

SEA and HRA Final Screening Report

Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review Pre-Submission Draft (Regulation 14)

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Part A: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of screening report

1.1.1. This Screening Report's purpose is to determine whether or not the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 to 2042 requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The screening is carried out on the Pre-Submission Draft, version dated April 2026.

1.1.2. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes prior to their final adoption. An SEA is a tool used internationally to improve the environmental performance of plans so that they can better contribute to sustainable development.

1.1.3. Establishing whether a Neighbourhood Plan considers SEA is an important legal requirement. The Independent Examiner subsequently appointed to consider the Neighbourhood Plan will check that it meets the 'Basic Conditions' set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). One of the Basic Conditions is whether the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with European obligations. This includes the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. This directive is transposed into UK law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004). A Neighbourhood Plan must be compatible with European Union obligations, as incorporated into UK law, to be legally compliant.

1.1.4. In meeting these obligations, the national PPG sets out that an initial screening stage is required to establish whether a Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. As the "responsible body" this report sets out Lewes District Council's conclusions in respect the emerging policy areas of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review.

1.2. Overview of requirements of the SEA Regulations in regard to Neighbourhood Plans

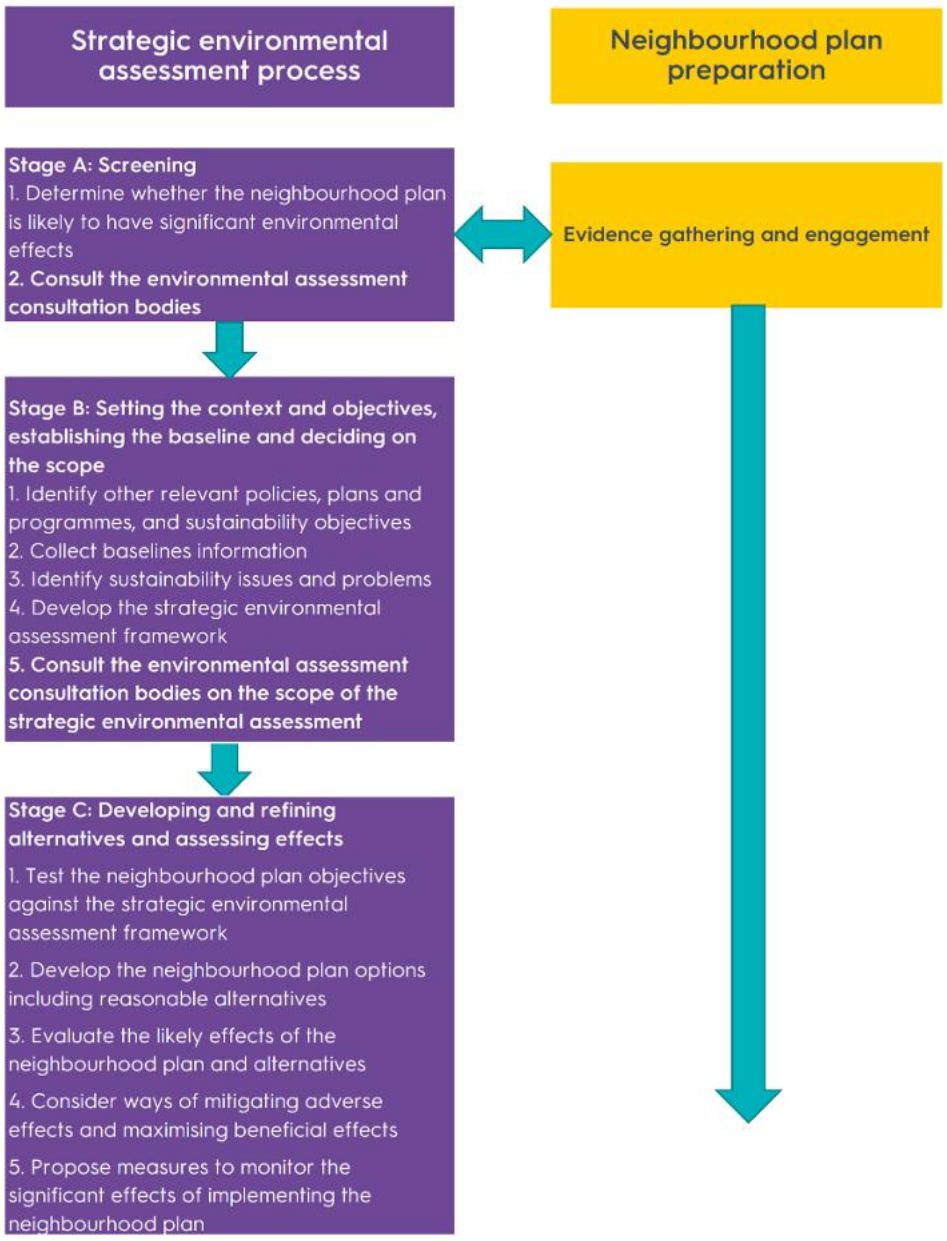
1.2.1. The Government published '**Screening Neighbourhood Plans for Strategic Environmental Assessment A toolkit for neighbourhood planners**' (April 2026), which provides a detailed guidance/toolkit on how an SEA should be carried out.

1.2.2. In accordance with the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) (Regulation 9(1)), Lewes District Council, as the responsible authority, must determine if a plan requires an environmental assessment. This process is commonly referred to as a "screening" assessment.

1.2.3. Where the council determines that SEA is not required, then the council must, under Regulation 9(3), prepare a statement setting out the reasons for this determination. Where it determines that proposals in a Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have significant environmental effects, the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to require a SEA. Draft Neighbourhood Plan proposals should then be assessed to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant Environmental effects as prescribed in Regulation 12 (2) & (3) of the above legislation.

1.3. The SEA screening process

1.3.1. *Figure 1* is taken from the Government's 'Screening Neighbourhood Plans for Strategic Environmental Assessment' toolkit and sets out the SEA process for Neighbourhood Plans.



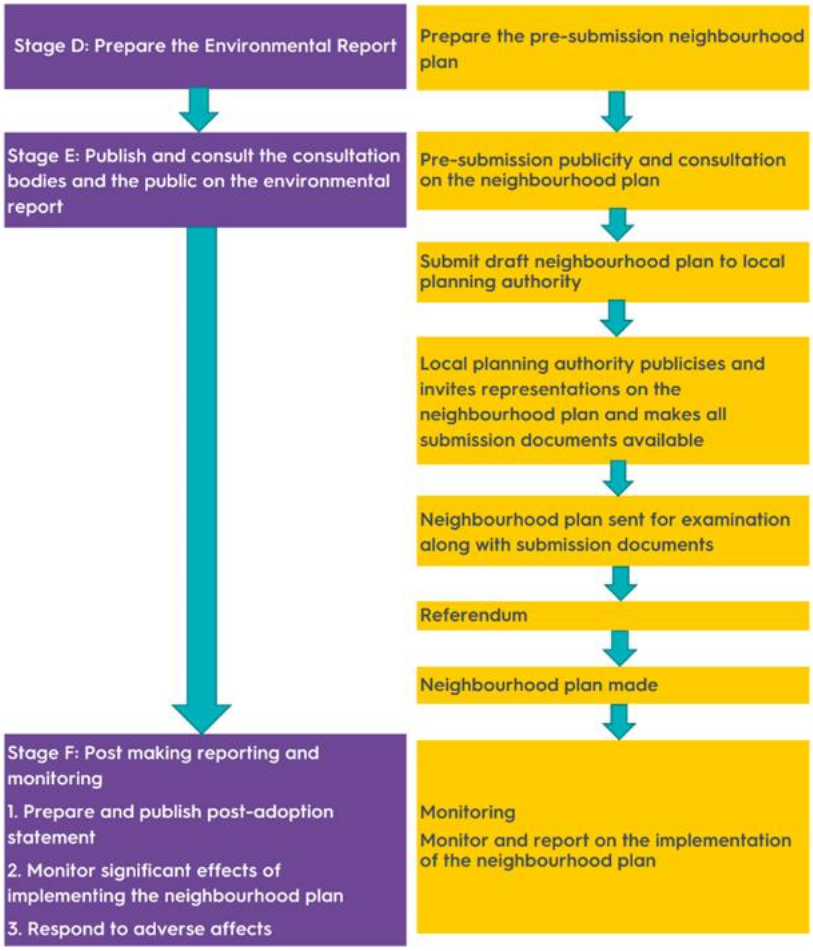


Figure 1: The SEA Process for Neighbourhood Plan

1.3.2. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out that an SEA may be required, where:

- 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; and
- 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.

1.3.3. It remains the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority to ensure that all the regulations appropriate to the nature and scope of a Neighbourhood Plan proposal submitted to it have been met for the it to progress. However, it remains the qualifying body's responsibility to make every effort to ensure the resultant draft Neighbourhood Plan that it submits to the local planning authority:

- Meet each of the basic conditions;
- Has been prepared in accordance with the correct process and all those required to be consulted have been;

- Is accompanied by all the required documents.[1]

1.3.4. Once the process set out in *Figure 1* has been completed, a screening outcome can be reached, and the conclusion can be found in section 4 of this report.

1.4. The methodology for screening report

1.4.1. The Core Strategy was adopted by Lewes District Council on 11 May 2016. The Local Plan Part 2 was adopted in 2020 and forms part of the development plan for that part of Lewes district outside of the South Downs National Park. Adopted supplementary planning documents covering landscape character, sensitivity to renewable energy and design are also published and provide further guidance. As such the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The strategies and policies were tested against the sustainability objectives (and accompanying questions) as published in the final SA.

1.4.2. As part of the emerging new single Local Plan the Council published its' Interim Sustainability Appraisal in December 2025. The Council considers it appropriate to adopt the established SA framework used in the existing and emerging draft Local plans to undertake this screening.

1.4.3. In addition to SA considerations, the Habitats Regulations require that any plan or project, including a Neighbourhood Plan, is assessed to determine whether it is likely to have a significant effect on European designated sites. This process is undertaken through Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening. HRA is required where policies or site allocations could, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, result in impacts on protected habitats or species.

1.4.4. Protected sites under the Habitats Regulations include:

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs):** designated for habitats and species of international importance
- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs):** designated for the protection of wild birds and their habitats
- **Ramsar Sites:** wetlands of international importance

1.4.5. Within Lewes District, there are two SACs: Lewes Downs SAC and Castle Hill SAC. Nearby sites must also be considered which includes the Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site to the east, and Ashdown Forest to the north, which is designated as both an SAC and an SPA.

1.4.6. Accordingly, HRA screening should be undertaken for a Neighbourhood Plan where there is potential for development or policy proposals to affect these sites. Where likely significant effects cannot be ruled out, a full Appropriate Assessment will be required.

[1] *PPG Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 11-031-20150209*

The overarching requirement in both SA/SEA and HRA processes is to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan avoids, mitigates, or otherwise manages any significant adverse effects on the environment, particularly on internationally designated sites.

1.4.7. Schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 refers to the Habitats Directive. The Regulations require Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening to be undertaken (by the qualifying Body) to identify if a Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant impact on nature conservation sites that are of European Article 6 (3) of the EU habitats Directive10 and Regulation 61 of the Habitats and Species Regulations 201011 (as amended) requires that an Appropriate Assessment is carried out on any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European Site.[2]

1.4.8. European Sites are defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2010, and consist of candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. These are also reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF, which also refers to Ramsar sites, which are listed in accordance with the international Ramsar Convention. The NPPF requires decision makers to apply the same protection and process to Ramsar sites as that set out in legislation for European sites.

1.4.9. To fulfil the legal requirements to identify if likely significant effects will occur on European sites through the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan group should request a separate HRA Screening Assessment from the competent authority followed by a screening determination.[3] Lewes District Council is the competent authority, (LPA) for the purpose of determining if further assessment of the implications for European sites is required. Details of the internationally designated sites need to be assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan to have an impact on the sites. The Regulations state that any assessment should be in view of the site's conservation. Any such affect needs to be ascertained, and this can be done at the time the screening opinion is being sought.[4]

[2] PPG Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 11-031-20150209

[3] *http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm*

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made

[4] NPPF para 118 13 Regulation 102A (3) Schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

2. The Neighbourhood Plan Review and neighbourhood area

2.1 Context for the Neighbourhood Plan Review

The review of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan is being carried out at a time when both Lewes District Council and the South Downs national Park are in the midst of preparing a new Local Plans.

The South Downs National Park completed its Regulation 19 Plan in June 2026 with Lewes District Council yet to undertake a Regulation 19 consultation, but having completed its Regulation 18 Phase 2 consultation in February.

Both local planning authorities are seeking to meet the government's 31 December 2026 deadline for submission under the current planning making framework.

Further information on both plans can be found on their websites:

- Lewes District Council: Emerging Local Plan - Lewes and Eastbourne Councils
- South Downs National Park Authority: A New South Downs Local Plan - South Downs National Park Authority

The emerging Lewes District Local Plan 2042 seeks to address the challenges within the District and Neighbourhood Plan Area through a vision-led spatial strategy that directs growth to the most sustainable locations. The strategy is informed by a tiered settlement hierarchy which recognises the different roles and functions of settlements and seeks to align growth with accessibility, infrastructure provision and opportunities for sustainable travel.

By prioritising development in locations where walking, cycling and public transport can be supported, and where infrastructure investment can be effectively delivered, the spatial strategy has the potential to reduce reliance on private car travel, minimise transport-related emissions and improve accessibility to services and employment.

2.2 The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan has been

2.2.1 In the context of the proposed growth across the district, with both Ringmer and Broyleside anticipated to attract additional homes, there is a strong desire to retain the 'village' feel and rural character that residents value.

2.3 Vision, aims and objectives of Neighbourhood Plan Review

The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review Steering Group has developed a number of objectives that will support the aim and vision of the Neighbourhood Plan Review. These objectives are:

2.3.1 Objective 1: Sustainable development and housing:
There are well-designed homes to meet the needs of the local community. They allow growth and adaptation to serve all phases of life, promoting health and wellbeing. The architecture uses passive energy and low carbon building materials and there is increased biodiversity and reduced carbon emissions for existing and proposed development.

2.3.2 Objective 2: Protecting the natural and built environment:
The natural environment of the South Downs National Park and its setting is protected and celebrated. Green spaces that are important to the community are safeguarded and opportunities for biodiversity improvements are sought. There is a network of ecological corridors that connect through the villages and to the wider countryside. Space for a wide range of active and passive recreation, for all ages. The value of the Parish's dark skies is recognised. The Parish's historic buildings are protected and conserved. They are appreciated alongside contemporary architecture as part of our daily activities.

2.3.3 Objective 3: Safe and active travel:
Opportunities to encourage walking and, where practical, cycling are optimised to encourage active travel for local journeys. Improving connectivity within and between Ringmer and Broyleside as well as to the wider countryside and neighbouring settlements is paramount. Improvements to recreational horse-riding routes will be supported. There is the infrastructure to support electric cars with fewer miles travelled by vehicle.

2.3.4 Objective 4: Connected and supported communities:
The existing facilities are safeguarded and, where necessary improved and expanded, to serve all needs – for health, education, social and wellbeing, local food production, culture, retail, sport and recreation. They are inclusive spaces that connect and bring people together linked to active travel and green spaces.

2.3.5 Objective 5: The village centre and local economy:
Established local businesses and new businesses are supported, including working from home. The village centre continues to provide a focal point for activity with support for enhanced facilities to support the growing population.

2.4 Key environmental constraints in the neighbourhood area

2.4.1 The Ringmer Neighbourhood Area contains a range of important environmental constraints and sensitivities that are relevant to the preparation and assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan Review.

2.4.2 Approximately 20% of the parish lies within the South Downs National Park (SDNP), with the eastern part of the parish located within the designated area and additional land contributing to its wider setting. The western part of the parish is characterised by Open Downland, a distinctive upland landscape found on the south-facing dip slope of the South Downs. This landscape type forms part of the chalk downs which extend from the Arun Valley to the Seven Sisters and includes elevated, open and remote areas of the National Park. These characteristics make the landscape particularly sensitive to change and require careful consideration in plan-making.

2.4.3 The parish supports a diverse range of ecologically important habitats, including multiple Section 41 priority habitats such as chalk streams, traditional orchards, lowland meadows, lowland calcareous grassland, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, and areas of deciduous and ancient woodland. Notable examples of ancient woodland and veteran trees include Skimcorner Wood, Plashett Wood, Road Wood, Grasslands Shaw and Glynde Rough. These habitats are of high biodiversity value and are sensitive to development pressures.

2.4.4 There are several designated nature conservation sites within or partly within the parish, including:

- **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):** Plashett Park Wood
- **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS):** including part of Barcombe Reservoir and Barcombe Mill, Marshy Fields and lake by Wellington Farm, and Hemley's Rough (also recognised as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance)
- **Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve:** Malling Down and Southerham
- In addition, there are a number of designated road verges, **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)**, and a network of **Local Green Spaces** (26 designated under Policy R13), all of which contribute to biodiversity, landscape character, and local amenity value.

2.4.5 There have been recorded instances of flooding within the parish. Combined with the presence of watercourses and floodplain grazing marsh, this highlights the importance of managing flood risk and surface water, as well as protecting water quality and hydrological systems.

2.4.6 The key environmental constraints affecting the neighbourhood area include:

- Conservation of the South Downs National Park, its Open Downland landscape, and wider setting
- Protection of priority habitats, ancient woodland, and biodiversity assets
- Safeguarding designated sites (SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites, and nature reserves)
- Maintaining landscape character, tranquillity, and visual amenity
- Management of flood risk and water environments

- Protection and enhancement of **green infrastructure**, including Local Green Spaces and tree assets

These factors will need to be carefully considered to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan avoids or mitigates significant adverse environmental effects, while supporting the conservation and enhancement of the parish's natural environment.

2.5 Neighbourhood Plan Review's approach to allocating land for development

2.5.1 The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review (RNP) does not allocate new sites for development. Sites within Policy SA1 are carried forward from the existing (made) Neighbourhood Plan have been previously subject to SEA, and have been reviewed.

2.5.2 For the sites with existing planning permissions, the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review introduces no material changes to the environmental baseline or likely effects, and it does not create any new or additional significant environmental effects beyond what is already legally permitted. Environmental controls are securely managed at the project level via standard planning conditions.

2.5.3 Following discussions with the SDNPA, a review of the 14 retained site allocations was undertaken to reconfirm the existing site allocations and to identify any changes in circumstances since the previous SEA/SA assessment both alone and in combination. A summary of the findings is provided in Appendix 2 of this report.

2.5.4 The Plan Review does set out criteria against which development proposals should be considered, in terms of the types and form of development.

3. Area Characteristics

This section summarises the range of issues that must be considered as part of the SEA screening process. Consideration of likely significant effects, using the criteria from Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations for each of the SEA issues:

3.1 Population and health

The total population of the Parish is 4,795 (2021 census), an increase of 3.2% since 2011, with over 98% of the Parish population living in the Parish area outside the 20% falling into the South Downs National Park. This population represents about 4.8% of the total District population, making it the largest Parish in the District's rural Low Weald Levels of deprivation are extremely low and overall health is good, as shown in *Figure 2*

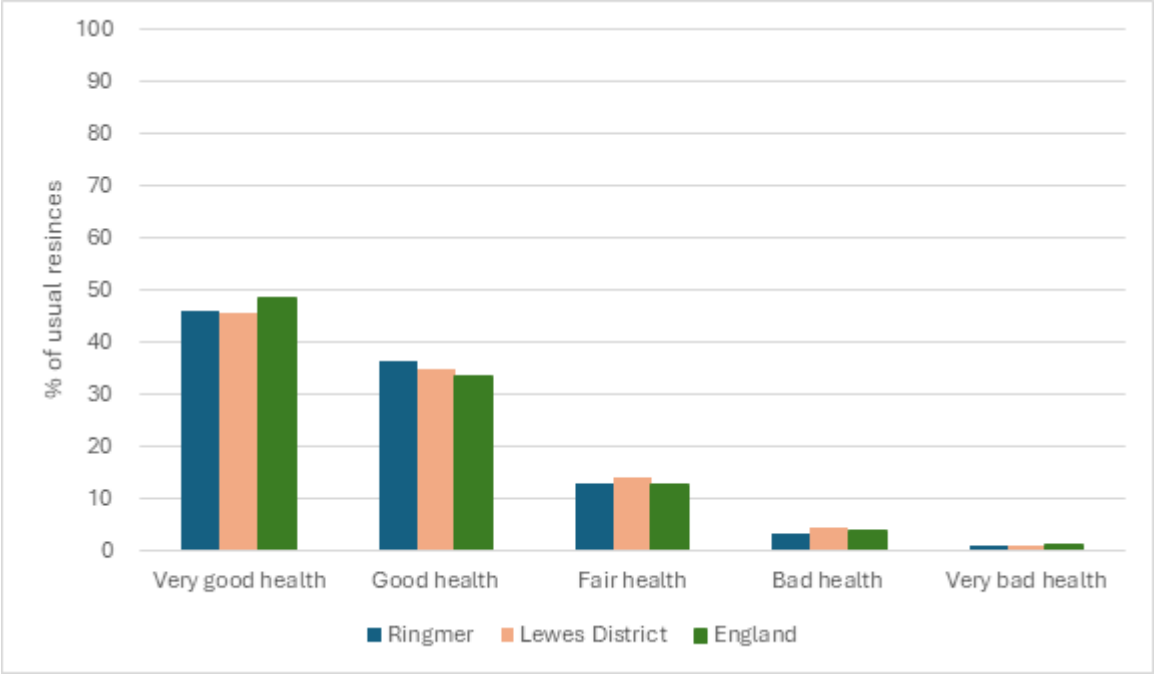


Figure 2: General Health Levels
Source: East Sussex in Figures 2021

3.2 Biodiversity, flora and fauna

The parish contains nationally and internationally important ecological designations. These include:

- Plashett Wood (ancient woodland), designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is currently recorded as being in an unfavourable but recovering condition.)
- The Lewes Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies on the parish boundary, highlighting the presence of habitats of international ecological importance.
- woodland within Plashett Park Farm, which represent irreplaceable habitats and a key biodiversity resource.

The parish also supports a wide range of priority habitats**,** including chalk downland, lowland meadows, calcareous grassland, grazing marsh and chalk streams.

The area supports a diverse range of protected and notable species, including significant populations of birds and bats, alongside species such as badgers, deer, Great Crested newts and slow worms.

3.3 Soil

Ringmer Parish has a variety of soils, with the most fertile soils located just below the scarp of the Downs, along the banks of the Ouse and a band of Lower Greensand that runs across the Parish through Wellingham and Norlington. There are a small number of contaminated sites within the Parish, from either present or former industrial activity or small local landfill sites.

The overall agricultural land is mostly Grade 3 in the Provisional Agricultural and Classification (England) as can be seen in *Figure 3.*

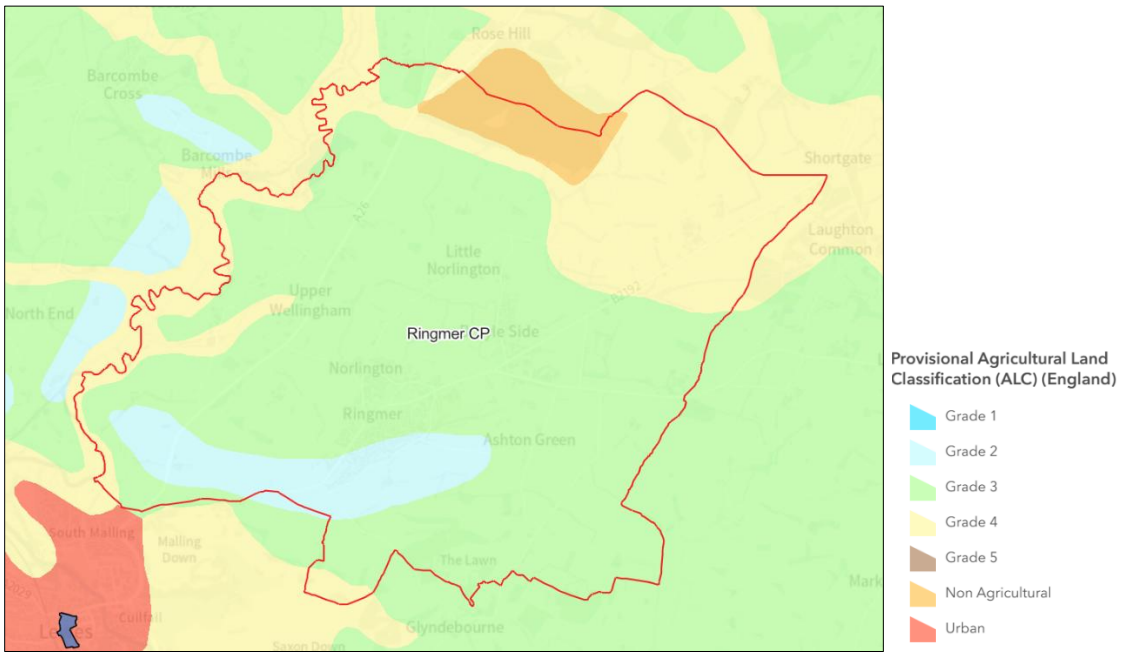


Figure 3: Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) (England)
Source: Defra and Natural England (updated 2024)

3.4 Water

The majority of the Plan Area is influenced by the River Ouse and Glynde Reach, with areas of floodplain and brookland present as seen in *Figure 4*. While some of these areas are undeveloped, there is a history of surface water and runoff flooding, particularly affecting parts of Broyleside due to inadequate drainage and runoff from surrounding land as can be seen in *Figure 5*.

Flood risk is expected to increase due to climate change, making water management a critical consideration. In addition, the Parish lies within a water-stressed area, placing pressure on water resources and infrastructure, including supply from Barcombe Mills.

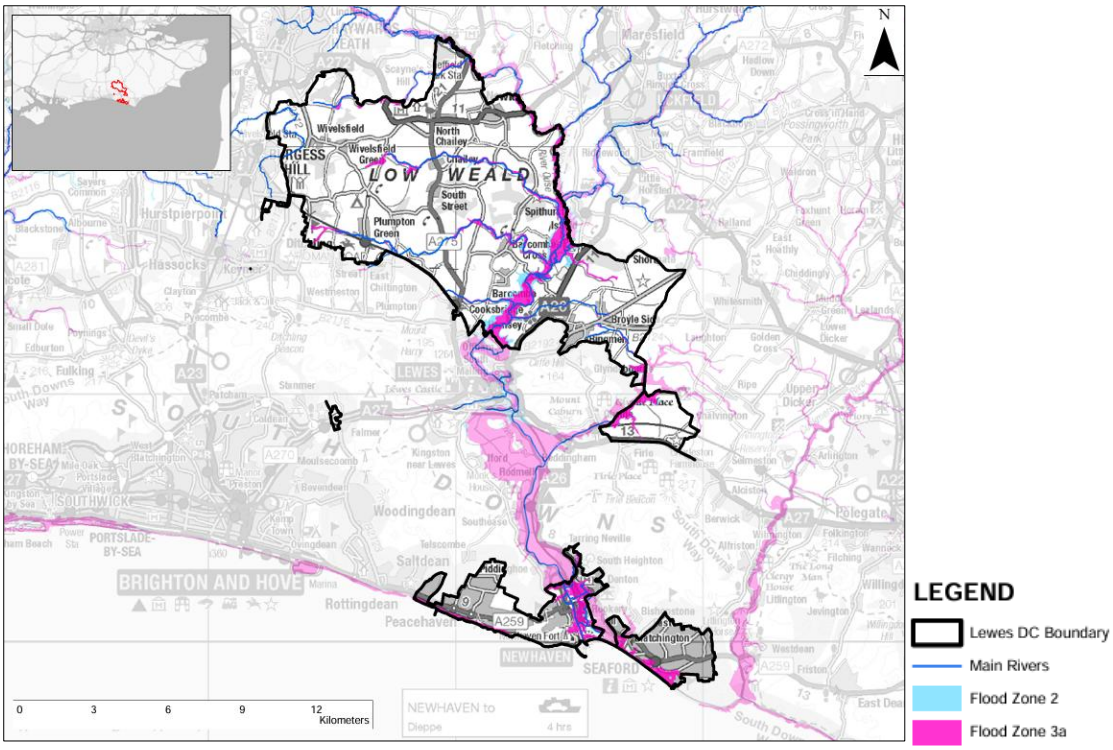


Figure 4: Flood Zones

Source: Lewes Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2025

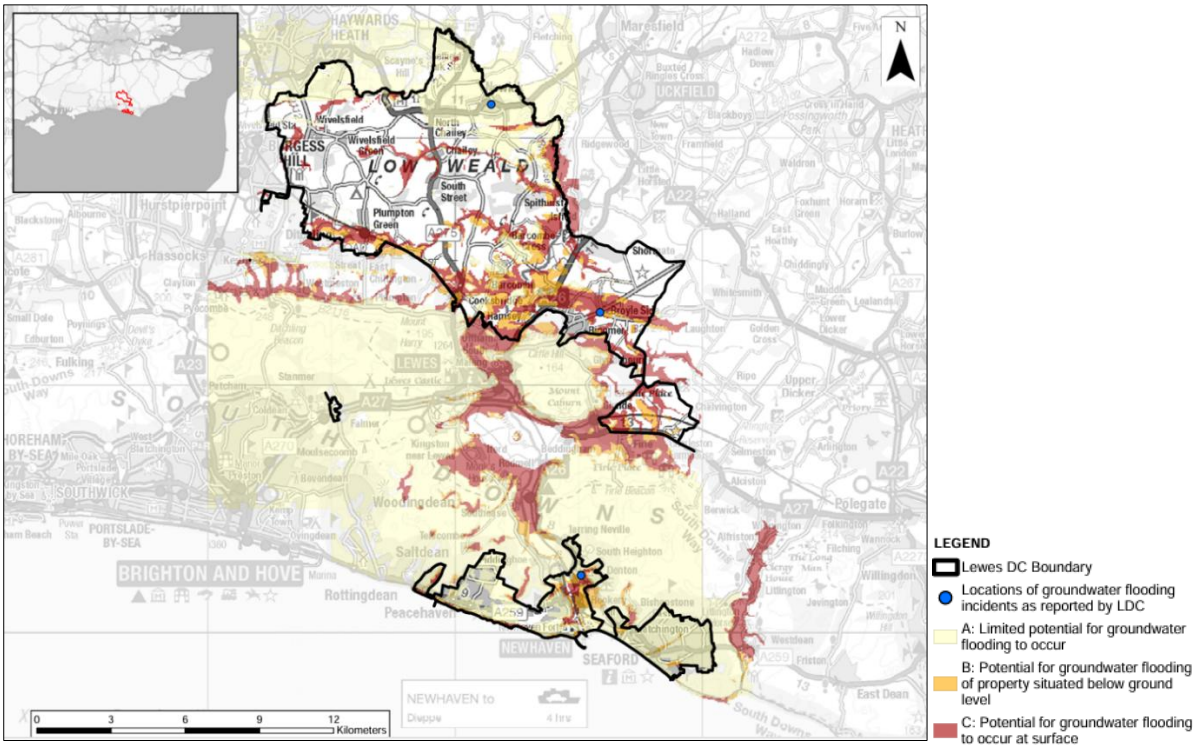


Figure 5: Groundwater Flooding

Source: Lewes Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2025

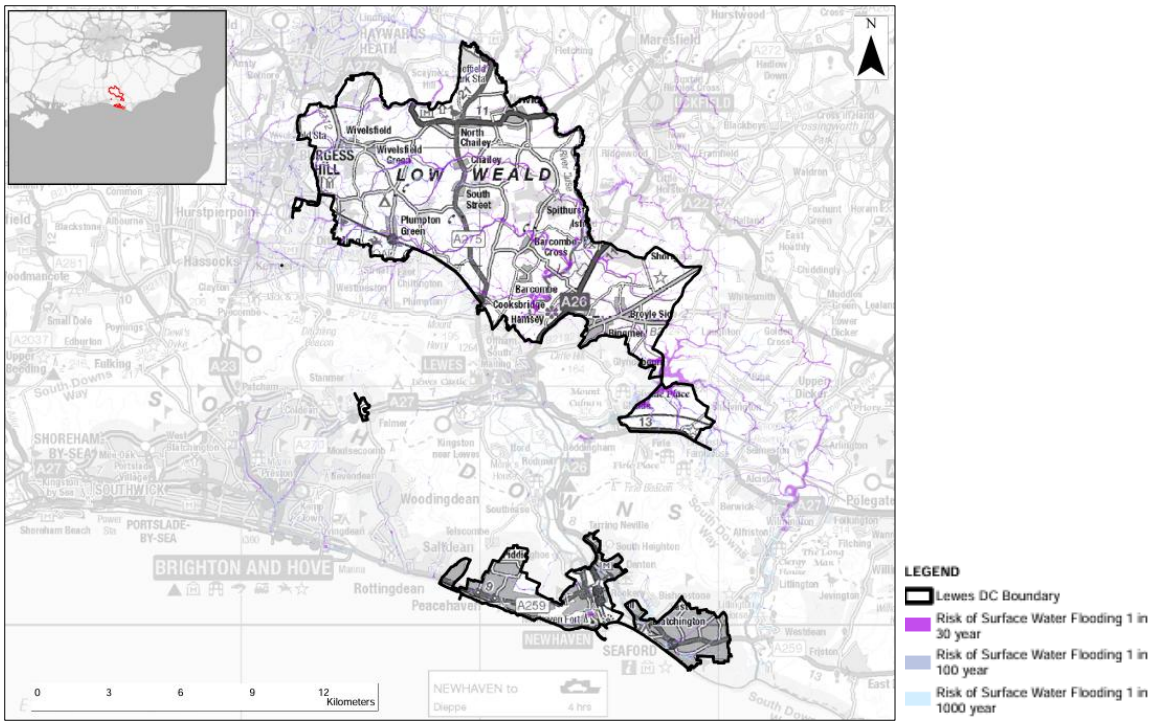


Figure 6: Surface Water flood risk

Source: Lewes Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2025

The Lewes SFRA 2025 should be read in conjunction with the updated South Downs National Park SFRA 2026, which covers the whole National Park area. The final version of the South Downs National Park SFRA is due to be published shortly and may provide supplementary information relevant to flood risk considerations within the National Park area of Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Area.

3.5 Air Quality

While overall air quality is generally good, there are localised issues associated with traffic congestion**,** particularly along the B2192 and A26 corridors as per Lewes District Council Air Quality Action Plan 2025 by Lewes District Council. This is linked to high levels of car dependency typical of rural areas, which also contributes to emissions and pressure on nearby sensitive environments such as the Lewes Downs SAC.

3.6 Climatic factors

The Design Guidance within the Neighbourhood Plan Review promotes sustainable design, in terms of insulation, ventilation, use of materials, heating and energy sources and so forth. This is underpinned in a sustainable design policy. In terms of transport, the Plan actively supports the promotion of 'active' travel in order to reduce car use for shorter journeys where possible. The Plan promotes EV charging points and cycle storage to encourage the use of less polluting forms of transport.

The parish faces broader challenges relating to climate change, including the need to reduce carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency, and adapt to more extreme weather events.

3.7 Material assets

The parish includes a range of designated sites and environmental assets, including Local Wildlife Sites (e.g. Barcombe Reservoir, Marshy Fields, Hemley's Rough), the Sussex Wildlife Trust reserves at Malling Down and Southerham, and numerous Tree Preservation Orders.

There are also 26 Local Green Spaces designated under the Neighbourhood Plan, along with designated road verges, all of which contribute to green infrastructure, biodiversity, and local amenity value.

3.8 Cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage

Ringmer contains a rich historic environment, including a Conservation Area, numerous Listed Buildings, and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. These heritage assets contribute significantly to local character and identity and require careful consideration to ensure their conservation and appropriate setting.

Listed buildings

Ringmer Parish is home to 49 Listed Buildings, including the Grade I medieval Ringmer church and several other medieval houses. Grade II* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest and only one building in Ringmer Parish falls into this category. Grade II buildings are buildings of special interest, thus warranting every effort to preserve them. Ringmer Parish has 47 Grade II buildings as shown below in *Figure 7*.

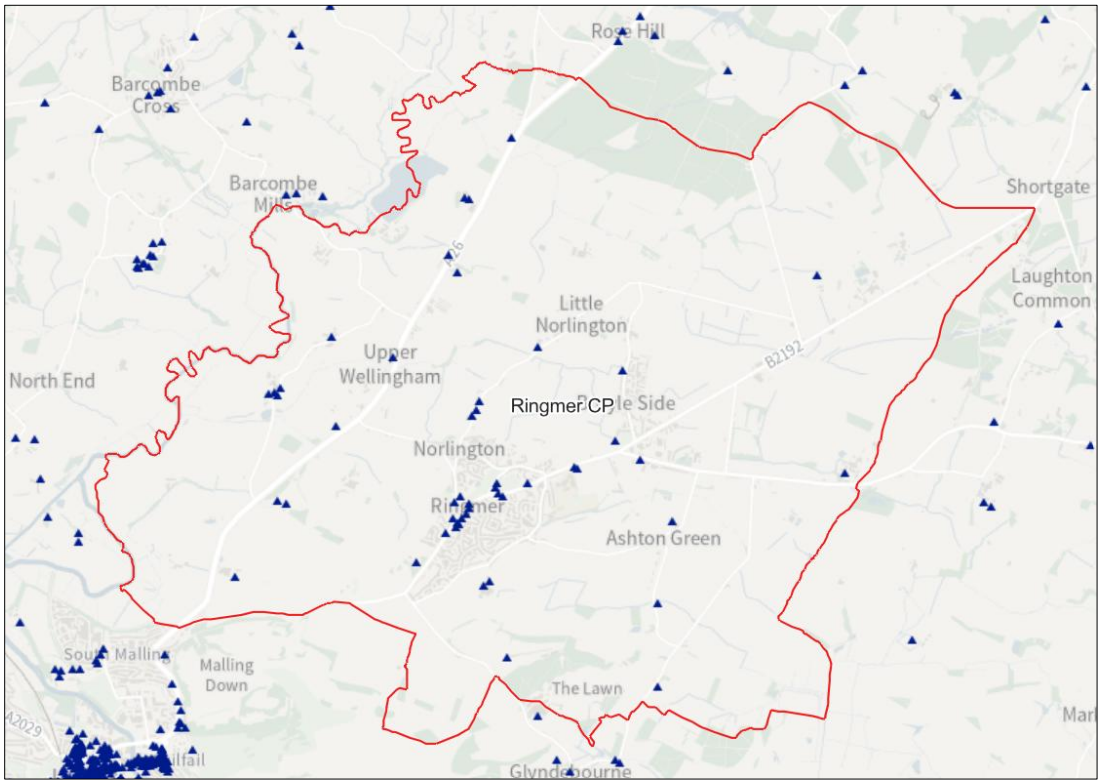


Figure 7 Listed buildings around the Plan Area marked

Source: Historic England 2026

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Ringmer has two Scheduled Ancient Monuments, the Clay Hill motte, which is believed to have been the site of an archiepiscopal hunting lodge serving the Plashett Park and a medieval settlement site on the east side of Saxon Down that lies across the Ringmer-Glynde Parish boundary.

Ecological & Nature Conservation Designations

Ringmer includes one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the Plashett Wood, an ancient woodland and an area to the south which is under Stewardship. SSSIs are of national importance and are designated based on their nature conservation and/or geological value. Plashett Wood was last assessed to be in an unfavourable but recovering condition and has since been significantly improved by the tenant farmer. The internationally important Lewes Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies on the border of Ringmer Parish and separates Ringmer from Lewes. SACs are areas that have been given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive, helping to increase the protection for a variety of animals, plants and habitats and are seen as a vital part of the global effort to conserve the world's biodiversity.

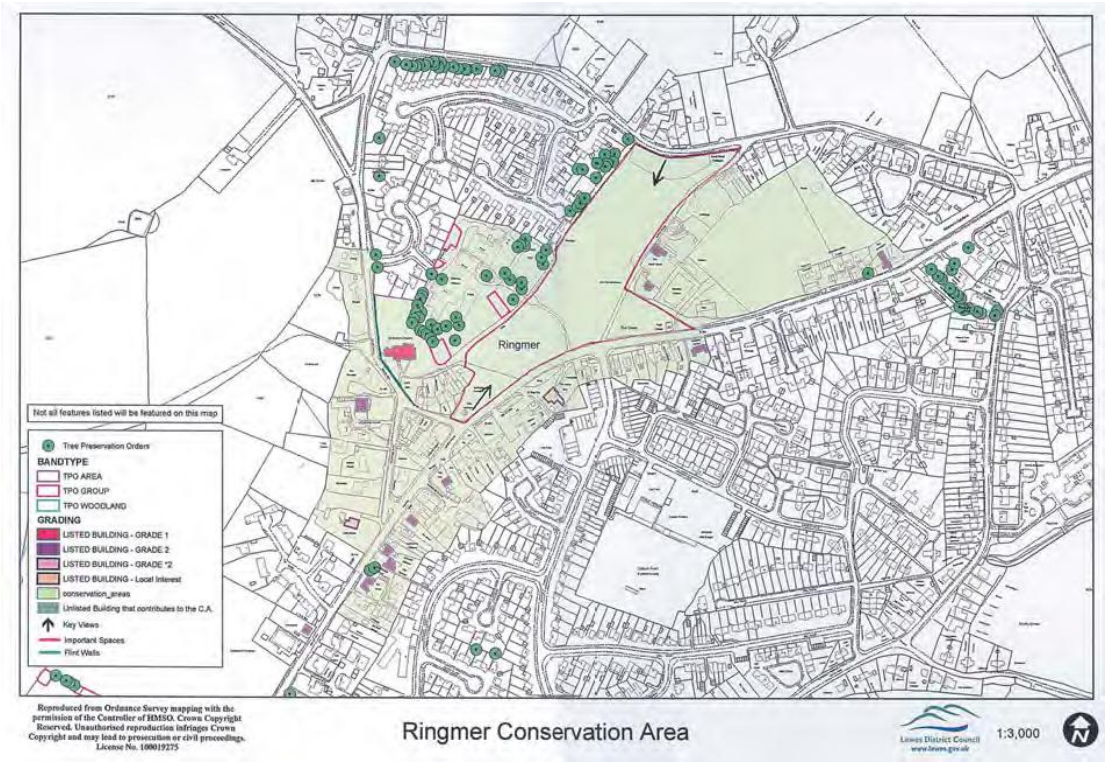


Figure 8 ***Conservation Area in the Plan Area***

Source: LDC Conservation Area Appraisal 2003

Ancient Woodland

Ancient Woodland is an important ecological resource that receives special recognition in the NPPF (paragraph 118). About half of the Plashett Wood ancient woodland lies in Ringmer Parish, and there are additional fingers and plots of ancient woodland within Plashett Park Farm, immediately to the south of the Plashett Wood and in the same ownership. These are shown on the District Council's recently updated Ancient

Woodland Inventory, which provides a more accurate picture of the extent of this important biodiversity resource in the district.

3.9 Landscape

Approximately 20% of the plan area lies within the South Downs National Park, with additional areas contributing to its wider setting. The plan area spans two distinct landscape character areas: the South Downs and the Low Weald, with Ringmer located at the transition between them.

The landscape is highly valued and includes chalk downland, agricultural land bounded by historic hedgerows, river valleys, and areas of ancient and more recent woodland. The Broyle represents a distinctive historic landscape, characterised by its large, open, enclosed fields and straight roads.

Key pressures affecting the landscape include the loss of hedgerows**,** damage to ancient woodland, and scrub encroachment on chalk grassland, all of which can erode landscape character and biodiversity value.

4. Assessment

4.1 Table 1 below assesses the need for a full SEA of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review. The criteria are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Table 1: The need for a full SEA of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review

Assessment Criteria	Assessment (Yes, No)	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	The preparation and adoption of the NP is allowed under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017. The NP is being prepared by Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review Group (as the "relevant body") and will be 'made' by Lewes District Council as the local authority subject to passing an independent examination and community referendum. The preparation of NPs is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will if 'made', form part of the statutory Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether a full SEA is required under the Directive.
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	Neighbourhood Plans can cover some of the topics identified in this list and they could set the framework for development of a scale that would fall under Annex II of the EIA Directive. However for Neighbourhood Plans, developments which fall under Annex I of the EIA Directive are 'excluded development' as set out in Section 61k of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act).
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?	No	The Neighbourhood Plan Review does not allocate any new development sites and have the retained sites have been reviewed. The Plan contains any proposals likely to result in significant effects on European sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

(Art. 3.2 (b))		HRA screening is therefore needed to determine that likely significant effects can be ruled out.
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 Plan applies only to the Ringmer Neighbourhood Area and therefore determines the use of a small area at the local level within the meaning of Article 3.3 of the SEA Directive.
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	The Neighbourhood Plan is to be used by Lewes District Council in helping determine future planning applications. The neighbourhood plan however focuses on shaping how development comes forward.
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)		N/A
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	The environmental designations have been identified further in the Ringmer baseline information in Section 3 which includes maps, distances and vulnerability. The Plan is not considered to have significant effects on the environment. Any likely effects are related to the objectives of the Plan in respect of generally protecting and enhancing the Plan Area and are not considered to be significant. No site allocations are proposed, and plan policies generally seek conservation and enhancement of heritage assets. Significant adverse effects on heritage assets are therefore unlikely.

5. Assessment of likely significant effects

The final question in the SEA screening process (Question 8 in Table 1 above) asks 'is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?'. Table 2 below shows the Assessment of likely significant effects of Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review following the guidance provided in Annex II of the SEA Directive, Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC — Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA).

Table 2 Assessment of likely significant Effects

Significant effect criteria		**Assessment**	**Is there significant environmental effect?**
1. The characteristics of the plans, having regard to:	a. the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The Plan establishes a framework for guiding future development and land use within the defined planning boundaries of Ringmer and Broyleside. Through its policies, it seeks to direct development to appropriate locations while ensuring that proposals reinforce the rural character of the Parish, preserve the distinct identities of its settlements, and are supported by suitable infrastructure. In accordance with Policy R3, the Plan provides guidance on the location, form and scale of development that can be accommodated within the Parish, including housing, employment and other forms of development. The Plan does not allocate any new development sites. Instead, it retains the existing neighbourhood plan allocations for sites that have not yet been delivered but are considered to remain available, suitable and achievable as per Policy SA1.	NO - Given that the Plan carries forward the existing strategy and site allocations of the adopted development plan, and introduces only limited additional policy direction relating to design, biodiversity, heritage, landscape protection, sustainable transport and community facilities, it is not considered likely to establish a framework that would give rise to negative significant environmental effects.
	b. the degree to which the plan influences other plans and	The Plan sits within the wider planning policy framework established by the Lewes District development plan and National Planning Policy.	NO. It does not directly influence any other plans or programmes, the Plan is unlikely to have a significant positive environmental effect or a significant negative environmental

Significant effect criteria		Assessment	Is there significant environmental effect?
	programmes including those in a hierarchy;		effect on the implementation of those plans or programmes.
	c. the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	A Neighbourhood Plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment should be minimised through the policy framework. The Plan includes policies that seek to positively address a number of environmental aspects of sustainable development. The natural environment specifically biodiversity and the protection of natural resources is addressed through the landscaping and protection of ancient woodland (Policy R12), designation of local green spaces (Policy R13) and energy use (Policies R3 and R4). All these policies will have positive effects which means that these will not be significant. The Plan has a positive effect on the heritage environment through policies that address development in the conservation areas, non-designated heritage assets (Policy R6) and ensuring good design through a landscape-led perspective (Policy R3).	NO. The plan is relevant for the integration of environmental considerations with a view to promote sustainable development.
	d. environmental problems relevant to the plan;	The plan seeks to address the environmental issues identified include flood risk(R24), protection of the South Downs National Park setting, biodiversity conservation, protection of ancient woodland (R10 and R12), preservation of heritage assets(R6), Protection of the River Ouse water catchment (R10), climate change (R4)	NO. The policies are considered to have a positive effect on the environment of the Neighbourhood Plan Area in terms of addressing environmental problems. Therefore, such effects are not considered likely to be significant.

Significant effect criteria		Assessment	Is there significant environmental effect?
		and local traffic-related air quality issues which are addressed through sustainable transport (R16) through protective and enhancement-based policies.	
	e. the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in conformity with the Lewes District Adopted Plan and South Downs National Park Adopted Plan. The District Plan and National Park Plan both have regard to European Union (EU) legislation on the environment and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan already meets the requirements of this legislation. The Neighbourhood Plan, in its preparation, has taken into account the following EU legislation and strategies: • EU Habitats and Conservation of Wild Birds Directives (92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC) • EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) • EU Directive on Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (2008/50/EC) • EU Waste Directive (2008/98/EC) • EU Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution • Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Many of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will make a positive contribution towards the achievement of the targets in this legislation and these strategies, therefore will have a positive environmental effect. This particularly	NO. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have positive effect on the environment of the Neighbourhood Plan Area in terms of their contribution towards the implementation of Community legislation on the environment. However, this effect is not likely to be significant.

Significant effect criteria		Assessment	Is there significant environmental effect?
		includes policies on landscaping and biodiversity(R12), designation of local green spaces (R13) and maximisation of energy efficiency (R3 and R4).	
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	a. the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,	Development is expected to come forward within the Plan area, so environmental effects may arise. The probability of adverse effects is considered low because the Plan includes policies intended to protect and enhance the environment. Policy R13 designates Local Green Spaces while Policy R12 seeks to incorporate landscaping and biodiversity features into new development, giving rise to likely positive effects that may endure for the lifetime of the development. Sustainable Development has positive effects by helping to meet housing needs, improve access to leisure uses and broaden/support the range of commercial activities serving the local community. Policy R9 supports sustainable tourism proposals that enhance the visitor experience while respecting the rural environment, the local character and setting of the South Downs National Park. The duration and frequency of these effects would depend on the nature and implementation of individual proposals. Some effects, particularly the protection of Local Green Spaces and biodiversity enhancements, are likely to be long term, while construction-related or operational effects would generally be temporary,	NO. The effects are not expected to be significant due to the protective policy framework of the plan which reduces the likelihood of adverse effect. Although certain physical changes may not be reversible.

Significant effect criteria		Assessment	Is there significant environmental effect?
		intermittent and capable of being controlled through the planning process.	
	b. the cumulative nature of the effects,	The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate new development and therefore is unlikely to contribute to significant cumulative effects to the local environment. The policies are generally protective in nature and any possible negative effects such as noise, air pollution and habitat loss are required to be mitigated which would mean that they would not be significant. The Plan includes policies that seek to have a positive effect on the environmental aspects of sustainable development specifically flood risk(R24), protection of the South Downs National Park setting (R3), biodiversity conservation, protection of ancient woodland(R10 and R12), preservation of heritage assets(R6), protection of the River Ouse water catchment (R10), climate change (R4) and local traffic-related air quality issues which are addressed through sustainable transport (R16) through protective and enhancement-based policies.	NO. These policies are considered to have a positive effect on the environment of the Neighbourhood Plan Area in terms of addressing environmental problems. Therefore, such effects are not considered likely to be significant.
	c. the transboundary nature of the effects,	Unlikely effects	

Significant effect criteria		Assessment	Is there significant environmental effect?
	d. the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	The Neighbourhood Plan Review contains no proposals that would be expected to create significant risks to human health or the environment. It includes policies that support for active travel (R3), green infrastructure (R12) and sustainable design(R24) which may provide positive health and environmental benefits. There is an existing wastewater capacity issue addressed by the Policy R24 that will require any future development to carry planning conditions to address this prior to occupation resulting to have a positive impact on the environment.	NO. The Policies are likely to have a positive effect on the environment in the Neighbourhood Plan Area in term of human health.
	e. the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Neighbourhood plan area covers an area of 2,589 ha with a total population of the of 4,795 (2021 census), an increase of 3.2% since 2011. The population of the Parish represents about 4.8% of the total District population. Although about 20% of Ringmer Parish lies within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) boundary, over 98% of the Parish population lives outside the National Park. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any new sites for development but retains only existing sites.	NO. The policies relating to open spaces (R6 and R12), Public Realm (R7), Recreational use of the river bank(R11), active travel and public rights of way(R16) will have a positive effect on residents and visitors to the Area although these will not be significant in terms of their environmental effect.
	f. the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	The Plan seeks to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through some of its policies. The broad environmental characteristics of the area are in section 4 of this report. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Area contains a number of environmentally and historically sensitive assets, including	NO. The Neighbourhood Plan Review is expected to have a positive or neutral effect on these sensitive assets and is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effect.

Significant effect criteria		Assessment	Is there significant environmental effect?
	− special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, − exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, − intensive land-use, − the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	part of the South Downs National Park, the Lewes Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Plashett Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (R10), areas of ancient woodland (R12), Local Wildlife Sites, listed buildings, conservation areas (R6) and Local Green Spaces (R13). These assets are of high environmental and cultural value and are potentially vulnerable to inappropriate development pressures. However, the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate new development sites and includes policies that seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscape character, the historic environment and green infrastructure. The Plan also contains policies relating to sustainable design, flood risk management and protection of natural resources. The Plan is not expected to worsen environmental conditions and does not promote development that would adversely affect protected landscapes or designated environmental sites.	

6. SEA Screening Opinion

6.1. As a result of the assessment in section 5, although a number of factors remain unknown **it is considered that the neighbourhood Plan has the potential to cause environmental effects are unlikely** and whether significant environmental effects arise will depend on the final proposals within the NPR.

6.2. The criteria for undertaking such an assessment are drawn from the SEA Directive as set out above in Table 2. As such it is considered under the Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004, that the emerging draft Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review as July 2026 does not require an SEA to be undertaken.

6.3. The outcome of this screening report has been subjected to review by the statutory bodies, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The screening report and subsequent screening opinion may also need to be reviewed if significant changes are made to the neighbourhood plan following this review or any other evidence that informs a significant change to the Plan prior to Submission Stage, (Regulation 16).

6.4. The comments made by the Statutory bodies are as follows:

Natural England:
"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".

Historic England:
Historic England agrees with the Screening Opinion that the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review is not likely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Environment Agency:
Environment Agency has not provided any comments to the consultation.

6.5. A Habitats Regulations Assessment is required to inform that process. The HRA screening report has subsequently provided input into the final SEA determination report, which comprises Part B of this document.

Part B: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion

1. Introduction

1.1. Lewes District Council has undertaken the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). This report discusses the Stage 1- Screening. The Screening Assessment relates to the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review that will be in general conformity with the Lewes Local Plan.

1.2. Lewes District Council is preparing a new local plan with a plan period 2020-2042.Once adopted it will replace the current development plan which has an end date of 2030, and comprises the;

1.3. Part 1 Joint Core Strategy 2010-2030: Adopted in 2016 which sets out the strategic vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the district (including the areas that are within the South Downs National Park).

1.4. Part 2: Site Allocations and development management policies, which sets out more detailed (non-strategic) planning policies for different types of development.

1.5. The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on 'European' Sites and therefore whether an 'Appropriate Assessment' is required.

2. Legal Context

2.1. Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, any plan or project that may have a likely significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and can only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site in view of its conservation objectives.

2.2. The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle, requiring decision-makers to rule out adverse effects on the integrity of European sites before a plan or project can be approved and was implemented into UK legislation through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). The Directive is transposed into UK law, known as the Habitats Regulations, through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

2.3. The 2017 Regulations legally mandate that a competent authority (such as a local planning authority) must assess whether a proposed plan or project will have an adverse effect on the ecological integrity of a protected habitats site.

2.4. In 2021 the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government published guidance on Habitats regulations assessments: protecting a European site for a competent authority to decide if a plan or project proposal that affects a European site can go ahead.

3. Process

3.1. The Guidance on the HRA process can have up to 3 stages which are:

- Screening for likely to have a significant effect on the site's conservation objectives.
- Appropriate assessment on the likely significant effects of the proposal in more detail and identify ways to avoid or minimise any effects.
- Derogation - to consider if proposals that would have an adverse effect on a European site qualify for an exemption.

3.2. This report is the first stage of the process, the screening stage.
The purpose of HRA screening is to determine, in view of the best available scientific knowledge, whether a plan or project, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, could result in Likely Significant Effects on European sites in view of their conservation objectives. If the competent authority determines that no Likely Significant Effects is present (both alone and in-combination), then no further assessment is necessary.[5]

3.3. Importantly, the HRA process is underpinned by the precautionary principle, especially in the assessment of potential impacts and their resolution. If it is not possible to rule out a risk of harm to a protected site, based on the evidence available, it must be assumed a risk may exist. As a result, the protected site would have to undergo the further stages.

Identified relevant sites

Protected Site

3.4. There are three types of protected sites that an HRA would have to consider. These are:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) – sites designated for flora, fauna and habitats of community interest under powers derived from the Habitats Directive; and
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) – sites designated to conserve the habitat of protected wild birds to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution under powers derived from Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive).
- Ramsar Sites – wetland sites of international importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention

3.5. The HRA for the Lewes Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and development management policies considered 4 protected sites, both within and outside of the district, which could be affected by development in the district.

These were:

- Castle Hill SAC
- Lewes Downs SAC
- Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site and Candidate SAC
- Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA

[5] Habitats regulations assessment: non-technical summary - GOV.UK

The only protected site near to the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review area is the Lewes Downs SAC, located near to its south-west boundary with the town of Lewes. It is thus considered appropriate to carry out the screening for likely significant effects for only the Lewes Downs SAC.[6]

Lewes Downs SAC

3.6. The Lewes Downs site has been designated as a SAC since this chalk grassland site consists largely of Festuca ovina – Avenula pratensis and Bromus erectus calcareous grasslands. This site contains an important assemblage of rare and scarce orchids, including early spider-orchid Ophrys sphegodes, burnt orchid Orchis ustulata and musk orchid Herminium monorchis. The colony of burnt orchid is one of the largest in the UK. When assessing whether the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan would be likely to cause a significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC, these designation reasons will be considered.

Reviewed Neighbourhood Plan policies and site allocations

3.7. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review has 25 policies which sets out criteria against which development proposals should be considered, in terms of the types and form of development. This will be considered part of the development plan for both Lewes District and the South Downs National Park when any planning applications for development within Ringmer Parish comes forward. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review (RNP) does not allocate new sites for development.

3.8. In the screening process, each policy has been considered individually whether it could result in likely significant effect on the identified habitat site. Consideration has been given to whether the polices:

- allocate land for housing, employment or other forms of development
- increase development beyond that already provided for through the 'made' neighbourhood plan
- could increase recreational pressure or disturbances.

The policy assessment is set out in Table 1 following these criteria. Policies that are supportive, design based or protective in nature and which do not provide for additional development has been considered in terms of whether they could cause any likely significant effect to the European site.

[6] HRA Report Lewes Local Plan Part 2 2017-10-06

4. Assessment of the Policies

For it to be concluded that a policy would have no likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC, one of the reasons listed below usually applies:

(**A**) The policy is intended to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity, or to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on a European site;

(**B**) The policy will not itself lead to development or other change, for example, because they relate to design or other qualitative criteria for development or other kinds of change;

(**C**) The policy makes provision for change which has no conceivable effect on a European site, because there is no link or pathway between them and the qualifying interests, or any effect would be a positive effect, or would not otherwise undermine the conservation objectives for the site;

(**D**) The policy makes provision for change which has no significant effect on a European site, because any potential effects would be insignificant, being so restricted or remote from the site that they would not undermine the conservation objectives for the site;

(**E**) The policy for which effects on any particular European site cannot be identified, because the policy is too general, for example, it is not possible to identify where, when or how the policy may be implemented, or where effects may occur, or which sites, if any, may be affected.

Table 1: Screening Assessment Matrix of Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review Policies

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
R1 Sustainable Development	Spatial strategy and housing	The policy sets out the Spatial strategy for the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review and provides guidance on where development should be directed. It seeks to ensure the new development located sustainably, in well-connected locations close to existing services and facilities.	Positive	No	The policy does not allocate additional development beyond that which has already been allocated in the made NP. Its purpose is to guide development towards sustainable locations. It does not provide for development that would be expected to result in a likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC either alone or in combination of other plans or Projects **Reasons B**
SA1	Housing Allocations in the Parish	Policy SA1 retains existing undelivered site allocations from the current (made) plan.	Positive	No	. The Policy does not introduce any new housing allocations or increase the level of development that has already been assessed in the adopted Lewes Local Plan (LPP2). Thus, the policy is not expected to give rise to additional effects on Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason C**
R2 Meeting Local Housing Needs	Housing Mix	The policy sets out requirements for housing mix and the type of housing to be provided to help meet identified housing needs at the parish level.	Neutral	No	The policy establishes criteria for types and mixes of housing being delivered and does not allocate new housing development. therefore, is not

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
					expected to result in additional development pressure or impacts on the Lewes Downs SAC **Reason B**
R3 Character and Design of Development	Character, heritage and design	The policy sets out criteria to ensure that new development is well designed and responds positively to the character, heritage and local rural character of the Parish area.	Neutral	No	The policy is concerned with the design, character and historic environment. It does not allocate development or increase the scale. It seeks to ensure that developments is appropriately designed and therefore is unlikely to cause effect to the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reasons A and B**
R4: Energy Efficiency and Design		The policy sets out criteria for new development to encourage high quality and energy efficient and sustainable design that will help to reduce energy use and mitigate the effects of climate change.	Positive	No	The policy promotes energy efficiency and sustainable design. The policy is expected to help reduce environmental pressures rather than create addition effects on the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason A and B**
R5: Renewable and Community Energy		A policy setting out criteria against which any renewable energy schemes should be considered locally, to ensure that they mitigate impacts on the environment and local character.	Neutral	No	Policy provides a framework for assessing renewable energy and seeks to ensure that potential environmental effects are appropriately considered and mitigated. Therefore, is unlikely to cause any effects to the Lewes Downs SAC.

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
					Reason B and C
R6: Conserving Heritage Assets		The policy identifies non-designated heritage assets and conserves and enhances conservation areas, designated and non-designated sites within the parish area.	Positive	No	Policy seeks to conserve, enhance and protect heritage assets within the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Area and is therefore unlikely to have a significant effect on Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason A and B**
R7: Enhancing the Role and Setting of Ringmer Village Centre	Local Economy and Jobs	The policy supports the role of Ringmer Village centre by safeguarding the existing provision and supporting appropriate improvements to the village centre and local economy.	Neutral	No	Policy seeks to safeguard existing provision and support improvements to the local economy Therefore, unlikely to cause significant effect to Lewes Downs SAC. **Reasons B and D.**
R8: Enhancing Opportunities for Local Employment		The policy aims to enhance existing employment provision and appropriate opportunities for new employment, while safeguarding the character and environmental quality of the parish area.	Neutral	No	Policy supports the local economy and employment opportunities but does not allocate any new employment sites or increase in overall development of the area. Therefore, it is unlikely to have any significant effect towards the Lewes Downs SAC **Reason B**

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
R9 Promoting Sustainable Rural Tourism		The policy supports the proposals that will enhance the visitor experience and encourage sustainable rural tourism, while ensuring that proposal respect the rural character and environmental qualities of the parish area.	Neutral	No	Policy seeks to promote tourism facilities and proposal that have strong regard for the SDNPA and rural character of the Parish area. It does not allocate tourism development site or increase the level of development in the area. Therefore, not expected to result in a likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason B and C**
R10 Plashett Wood SSSI, Plashett Park Farm and Clay Hill Farm	Environment and green space	The policy recognises the importance of Plashett Wood SSSI, Plashett Park Farm and Clay Hill Farm and seeks to protect these areas from inappropriate development.	Positive	No	Policy seeks to protect the natural and historic environmental assets and restrict inappropriate developments and intended to safeguard environmental features of the parish area. Therefore, it is unlikely to have significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reasons A and B**
R11 Protection of the River Ouse Water Catchment and Recreational Use of the Riverbank		The policy is designed to ensure that natural areas of the Parish that forming part of the River Ouse water catchment are protected and where appropriate enhanced with development restricted where necessary. It also seeks to manage recreational use of the riverbank appropriately.	Neutral	No	Policy seeks to protect the River Ouse catchment and associated natural areas to ensure that development does not adversely affect the water environment. Therefore, it is expected not to have significant effect to the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason A**

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
R12 Landscape and Biodiversity		The policy seeks to protect and enhance designated natural areas and improve ecological connectivity. It also seeks to ensure that trees, woodland, hedgerows and other important habitats are protected and appropriately incorporated into development. It also supports opportunities to enhance biodiversity and provide wildlife-friendly design are also supported.	Positive	No	Policy seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity, landscape features and ecological networks with the Neighbourhood Plan Area. It promotes habitat connectivity and wildlife friendly development. Therefore, it is not likely to effect significantly to the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason A**
R13 Local Green Space		The policy seeks to designate Local Green Spaces within Ringmer Parish Area for their local environmental, recreational and landscape value.	Neutral	No	The designation of Local Green Spaces restricts inappropriate development and helps safeguard environmental, landscape and recreational assets. The policy is protective in nature and does not allocate land for development or otherwise introduce growth that could affect the Lewes Downs SAC. Therefore, no likely significant effect is identified. **Reason A and B**
R14 Protection of Locally Significant Views		The policy seeks to safeguard a series of locally significant views in the community from inappropriate development.	Neutral	No	Policy intends to protect locally significant views so that developments take place in a landscape approach with intention to create a sense of place and visual connectivity of South Downs. There it

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
					not likely to have any significant effect on the Lewes Down SAC. **Reason A and B**
R15 Dark Skies		This policy is in support of the SDNPA policy S8 and seeks to ensure that development does not adversely affect the values dark skies and opportunities for star gazing in the parish area.	Neutral	No	This policy ensures the protection of the Parish area's Dark skies and minimise inappropriate lighting associated with development. this policy is therefore not expected to result in the any likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason A and B**
R16 Improving Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Opportunities	Transport and movement	The policy supports improvements to the active travel network and encourages more sustainable modes of transport and reliance on private car use.	Neutral	No	Policy promotes active travel, sustainable travel and improved connectivity which may reduce reliance on private vehicles and associated environmental pressures. Therefore, it is not expected to have any likely significant effect on Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason A and B**

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
R17 (i)Mitigating Vehicular Impacts at Junctions and Stress Points		The policy seeks to mitigate traffic impacts at key junctions and to support the provision of appropriate electric vehicle infrastructure.	Positive	No	Policy seeks to manage and mitigate transport impacts associated with developments and encourage the provision of electric vehicle infrastructure. It does not increase development and therefore not expected to result in a likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason A and B**
R17 (ii) Road Safety		The Policy requires safe pedestrian routes around B2192 or B2124 enabling residents of new developments to safely access services and schools, including those located to the south side B2192 of Ringmer Village	Neutral	No	The policy promotes pedestrian safety and accessibility within the Parish area. Therefore, it is not expected to result in a likely significant effect on Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason B**
R18 Publicly Accessible Parking		The policy safeguards existing publicly accessible car parking and support additional parking provision in areas identified as a challenge.	Neutral	No	The policy maintains and improves local parking provision and addresses existing parking pressures. It does not allocate new sites or increase development. Therefore, it is not expected to result in a likely significant effect on Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason B**

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
R19 Community Meeting Facilities	Community facilities	The policy seeks to address the deficiencies community meeting facility in the area and supports the provision of additional facilities to meet the local community need	Neutral	No	Policy supports improvements to community facilities and provision to meet local need. Therefore, it is not expected to result in a likely significant effect on Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason B**
R20 Important Community, Cultural, Sport and Recreation Facilities		The policy provides additional local detail for safeguarding facilities identified or nominated for designation as Community Assets and considered particularly important to the local community.	Neutral	No	Policy protects existing community cultural, sporting and recreational facilities that are important to residents. It does not allocate development or create additional development pressure and therefore, it is not expected to result in a likely significant effect on Lewes Downs SAC. **Reason B**
R21 Allotments and Community Growing Spaces		The policy seeks to safeguard the existing allotment space within the Parish as well as supporting new space. It would also support the expansion of the community orchard.	Neutral	No	Policy protects and enhances existing community growing space and support additional provision. It does not allocate development that could affect the Lewes Downs SAC and therefore, it is not expected to result in a likely significant effect on the European site. **Reason A and B**

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
R22 Adequate Health and Education Provision		Policy seeks to address the growing need for health and education provision and supports and facilities for new provisions.	Negative	Yes	Policy supports improvements to health and education provision to meet the growing need in the Parish area. There may be impacts from movement of the residents to and from Ringmer if there is no new or expanded health or education provision within the Ringmer Parish. Therefore, it is expected to result in a likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC.
R23 Water supply		The policy seeks to ensure that sufficient water supply capacity is available to meet current and future needs.	Neutral	No	Policy supports the provision of adequate water supply infrastructure and capacity to meet existing and future need. It does not allocate or increase development and therefore, it is not expected to result in a likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC. **Reasons B.**
R24 Drainage and Sewerage		The policy seeks to ensure that development is supported by suitable drainage infrastructure and flood mitigation measures, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) where required, to prevent adverse impacts from flooding	Neutral	No	The policy promotes appropriate drainage infrastructure and flood mitigation measures, including SuDS where necessary, to reduce flood risk and manage surface water sustainably. It does not allocate development or increase growth and is therefore not expected to result in a likely significant effect on the Lewes Downs SAC

Policy	Theme	Policy description	Potential impact (positive, negative, neutral)	Likely Significant Effect?	Explanation
					Reasons A and B
R25 Cemeteries		The policy seeks to ensure that sufficient cemetery space is available to serve the needs of the local community and accommodate future demand.	Neutral		Policy supports the provision of adequate cemetery space to meet local community needs. It does not increase planned growth or allocate development that would be likely to affect the Lewes Downs SAC and is therefore not expected to result in a likely significant effect. **Reasons B**

5. Assessed the potential impact (including any cumulative effects)

Screening the Protected Site in regard to Adopted Lewes District Local Plan and South Downs Local Plan

5.1. Other plans such as Lewes Local Plan Part 1 and 2 (LPP1 and LPP2) and South Downs Local Plan that could have an impact on protected sites in combination with the plan under production have to be taken into account during the screening stage. As an example, it may be assessed that there would be no significant effect caused by an individual plan on a particular protected site, but when considering in conjunction with other plans and strategies, the cumulative outcome could be assessed to cause a likely significant effect. In this case the protected site would have to undergo the further stages.

5.2. The Joint Core Strategy (LPP1) sets out provision of a minimum of 217 dwellings in Ringmer and Broyleside over the plan period. Ringmer Parish Council made a Neighbourhood Plan in 2016, and result residential site allocation development was expected to provide 204 dwellings over the plan period. The shortfall was to be provided by LPP2 residential allocation: RG01 - Caburn Field which is located 1.8 km from Lewes Downs SAC. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review (2025-2042) does not propose any new allocations but retains existing site allocations from the made Neighbourhood Plan.

5.3. Lewes Local Plan Part 2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (2017) for Ringmer and Broyleside concluded that ***"No HRA implications. Due to the distances involved there are no impact pathways present."***

6. Consultation with Natural England

6.1. In accordance with Regulation105 in the Habitats Regulations Natural England has been consulted on the preliminary HRA screening opinion/report.

6.2. The comments made by Naturalis are as follows:
"It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that significant effects on Habitats Sites are unlikely.
The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any 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."

7. HRA Screening Opinion

7.1. In a Neighbourhood Development Plan, one of the basic conditions is that it must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted development plan. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review (2025-2042) has been prepared in accordance with the Lewes District Local Plan Part 1, adopted by Lewes District Council on 11 May 2016 and the Local Plan Part 2, adopted in 2020 and forms part of the development plan for that part of Lewes district outside of the South Downs National Park.

7.2. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review does not allocate any new sites for development or make additional provision for growth beyond that already identified in the adopted Neighbourhood development plan. Consequently, no neighbourhood plan policies have been identified that would require mitigation measures, and mitigation has not been considered as part of this screening assessment.

7.3. The Plan retains 14 site allocations from the previously made Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan 2030, which are expected to deliver approximately 40 dwellings. These allocations have already been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment through the earlier neighbourhood planning process in 2014.

7.4. The previous assessment concluded that development in Ringmer, both alone and in combination with other planned growth in the district, would not result in likely significant effects on the Lewes Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It was also concluded that the scale of development proposed would not significantly increase visitor pressure on the SAC given the provision of accessible natural and semi natural greenspaces within Ringmer and by designating 26 Local Green Spaces in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan Policy R13.

7.5. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review introduces no new site allocations or additional development beyond that previously assessed. Therefore, as there has been no material change to the scale or nature of development proposed**, it is not considered likely to result in any new or additional significant environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans.**

Conclusion

Based on the assessment set out in Section 4, it is considered unlikely that the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review will give rise to any significant environmental effects. This conclusion was provided to Natural England for consultation, and their response is included in **Appendix I**.

Annex: I

Lewes District Council (2020-2042)

Lewes District Council is preparing a new local plan with a plan period 2020-2042.Once adopted it will replace the current development plan which has an end date of 2030, and comprises the;

- Part 1 Joint Core Strategy 2010-2030: Adopted in 2016 which sets out the strategic vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the district (including the areas that are within the South Downs National Park).
- Part 2: Site Allocations and development management policies, which sets out more detailed (non-strategic) planning policies for different types of development.

Work on preparing a new Local Plan for the Lewes District local plan area has been underway for several years. Most recently, the Council consulted on the Regulation 18 Phase 2 Draft Local Plan in early 2026, which built on the spatial strategy which included proposed site allocations for housing across the district.

In the emerging Local Plan for Lewes District, Draft Policy SDS3 (Settlement Hierarchy) identifies Ringmer as a Tier 2 Service Centre. Settlements within this tier are considered sustainable locations that has either a frequent bus or rail service and a range of key services and facilities that meet many of the day-to-day needs of residents and those living within the surrounding rural hinterland.

Ringmer occupies the second tier of the settlement hierarchy and, outside the higher-order Tier 1 settlements which presents one of the greatest opportunities to deliver the Council's transport vision-led spatial strategy. The close relationship between Ringmer and the neighbouring Tier 4 settlement of Broyle Side means that future growth in this area should be planned and delivered in a coordinated and strategic manner.

Through the Council's Call for Sites exercises, a significant number of sites were submitted in and around Ringmer and Broyle Side for consideration. Following site assessment and consultation on the emerging Local Plan, four allocations were proposed in the regulation 18 consultation within this area, comprising three strategic allocations and one non-strategic allocation. Together, these allocations would deliver approximately 1,605 dwellings over the plan period.

The proposed strategic and non-strategic allocations were:

- RG1: Land between Ringmer and Broyle – 1,150 dwellings
- RG2: Land at Harrisons Lane – 35 dwellings
- BR1: Land North of The Broyle – 340 dwellings
- BR2: Land South of The Broyle – 80 dwellings

Also within the Draft Local Plan Phase 2 consultation, two small site allocations were identified in Ringmer (LAA ref. 55RG and 70RG).

These allocations were proposed to be allocated to support the sustainable growth of Ringmer and Broyle Side, making use of the area's existing services, facilities and transport connections while ensuring that development is planned comprehensively to deliver the necessary infrastructure and community benefits in a sustainable way.

The emerging local plan is supported by a range of Evidence Base studies. These have been published and can be viewed here: Evidence Base for the Emerging Local Plan - Lewes and Eastbourne Councils.

South Downs National Park (2024-2042)

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is preparing a new South Downs Local Plan covering the period 2024-2042, which will replace the existing Local Plan. The review of the current Plan commenced in May 2022, with the project timetable updated in December 2022.

The first statutory consultation on the emerging Local Plan was undertaken under Regulation 18 in early 2025 followed by consultation on the Proposed Submission South Downs Local Plan under Regulation 19 in May 2026. The Regulation 19 Plan sets out the Authority's proposed planning policies and site allocations to guide development, including housing, employment, renewable energy and infrastructure, across the National Park up to 2042.

The South Downs Local Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the National Park, alongside Minerals and Waste Local Plans and Neighbourhood Development Plans. Neighbourhood Plans continue to play an important role in shaping development within local communities and currently provide a significant proportion of site allocations across the National Park.

The New South Down National Park 2024-2042 does not have any proposed allocations for Ringmer.

The emerging Local Plan is supported by a range of evidence studies and will be considered through an independent examination before adoption, which is anticipated in 2027. The published evidence base studies can be found here: Evidence Base - South Downs National Park Authority.

Annex: II

Table: Updated SEA Conclusion for retained site allocation in the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review (2025-2042)

Site Ref.	Location	Number of dwellings allocated	Status at September 2025	Updated SEA Conclusion Reason for Change / No Change
RES10	Parcels of land at Broyle Close	6	Planning permission granted for 3 dwellings, which are under construction. Carry forward the remaining 3 extant dwellings.	**No change.** Planning permission has been granted for 3 of the 6 dwellings, and construction is under way. The site is outside the 2 km SSSI impact-risk buffer, and no SAC, SPA or listed-building constraints have been identified. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES13	Downsview Farm, farmhouse and herd manager cottage	2	Has planning permission but has not yet been delivered.	**No change.** Planning permission has been granted. No SAC, SPA, SSSI or listed-building constraints have been identified, and no new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.

Site Ref.	Location	Number of dwellings allocated	Status at September 2025	Updated SEA Conclusion Reason for Change / No Change
RES14	Holfords Cottages, Norlington Lane	2	Has planning permission but has not yet been delivered.	**No change.** Planning permission has been granted. No SAC or SPA constraints have been identified. Plashet Wood SSSI is the nearest SSSI, but the two-dwelling proposal is below the relevant impact-risk trigger. No heritage constraints have been identified, so no new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES17	Farmhouse, Upper Lodge Farm	1	Retain in the RNP Review.	**No change.** No SAC or SPA constraints have been identified. Plashet Wood is the nearest SSSI, but the one-dwelling proposal is below the relevant impact-risk trigger. No heritage constraints have been identified. Therefore, no new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid
RES19	Clay Hill House barn conversion	1	Has planning permission for 5 dwellings, which are under construction. Retain in the RNP Review.	**No change.** Planning permission has been granted for a higher number of dwellings. The lower one-dwelling proposal is below the relevant impact-risk trigger for Plashet Wood SSSI, and no SAC or SPA constraints have been identified. No new likely significant environmental effects

Site Ref.	Location	Number of dwellings allocated	Status at September 2025	Updated SEA Conclusion Reason for Change / No Change
				arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES20	Barn complex, Old House Farm (within the SDNP)	5	Retain in the RNP Review.	**Neutral / No Significant Effect** Nearby Grade 2 listed building. Proposed development should be subject to appropriate heritage assessment and design. No change is required for biodiversity. No other ecological constraints have been identified, and the five-dwelling proposal is below the relevant impact-risk trigger for Lewes Downs SSSI. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid. Given the small scale, it is unlikely to cause substantial harm to the asset's primary significance.
RES21	Rural brownfield site, Ashton Green	2	Has undergone pre-application discussions. Retain in the RNP Review.	**No change.** No designated heritage or ecological asset lies within the site. A listed building is approximately 0.2 km to the north-east, but no likely significant effect has been identified. The site is outside an SSSI impact zone, and no SAC or

Site Ref.	Location	Number of dwellings allocated	Status at September 2025	Updated SEA Conclusion Reason for Change / No Change
				SPA constraints have been identified. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES22	Norlington Farm barn conversion	1–2	Retain in the RNP Review.	**Neutral / No Significant Effect** There are 3 listed buildings nearby the site. Retention of the allocation should be subject to appropriate heritage assessment, design and mitigation. No SSSI, SAC or SPA constraints have been identified. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid. Given the small scale, it is unlikely to cause substantial harm to the asset's primary significance.
RES23	Green Lane Farm barn conversion	1	Retain in the RNP Review.	**No change.** The site lies within the 2 km SSSI impact-risk buffer, but the one-dwelling proposal is below the relevant trigger. No SAC, SPA or heritage constraints have been identified; therefore, no new likely significant

Site Ref.	Location	Number of dwellings allocated	Status at September 2025	Updated SEA Conclusion Reason for Change / No Change
				environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES25	Lower Lodge Farm	8	Planning permission granted and construction underway. Retain in the RNP Review.	**No change.** Planning permission has been granted and construction is under way. No SAC or SPA constraints have been identified. The eight-dwelling proposal is below the relevant impact-risk trigger for Plashet Wood SSSI, and no heritage constraints have been identified. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES26	Redevelopment of shopping precinct maisonettes	14	1 dwelling delivered. Retain the remaining 13 dwellings in the RNP Review.	**Neutral / No Significant Effect** Given the site's existing use and surrounding built development, the potential effect on their settings is unlikely to be significant. No change is required for biodiversity because no SSSI, SAC or SPA constraints have been identified. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.

Site Ref.	Location	Number of dwellings allocated	Status at September 2025	Updated SEA Conclusion Reason for Change / No Change
RES27	Busy Bee redevelopment	8	Retain in the RNP Review.	**Neutral / No Significant Effect** Four listed buildings are located nearby. Any redevelopment should be informed by a proportionate heritage assessment and incorporate sensitive design measures No change is required for biodiversity because no SSSI, SAC or SPA constraints have been identified. The site is a previously developed land. Given the site's existing use and surrounding built development, the potential effect on their settings is unlikely to be significant. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES28	Farthings garden, North Road	6	Retain in the RNP Review.	**Neutral / No Significant Effect** Site is within the conservation Area. No change is required for biodiversity because no SSSI, SAC or SPA constraints have been identified.

Site Ref.	Location	Number of dwellings allocated	Status at September 2025	Updated SEA Conclusion Reason for Change / No Change
				Given the site's existing use and surrounding built development, the potential effect on their settings is unlikely to be significant. No new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.
RES33	Plashett Park Farm barn conversions	3	Retain in the RNP Review.	**No change.** The site lies within the 2 km SSSI impact-risk buffer, but the three-dwelling proposal is below the relevant trigger. No SAC, SPA or heritage constraints have been identified; therefore, no new likely significant environmental effects arise from retaining the allocation, and the existing SEA conclusion remains valid.

Please note: For the sites with existing planning permissions, the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review introduces **no material changes to the environmental baseline or likely effects**, and it does not create any new or additional significant environmental effects beyond what is already legally permitted. Environmental controls are securely managed at the project level via standard planning conditions.

Annex: III

SEA Consultation responses

Natural England Response

Date: 17 September 2026
Our ref: 556708
Your ref: Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan

NATURAL ENGLAND

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

T 0300 060 3900

Policy Planning Team
Lewes District Council

BY EMAIL ONLY
LocalPlan@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

T Dear Sir/Madam

Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review - SEA Assessment Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 17 August 2026.

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)

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.

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 area (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 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 faithfully

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

Historic England Response

Lewes District Council

Strategic Environmental Assessment Consultation for Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025-2042

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process that ensures environmental considerations are taken into account when preparing plans and programmes. It helps promote sustainable development by identifying and assessing potential environmental effects before a plan is adopted.

Ringmer Parish Council is updating the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan 2010-2030. Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, Lewes District Council, as the responsible authority, is required to determine whether the emerging Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Lewes District Council has prepared a SEA Screening Report setting out its initial assessment of the emerging policy proposals within the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review for the period 2025-2042.

As a statutory consultation body, we would like to invite you to participate in the consultation on the SEA Screening Report. The purpose of this consultation is to seek your views on whether the emerging Neighbourhood Plan Review is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore whether a full Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.

The consultation will run for a period of **5 weeks**, from **Monday 17th August 2026 to Friday, 18th September 2026.**

We would be grateful if you could submit your comments below and send the response to LocalPlan@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk.

Questionnaire

1. Do you have any comments on the information provided in the Introduction section of the SEA Screening Report?

No

2. Do you have any comments on the section describing the Neighbourhood Plan Review and the Neighbourhood Area?

No

3. Do you have any comments on the **Area Characteristics** section, including the environmental features, constraints, designations and sensitivities identified within the neighbourhood area?

No

4. Do you agree with the assessment of likely significant environmental effects?

Yes

5. Are there any environmental effects that you believe require further consideration?

No

6. Do you agree with the Screening Opinion that the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review **is** not likely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment?

Yes

7. Please add if you have additional comments.

None

Annex: IV
HRA consultation response from Natural England

Date: 29 September 2026
Our ref: 558727
Your ref: Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review

Mr Tabinda Rahman Chowdhury
Lewes District & Eastbourne Borough Council

BY EMAIL ONLY
LocalPlan@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Mr Chowdhury

Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025-2042 - HRA Screening Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 09 September 2026.

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: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that significant effects on Habitats Sites are unlikely,

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any 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.

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). The Neighbourhood Plan proposals should also be screened to ascertain whether Strategic Environmental Assessment is necessary. Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the planning practice guidance.

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 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