

Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2036



Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination Report

September 2025

Prepared on behalf of Swanton Morley Parish Council by



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

- 1.1. 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. SEA is a tool used internationally to improve environmental performance of plans so that they can better contribute to sustainable development.
- 1.2. Establishing whether a Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to a SEA is an important legal requirement. The Independent Examiner appointed to consider the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review will check it meets the 'Basic Conditions' set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)¹. One of the Basic Conditions is whether the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review is compatible with European Union obligations.
- 1.3. This screening report is designed to determine whether the contents of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review require a SEA in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC and the associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004)².
- 1.4. The legislative background, which is set out in section 2, outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise.
- 1.5. The policies of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 are set out in section 3.
- 1.6. To assess whether a SEA is required, a screening process must be undertaken based on a standard set of criteria. This must be subject to consultation with the statutory consultees of the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. Breckland District Council, Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Wildlife Trust have also been invited to respond as part of the consultation.
- 1.7. The result of the screening process must be detailed in a Screening Report and made available to the public.

¹ <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/the-basic-conditions-that-a-draftneighbourhood-plan-or-order-must-meet-if-it-is-to-proceed-to-referendum/>

² <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/the-basic-conditions-that-a-draftneighbourhood-plan-or-order-must-meet-if-it-is-to-proceed-to-referendum/>

2. Legislative Background

- 2.1. The basis for SEA legislation is European Union Directive 2001/24/EC³ which requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plan or programmes that would have a significant environmental effect. This was transposed into English Law by the Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations 2004, commonly referred to as SEA regulations.
- 2.2. In accordance with the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) (Regulation 9(1)), it must be determined if a Plan requires an environmental assessment. Where it is determined that a SEA is not required, then, under Regulation 9(3), prepare a statement setting out the reasons for this determination.
- 2.3. In accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004, Swanton Morley Parish Council (the Qualifying Body) has considered whether an environmental assessment of the emerging Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan is required due to significant environmental effects.
- 2.4. Whether a Neighbourhood Plan requires a SEA, and if so, the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft Neighbourhood Plan (see PPG on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Paragraph 046). The PPG suggests that a SEA may be required, for example, where:
- 2.5. A Neighbourhood Plan can allocate sites for development.
- 2.6. The Neighbourhood Area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; and
- 2.7. 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 (LP).

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042>

3. Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Designation & Policies

- 3.1. Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review is at a pre-submission consultation stage (Reg 14). The Review considers and updates the adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan (which was made in 2019). The adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan was the subject of an Sustainability Assessment (SA), which included the SEA, and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Assessment that concluded that no Assessment was required⁴.
- 3.2. The changes being proposed in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review can be summarised as follows:
- 3.3. First new policy: **Policy 17 - Commercial Solar & Wind Generation of Electricity** seeking to guide the location of such schemes, which should only be located in areas of least environmental and social impact, should such schemes come forward in the Parish;
- 3.4. Second new policy: **Policy 18 - Parking Provision** seeking to ensure adequate off-road parking with electric charging points are available to residents, to seek to reduce pavement parking and prevent the mistakes of previous development whilst reducing greenhouse gases;
- 3.5. Third new policy: **Policy 19 - Provision of Street-lighting** which seeks to ensure any provision of street-lighting accords with the standards, reduces the pollution impact on dark skies and encourages greater use of energy efficient infrastructure; and
- 3.6. Fourth new policy: **Policy 20 - Management of Community Infrastructure** to provide sustainability and certainty in management of community assets.
- 3.7. There are two proposed changes to the existing suite of policies in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan A minor update to **Policy 1: Protecting the Identify of Swanton Morley** by seeking to retain the Swanton Morley settlement boundary; and
- 3.8. Proposed designation of four additional new sites as Local Green Space in **Policy 7: Local Green Space:-**
- 3.8.1. Village Hall Playing Fields, Manns Lane;
- 3.8.2. Allotments, Manns Lane;

⁴ <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/swanton-morley>

3.8.3. Playing field, Manns Lane; and

3.8.4. Cricket Ground, Hoe Road South;

3.9. The remaining 14 policies of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan will be 'saved policies' and remain unaltered.

3.10. Other updates and corrections are mainly attributed to the latest version, December 2024, of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adoption of the Breckland Local Plan in 2023.

3.11. The information provided for the SEA Screening Opinion Request, identifies in terms of environmental assets, that the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area does include one Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area's of Conservation (SAC) – The River Wensum.

3.12. The River Wensum SSSI / SAC is designated for its unique habitat and features, including the river itself, supporting habitats, and specific species like Bullhead, Brook Lamprey, White-clawed crayfish, and Desmoulin's Whorl Snail.

3.13. Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area does not encompass any Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the nearest AONB is the Norfolk Coast over 20km away) or National Parks (the Broad over 15km away).

3.14. The River Wensum is a Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

3.15. The designated for its unique habitat and features, including the river itself, supporting habitats, and specific species like Bullhead, Brook Lamprey, White-clawed crayfish, and Desmoulin's Whorl Snail.

3.16. Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area has no Special Protection Area's or Ramsar Sites within the Parish. A more detailed screening of the potential effects of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 on these areas is undertaken through a parallel Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening.

3.17. Information relating to the environmental assets in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area are summarised in the table below.

Environmental Asset	Designation	Details
Internationally designated sites	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	One within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area, Located to the north of the village the River Wensum (SAC).

Environmental Asset	Designation	Details
	Special Protection Areas (SPA)	None within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area.
	Ramsar Wetlands	None within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area.
	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	<p>One within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>The River Wensum, which flows through Swanton Morley, is designated as a SSSI and SAC.</p> <p>This designation highlights the river's importance as a valuable chalk river habitat with a rich variety of plant and animal life.</p>
	Registered Ancient Woodland	<p>There are no registered Ancient Woodlands within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Area.</p> <p>Foxley Wood, the largest ancient woodland in Norfolk, is approximately 5 miles to the north of Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area, and is known for its biodiversity and walking trails.</p>
Local Sites	County Wildlife Sites (CWS)	There are five sites identified as County Wildlife Sites in the parish. Only the one

Environmental Asset	Designation	Details
		located south of the Church abuts the built environment of the village of Swanton Morley. The other four are located in open countryside, with two being adjacent to the River Wensum or its floodplain.
	Geodiversity Sites	<p>There are no specific County Geodiversity Sites (CGS) listed for Swanton Morley.</p> <p>However, the area is part of the broader Norfolk landscape with significant geodiversity, including glacial landforms and geological formations.</p> <p>Swanton Morley is situated within the South Norfolk till plateau, known for its agricultural landscape and underlying Pleistocene glacial deposits.</p>
	Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR)	<p>Swanton Morley does not have a dedicated Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR) listed.</p> <p>However, Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Wildlife Trust have established many RNRs across Norfolk to protect valuable roadside verges.</p>

Environmental Asset	Designation	Details
		Swanton Morley is near several other nature reserves, including Rush meadows, Scarning Fen, and Honeypot Wood, which are within 3 miles of the Neighbourhood Area.
Common land	Registered Common Land	In Swanton Morley there are three registered common lands, these are Burgh Common, Mill Common, and Little Common. The Swanton Morley Parish Council is responsible for these common lands.
	Registered Village Green	Swanton Morley has a registered village green, specifically registered as VG.68, by Breckland District Council.
Public Rights of Way (PRoW).	Public Footpaths, bridleways and Restricted byways.	The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area has a network of public rights of way, including footpaths and restricted byways. Please see Norfolk County Council Map of PRoW ⁵ for locations and routes.
	Norfolk Trails	The Wensum Way, which passes through the village of Swanton Morley, runs from Gressenhall to

⁵ <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/43028/Map-and-Statement-of-Public-Rights-of-Way-in-Norfolk>

Environmental Asset	Designation	Details
		Lenwade, passing through the Wensum Valley.
Agricultural Land	Grades 1-5	Area mostly of Grade 3 Agricultural Land.
Heritage Assets	Schedules Monuments	No scheduled Monuments
	Listed Buildings	There are ten listed buildings, including the Control Tower (Grade II) which is located on the parish boundary with Hoe & Worthing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Grade 1 Listed Buildings • Zero Grade 2* Listed Buildings • Eight Grade 2 Listed Buildings
	Conservation Areas	Swanton Morley does not have any Conservation Areas.

3.18. The adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan has already allocated additional land for development to deliver a higher level of development than is already identified within Breckland's Local Plan.

3.19. The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 does not allocate land in and above that identified within the Breckland Local Plan or adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan.

3.20. The policies covered within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 are not likely to lead to any major new development or infrastructure, nor are they likely to have any likely significant adverse effects on any SEA topic area.

3.21. Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Policies (Regulation 14) to be considered in this new SEA Screening Opinion are:

- 3.21.1. **Ambition of New Policy 17:**
Should proposals come forward for commercial renewable and low carbon energy schemes this policy seeks to provide guidance for such development, which should only be located in areas of least environmental and social impact.

NEW POLICY 17:

Commercial Scale Solar & Wind Generation of Electricity

Development of commercial 'green energy' production would be supported in the appropriate area, as shown on MAP A.

Proposals for new renewable energy and low carbon development, subject to consideration of the impact of the development and whether this can be made acceptable, will be supported.

Proposals will be considered having regard to the extent to which there are:-

- a. adverse impacts on the local landscape;
- b. designated and non- designated heritage assets assessed;
- c. adverse effects on residential amenity by virtue of outlook / overbearing impact, traffic generation, noise, vibration, overshadowing, glare, or any other associated detrimental emissions, including during construction, operation and decommissioning;
- d. an irreversible loss of the highest quality agricultural land;
- e. adverse impacts upon designated wildlife sites; nature conservation interests; and biodiversity;
- f. applications will be expected to demonstrate that any adverse impacts can be mitigated; and
- g. for the continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.

Proposals for renewable energy development including the landward infrastructure for offshore renewable schemes requiring planning permission will be assessed to determine whether the benefits they bring in terms of the amount and usability of energy generated outweigh any adverse impacts. When attributing weight to any harm, in addition to other relevant policies in the Local Plan, regard will be given to national policy and guidance, statutory duty and legislation which seeks protection and enhancement of the landscape; designated and non-statutory heritage assets.

Where appropriate consideration should be given through the need for planning conditions requiring the decommissioning and removal of all plant and ancillary equipment, and if necessary the restoration of land, on the cessation of use.

The effective use of land by focusing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, will be encouraged provided that it is not of high environmental value.

This policy contributes to and supports Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Objectives (a), (b) and (c).

3.21.2. **Ambition of New Policy 18:**

This policy seeks to ensure adequate off-road parking with electric charging points are available to residents to reduce greenhouse gases, to seek to reduce pavement parking and prevent the mistakes of previous development.

NEW POLICY 18: Parking Provision

New residential developments must provide the following minimum number of off-street associated car parking spaces per dwelling:

1 or 2 bedrooms	2 spaces
3 bedrooms	3 spaces
4 or more bedrooms	4 spaces

Accessible communal car parking areas of an equivalent provision will be considered as an acceptable alternative in appropriate locations - in clear view and not located behind the homes expected to make use of this type of off-street car parking.

Each new home is required to provide at least one electric charging point and infrastructure which is accessible and convenient for the homeowner to use.

This policy contributes and supports Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Objectives (c), (e) and (i).

3.21.3. **Ambition of new Policy 19:**

This policy seeks to ensure provision of street-lighting accords with the Local Lighting Authority's (Swanton Morley Parish Council)

standards, reduce the pollution impact on dark skies and encourage greater use of energy efficient infrastructure.

NEW POLICY 19: Provision of Street-lighting

Where streetlighting is provided by new development it should meet the following criteria:-

- accord with the specification defined in the adopted Swanton Morley Parish Council Streetlight Policy (or subsequent updates).
- low energy consumption;
- seek to minimise light pollution;
- designed to maintain highway safety;
- have the capability to be dimmed between certain hours (as set by the Parish Council); and
- if ownership is transferred to the Swanton Morley Parish Council should be accompanied with funding for maintenance and repairs (as set out in New Policy: Management of Community Assets) and calculated using the approved method.

This policy contributes and supports Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Objectives (b), (c), (e) and (f).

- 3.21.4. **Ambition of New Policy 20:**
This policy seeks to provide longevity for the management of community infrastructure (such as open space, streetlighting, etc..) in a sustainable way, with option (a) as the preference.

NEW POLICY 20: Management of Community Infrastructure

Where new developments provide elements of green infrastructure (such as open space, natural green space, recreational areas, allotments, community woodland and orchards) or hard infrastructure assets (such as streetlighting, buildings) the Developer will be required to demonstrate an effective and sustainable management programme for the infrastructure or asset by having:

- a) an effective transition to the Swanton Morley Parish Council ownership with funding payment to cover projected future costs for at least the next ten years; or
- b) an effective transition to the Local Authority ownership; or
- c) an appropriate legally binding arrangement for management by an established management company with a viable and sustainable business case and operating model.

This policy contributes to and supports Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Objectives (a), (e) and (h).

3.21.5. **Ambition of existing Policy 1 (unchanged):**
This policy seeks to maintain Swanton Morley as a distinct and separate village with its own identity.

3.21.5.1. **Changes to Policy 1:**
It is proposed to insert the additional wording “**(as defined in Map 4 Swanton Morley Settlement Boundary)**” into the existing policy to reference the current Swanton Morley settlement boundary. The proposed change to Policy 1 wording is shown in red below.

POLICY 1: Protecting the Identity of Swanton Morley

Outside the defined settlement boundary (as defined in Map 4 Swanton Morley Settlement Boundary) development will not be supported unless it involves:

Rural exception sites;

Dwellings to meet the essential need for a rural worker;

Development involving the re-use of redundant or disused buildings;

Farm diversification; and

Rural tourism related development.

The development of residential curtilages in the countryside will be resisted where it would lead to significant change to the landscape character.

3.21.6. **Ambition of existing Policy 7 (unchanged):**
This policy seeks to provide special protection for key areas of green space through designation as 'Local Green Space', as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 106 and 107, which the local community has identified of particular importance to them.

3.21.7. **Changes to Policy 7:**
It is proposed to designate four new areas of Local Green Space in addition to the three already designated in the adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan. These new areas are numbered 4), 5), 6) and 7) in Policy 7 below.

POLICY 7: Local Green Space

The Neighbourhood Plan has already designated the following three locations as Local Green Spaces (as shown on Map 8: Local Green Space) and these remain unchanged:-

- 1) Gray Drive;
- 2) Thompson Close; and
- 3) Middleton Avenue

The Neighbourhood Plan now seeks to designate the following four new locations also as Local Green Spaces (as shown on Maps 8b, 8c, 8d and 8e):-

- 4) Village Hall Playing Fields, Manns Lane;
- 5) Allotments, Manns Lane;
- 6) Playing field, Manns Lane; and
- 7) Cricket Ground, Hoe Road South.

Applications for development which would adversely affect the function and local character of designated Local Green Space will not be supported unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

- 3.22. Listed below is each of the existing adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Policies, all of which remain unchanged from the 'made' Neighbourhood Plan and will be 'saved policies'.

Policy 2: Growth in the Right Places

Policy 3: Enabling Growth on Allocated Sites

Policy 4: Housing for the Local Community (Local Lettings)

Policy 5: Affordable Housing on Exception Sites

Policy 6: Delivery of Planning Obligations

Policy 8: Protection of Existing Open Space

Policy 9: Important Views

Policy 10: Accessibility and Biodiversity

Policy 11: Design of Development

Policy 12: Flooding

Policy 13: Broadband and Mobile Communications

Policy 14: Employment and Local Shops

Policy 15: Additional Community Facilities

Policy 16: Traffic Impact

4. Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

- 4.1. The process for determining whether or not a SEA is required is called screening. In order to screen, it is necessary to determine if a plan will have a significant environmental effect using the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule I of the SEA Regulations.
- 4.2. A determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted: The Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England.
- 4.3. Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3 (5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Effects⁶

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
 - The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
 - The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
 - 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).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
 - The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
 - The cumulative nature of the effects,
 - The transboundary nature of the effects

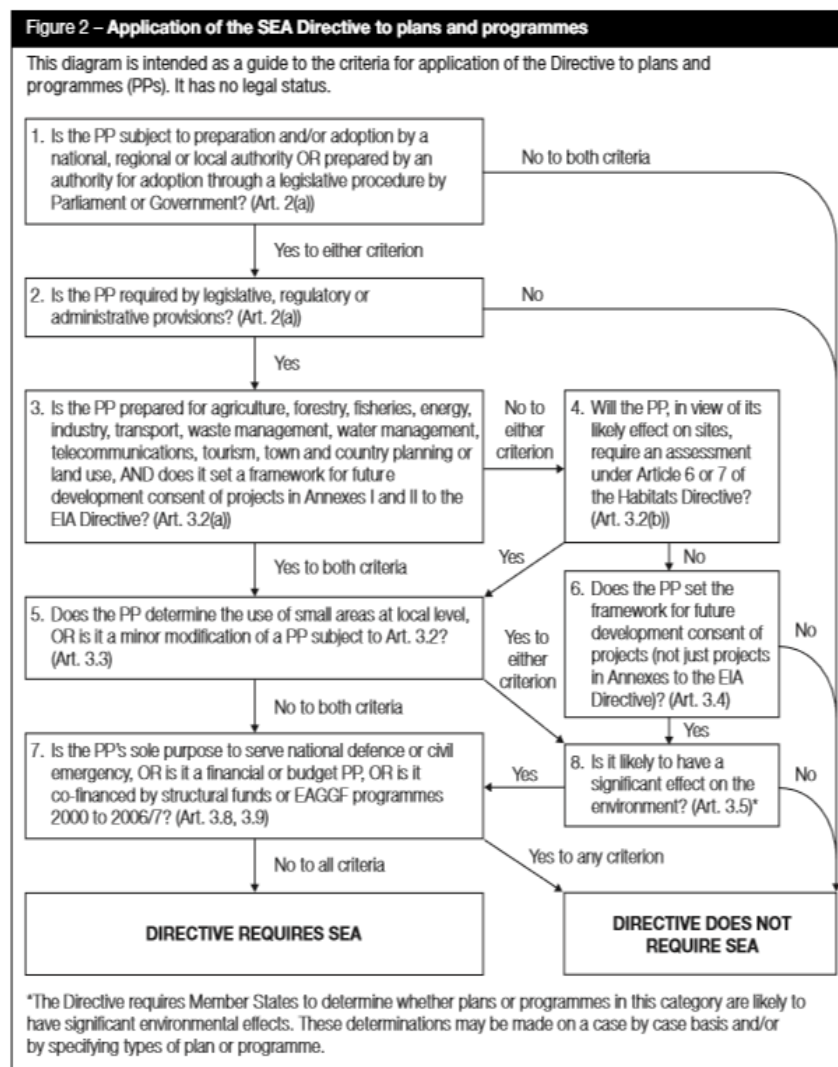
⁶ Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

- The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - Intensive land-use,
 - The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

5. Assessment

5.1. The SEA screening is a two-stage process. The first part considers the Neighbourhood Plan against the SEA assessment criteria set out in the national guidance, 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive'⁷. The second part of the assessment considers whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004⁸.

5.2. Figure 2 below sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied with steps 1 to 5 encompassed within Stage 1 of the SEA screening process and step 8 undertaken through Stage 2.



(Source: Annex 11 of SEA Directive)

⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf

⁸ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/pdfs/ukxi_20041633_en.pdf

5.3. **SEA Screening Stage 1:**

SEA Directive Article 2(a), 3.2(a), 3.2(b), 3.3, 3.4, 3.8 and 3.9

**Table 2: Application of the SEA Directive to the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan
Assessment1: Establishing the need for SEA**

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan 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))	Y	<p>The preparation and making of the Neighbourhood Plan is permitted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 is being prepared by the Swanton Morley Parish Council (the relevant body) and will be “made” (adopted) by Breckland Council as the Local Authority subject to passing an independent examination and community referendum, if required.</p> <p>The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and 2. Neighbourhoods Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the Neighbourhood Plan Review required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art.2(a))	N	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan review is not a requirement of the Town and Country Planning Act as amended by the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>Once the review is completed the Neighbourhood Plan will be</p>

Stage	Y/N	Reason
		<p>updated, following the regulations, before being “made” and forming part of the Development Plan for the District.</p> <p>The actions and process are directed by legislative and it is important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects. Hence, whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p>
<p>3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan 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))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan can include these policy areas and could provide, at a neighbourhoods level, the framework for development that would fall within Annex II of the EIA Directive.</p> <p>Developments that fall within Annex I are ‘excluded’ development for Neighbourhood Plans (as set out in Section 61(k) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)).</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a framework for Town and Country Planning and land use within the parish of Swanton Morley.</p> <p>The strategic framework for development is set by the adopted Breckland Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to be in general conformity with this.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not anticipate being the tool to</p>

Stage	Y/N	Reason
		manage development of the scale and nature envisaged by Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan Review, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (Art.3.2(b))	?	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have impacts on sites covered by the Habitats Regulations.</p> <p>A Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening Report and the Assessment of the Breckland Local Plan were carried out as part of the preparation of the Local Plan.</p> <p>A HRA screening assessment on the Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 will be undertaken. This will determine whether there are any likely significant effects on Habitat Sites covered by the Habitats Regulations arising from the Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025.</p>
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan Review determine the use of small areas at local level, Or is it a minor modification of a plan or programme subject to Art 3.2? (Art 3.3)	Y	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan can determine the use of small areas at a local level.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to include policies relating to the management of sustainable development.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 does not specifically allocate further land for additional housing or other growth, as the adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan has already allocated land for additional housing growth.</p>

Stage	Y/N	Reason
6. Does the Neighbourhood Plan Review set the framework for future development consent of Projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	Once 'made', a Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan and will be used in the determination of planning applications in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area. Therefore, it sets the framework for future developments at a neighbourhood level.
7. Is the Neighbourhood Plan Review's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it financial or budget plan or programme, OR is it financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art.3.8,3.9)	N	The Neighbourhood Plan does not deal with these categories.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment	N	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 seeks general conformity with the strategic policies of the "adopted" Local Plan.</p> <p>There is no new specific development proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan Review, nor is further or additional land allocated for development through the Neighbourhood Plan (allocations have already been made in the adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan).</p> <p>It is therefore considered that the plan would not have a significant effect on heritage assets, landscape, biodiversity interests or areas of flood risk.</p>

5.4. SEA Screening Stage 2:

SEA Directive Article 3(5) Annex II - Application of Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects of a Neighbourhood Plan

5.5. Table 3 below sets out the assessment against the Strategic Environmental Assessment criteria for the Neighbourhood Plan Review. This is to determine whether the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan will have a significant effect on the environment.

5.6. This criteria against which the screening is carried out are taken directly from Annex II Of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (also known as the SEA Directive), as required by Article 3(4).

Table 3: SEA Screening Stage 2- Assessment of the likelihood of Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria in Annex 11 of the SEA Directive	Response	Is there a significant effect?
(1) Characteristics of the plan and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size, and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	<p>The strategic framework for development is set by the adopted Breckland Local Plan.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to align and be in general conformity with the Breckland Local Plan as well as within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>	No
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy;	<p>Once “made” the Neighbourhood Plan would be implemented alongside the Breckland Local Plan and form part of the District's Development Plan.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan will expand upon some of the Local Plan policies, providing additional information at a neighbourhood level.</p>	No
The relevance of the plan or programme for	Any development that comes forward through the	No

Criteria in Annex 11 of the SEA Directive	Response	Is there a significant effect?
the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to the environmental considerations of the adopted Local Plan. These policies have been subject to sustainability appraisal and are in place to ensure that sustainable development is achieved.	
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;	<p>There are not considered to be any significant environmental problems which are specific to the area, above and beyond those considered and addressed in the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan policies which provide additional environmental protection.</p> <p>A HRA screening assessment on the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 will be undertaken and will determine whether there are any likely significant effects on habitat sites covered by the Habitats Regulations arising from the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025.</p>	No
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 implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Neighbourhood Plan.	No
(2) Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
The probability, duration, frequency,	The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 has a plan period to 2036.	No

Criteria in Annex 11 of the SEA Directive	Response	Is there a significant effect?
and reversibility of the effects;	The Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 does not seek to allocate additional sites for growth (the adopted Neighbourhood Plan did allocate sites) but supplements Local Plan policy with neighbourhood level matters of importance for consideration.	
The cumulative nature of the effects;	No new growth is proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025, as such no cumulative effects arise in combination with the adopted Local Plan to introduce significant environmental effects.	No
The transboundary nature of the effects;	The impacts beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area are unlikely to be significant.	No
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);	The nature of the proposals establishing local criteria for consideration of development proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to produce any significant effects.	No
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the Parish of Swanton Morley, which has a population of approximately 2,173 (Census 2021). The spatial extent and the magnitude of the population affected are not considered significant for the purpose of the SEA.	No
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;	i) The Neighbourhood Plan Area does contain one nationally designated site – part of the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – it also includes designations which reflect the cultural and	No

Criteria in Annex 11 of the SEA Directive	Response	Is there a significant effect?
<p>ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</p> <p>iii) Intensive land use</p>	<p>heritage value of the area such as listed buildings. The Neighbourhood Plan will conform to the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan, which provides protection to these environmental characteristics to ensure that they are not vulnerable to significant impacts from development.</p> <p>ii) The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in exceedance of environmental quality standards, such as those relating to air, water, and soil quality.</p> <p>iii) The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent that would result in a significant intensification of local land Use.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>No</p>
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The Neighbourhood Plan Area includes the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and other designations which reflect the cultural and heritage value of the area such as listed buildings. The environmental effects on areas of biodiversity designations have been considered through the emerging Local Plan.	No

6. Consultee Responses

6.1. The response summary conclusions received from the statutory consultees, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England are below.

6.2. Each full and detailed responses are recorded in Appendix 1.

6.3. No responses were received from Breckland District Council, Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Wildlife Trust will be recorded here.

Statutory Responses

6.4. **Environment Agency's view** – Thank you for consulting us on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan. **No issues were raised.**

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

6.6. **Natural England's view** – It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

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

Non-statutory Responses

6.7. **Breckland District Council's view** – none received.

6.8. **Norfolk County Council's view** – none received.

6.9. **Norfolk Wildlife Trust's view** – none received.

7. Conclusion & Determination

- 7.1. This screening assessment suggested Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 and the policies which it includes are **unlikely to have significant negative effects on the European Designated Sites**.
- 7.2. In light of the assessment and the opinions given by the statutory bodies it is concluded that the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 is **not likely to have significant environmental effects** and, therefore, **will not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment**.
- 7.3. The main reasons for this conclusion are as follows:-
- 7.3.1. The assessment identifies and the opinions expressed by the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England there are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects from the implementation of the proposals in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025.
- 7.3.2. The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 does not seek to further increase household numbers.
- 7.3.3. Where development is supported policy outlines that it should considered having regard to the extent of adverse impacts on the local landscape, designated and non-designated heritage assets and demonstrate mitigation of any adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites, nature conservation interests and biodiversity while consider restoration of land on cession of use.
- 7.3.4. The locations identified for future growth in the adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan align with the Breckland Local Plan and were preferred or acceptable alternative sites identified through the plan making process and supported by a specific Sustainability Appraisal.
- 7.3.5. The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 policies add detail to strategic policies within the Breckland Local Plan. These strategic policies have been subjected to a Habitat Regulations assessment (HRA) screening.
- 7.4. This report is based on the Screening Assessment undertaken on the Regulation 14 version of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025. Should the contents of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan subsequently differ from this version, there may be a requirement to revisit this Screening Assessment.
- 7.5. A copy of this determination, as required by Regulation 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, has been shared with the statutory bodies.

Appendix 1: Response Details (alphabetical order)

- **Environment Agency**
- **Historic England**
- **Natural England**

Environment Agency



Swanton Morley Parish Council
New Village Hall Manns Lane
Swanton Morley
Norfolk
NR20 4NP

Our ref: AC/2025/133009/01-L01
Your ref: SwantonMorleyNHP
Date: 05 September 2025

To whom it may concern

SWANTON MORLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: SEA SCREENING OPINION REQUEST

SWANTON MORLEY

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

Flood Risk

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

On the basis that future development is steered away from the sensitive aspects of the environment highlighted, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless, we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to cover the management of flood risk.

Allocation of any sites and any windfall development delivered through the Plan period should follow the sequential approach. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 161 sets this out.

Groundwater and Contaminated Land

The Parish is located within Source Protection Zones 1, 2 and 3. These are areas identified as particularly sensitive to contaminating development, or development on historically contaminated sites.

Any development in these areas should follow Environment Agency recommendations at [Protect groundwater and prevent groundwater pollution - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-groundwater-and-prevent-groundwater-pollution).

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

On 12 February 2024, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by](#)

Environment Agency
Bromholme Lane, Bampton, Huntingdon, PE28 4NE.
Customer services line: 03708 506 506
www.gov.uk/environment-agency
Cont/d..

[Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021](#)). This means that unless exempt, developers must deliver a net gain in biodiversity of at least 10%. Consequently, a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development.

When a development seeks [planning permission](#) from the Local Authority, it needs to confirm whether the development is exempt from BNG.

If it is not exempt, the developer will need to provide information about how it is intended to meet the BNG target, including details of proposed significant on-site enhancements.

There are 3 ways a developer can achieve BNG.

1. They can create biodiversity on-site (within the red line boundary of a development site).
2. If developers cannot achieve all of their BNG on-site, they can deliver through a mixture of on-site and off-site. Developers can either make off-site biodiversity gains on their own land outside the development site, or buy off-site biodiversity units on the market.
3. If developers cannot achieve on-site or off-site BNG, they must buy statutory biodiversity credits from the government. This should be a last resort. The government will use the revenue to invest in habitat creation in England.

Where development falls within 10m of a watercourse, a watercourse metric should be applied to the assessment.

Informative

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment. For your information, together with Natural England, Historic England and Forestry Commission we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans.

This is available at: [How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood Plans - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)

We trust this advice is useful.

Yours sincerely



Mr Jack Saunders
Sustainable Places - Planning Advisor

Direct e-mail: Jack.Saunders@environment-agency.gov.uk
Team email: Planning.Eastanglia@environment-agency.gov.uk
Team phone number: 02030 255475

End

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Historic England

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

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

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

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

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

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

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

Please do contact me, either via email or the number below, if you have any queries.

Kind regards,
Ross

Ross McGivern
Historic Places Adviser | Partnerships Team | East of England
Historic England, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 8BU
Telephone: 01223 582708 Mobile telephone: 07787 275366



Ensuring our heritage lives on and is loved for longer.

historicengland.org.uk

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Natural England

Date: 29 August 2025
Our ref: 521638
Your ref: Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan



Mr Shaun Vincent
ABZAG Ltd

BY EMAIL ONLY
shaun.vincent@abzag.com

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Mr Vincent

Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review - SEA Screening Opinion Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 1 August 2025.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

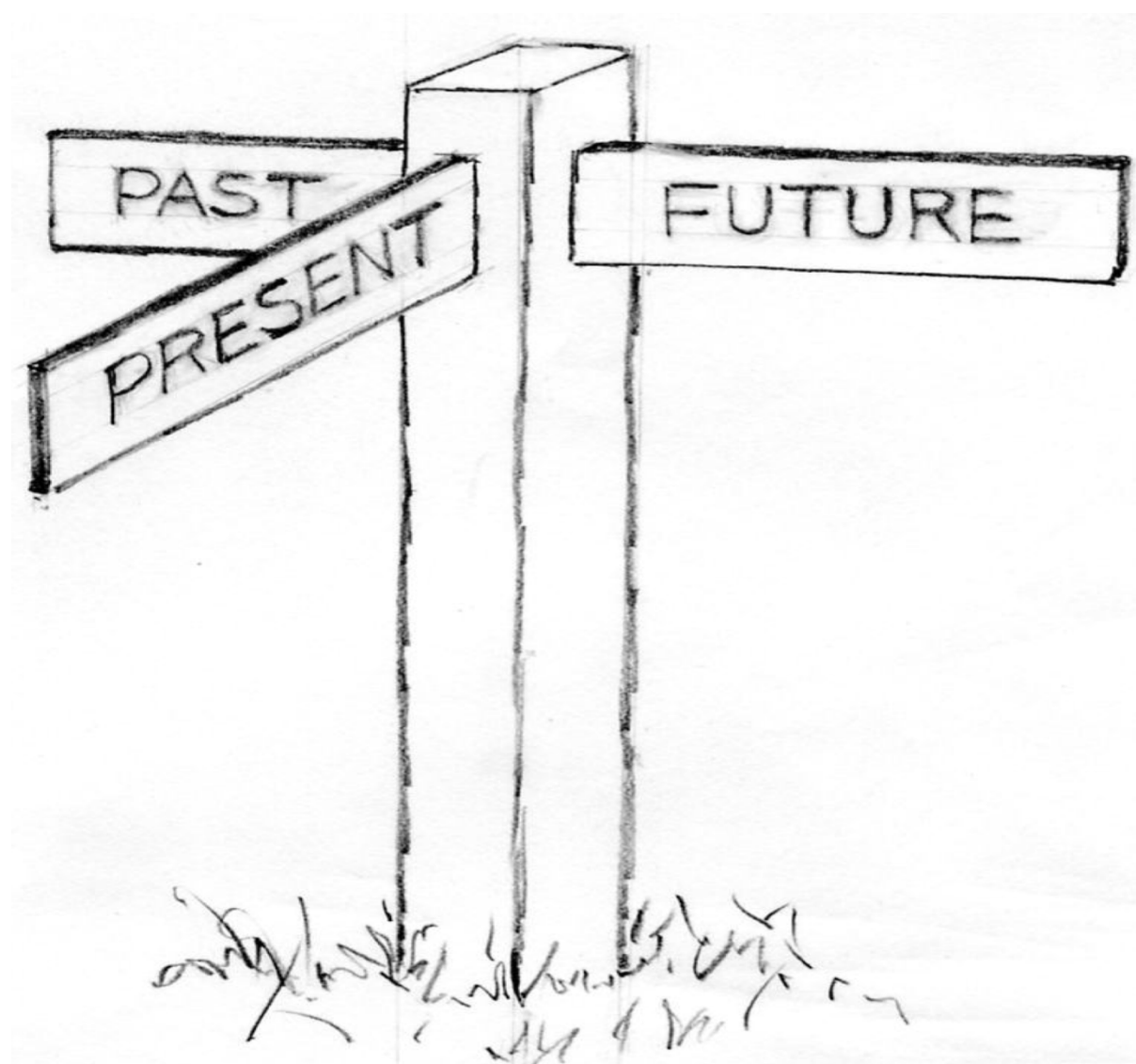
We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before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

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

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team



Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan

Swanton Morley Parish Council
Swanton Morley Village Hall
Manns Lane
Swanton Morley
NR20 4NP

email: parishcouncil@swantonmorley.org

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