Water efficiency of new developments; energy efficiency of new developments

11.2 Once the Emerging Local Plan 2034 is made and replaces the Adopted Development Plan there may be a need for Crowmarsh Parish Council to revisit the Plan Objectives and Plan Policies in order for them to remain wholly in line with that Plan and of any revisions of guidance issued by Government. Initial monitoring of the Local Neighbourhood Plan will inform that updating process.