

Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2036



Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025

Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Opinion Report

September 2025

Prepared on behalf of Swanton Morley Parish Council by



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Screening Assessment has been undertaken in order to support the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 which has been undertaken by Swanton Morley Parish Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and subsequent updates.
- 1.2 In 2017 a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) was undertaken on the current adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan which Natural England, the statutory body, **concluded that a full Habitat Regulations Assessment was not required.**
- 1.3 The purpose of this Screening Report is to assess whether there are likely to be any significant effects on European Sites as a result of the new policies or changes in policies as set out in the draft Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 that would necessitate the production of a full Habitat Regulations Assessment, also known as an Appropriate Assessment.
- 1.4 This report assesses, as far as is practicable, whether there are any likely significant impacts on European Designated Sites within or relative proximity to the designated Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.5 The designated Neighbourhood Area comprises the civil parish of Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Legislative Basis

2.1 Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive states that:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

2.2 The purpose of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is therefore to ensure the protection of European Designated Sites (Natura 2000) wherever practicable. These sites are designed to form an ecologically coherent network of designated spaces across the whole of Europe.

2.3 Referred to as 'European Designated Sites', Natura 2000 sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas for Conservation (SAC). As a matter of policy the government also expect authorities to treat Ramsar sites, candidate SAC (cSAC) and proposed SPAs (pSPA) as if they are European sites for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.

2.4 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 state submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement, which explains how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, this includes the requirement of a HRA.

3. Approach

- 3.1 The first step in the screening process is the identification of European Designated Sites that are in or considered within close proximity of the designated Neighbourhood Area.
- 3.2 Breckland District lies in an area of considerable importance for nature conservation with number of European sites located within and just outside the District. A list of Natura 2000 sites was compiled as part of the Breckland Local Plan Screening Report considering sites within 20 kilometres of the potential zone of influence around the Core Strategy area. This was subsequently agreed by Natural England. Within this perimeter, seven sites have been identified within relative proximity of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area. These are as follows:
- a. Breckland Special Protection Area
 - b. Broadland Special Protection Area
 - c. Breckland Special Area of Conservation
 - d. Norfolk Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation
 - e. River Wensum Special Area of Conservation
 - f. The Broads Special Area of Conservation
 - g. Broadland Ramsar
- 3.3 Of the above listed sites only part of the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation is in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area. The River Wensum flows on to The Broads and, therefore, significantly contributes to its ecosystem. Any negative impact from the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan policies could have a detrimental impact on The Broads.
- 3.4 Although the remaining six sites do not lie within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area as designated for the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan each one has been included and considered due to their importance to the wider area.
- 3.5 Full details of the seven identified sites are given in Appendix 1.

- 3.6 The second step in the assessment is to appraise the extent to which the proposed policies of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan could have a significant effect on the European Designated Sites. The assessment specifically considers any potential effect that the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan policies may have on the 'qualifying features' of each European Designated Site. In support of the Core Strategy, the Appropriate Assessment produced set out the 'qualifying features'. These have been included with Appendix 1.
- 3.7 The table in Section 4 sets out the assessment of any likely significant effect of each Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan policy on the European Designated Sites.
- 3.8 The adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan does support sites for future development, as identified the Breckland Local Plan (September 2023) document. The four new policies proposed to be added in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 do not seek to allocate any new sites for development, although Policy 17 does seek to guide the location of commercial solar and wind generation of electricity to areas on least landscape sensitivity. Should proposals come forward for commercial renewable and low carbon energy schemes Policy 17 seeks to provide guidance for such development, which should only be located in areas of least environmental and social impact.
- 3.9 Of the existing policies within the adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan two have amendments, Policy 1 to recognise the Swanton Morley Settlement Boundary and, Policy 7, which seeks to designate four new areas as Local Green Space. The remaining policies remain unchanged.

4. Screening Assessment

4.1 Natura 2000 sites within relative proximity of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Area, as identified in section 3, are:

- a. Breckland Special Protection Area
- b. Broadland Special Protection Area
- c. Breckland Special Area of Conservation
- d. Norfolk Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation
- e. River Wensum Special Area of Conservation
- f. The Broads Special Area of Conservation
- g. Broadland Ramsar

4.2 Stage 1 of the HRA process is a screening assessment. The table below provides an assessment of any likely significant effect of each Neighbourhood Plan Policy on the European Designated Site. The 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 and subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA which included a SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening that concluded that a full Habitat Regulations Assessment was not required.¹

4.3 The changes being proposed in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 can be summarised as follows:

4.3.3 Introduce a new policy - **Policy 17: Commercial Solar & Wind Generation of Electricity** seeking to guide the location of such schemes

¹ <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/swanton-morley>

which should only be located in areas of least environmental and social impact, should such schemes come forward in the Parish;

- 4.3.4 Introduce a 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;
- 4.3.5 Introduce a 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
- 4.3.6 Introduce a new policy - **Policy 20: Management of Community Infrastructure** to provide a sustainability and certainty in future management of community infrastructure.
- 4.3.7 Update to **Policy 1: Protecting the Identify of Swanton Morley** by retaining the Swanton Morley settlement boundary;
- 4.3.8 Update to **Policy 7: Local Green Space** to designate four additional new sites as Local Green Space:-
- Village Hall Playing Fields, Manns Lane;
 - Allotments, Manns Lane;
 - Playing field, Manns Lane; and
 - Cricket Ground, Hoe Road South.
- 4.4 Other updates and corrections: Mainly attributed to the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated December 2024 and the adoption of the Breckland Local Plan.
- 4.5 The remaining fourteen policies of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan will be 'saved policies' and remain unaltered.

4.6

Key:

**Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on the internationally designated sites' qualifying features.****No Likely Significant Effect (NLSE) on the internationally designated sites' qualifying features****Uncertainty of Likely Significant Effect (LSE) or No Likely Significant Effect (NLSE)**

4.7 Assessment of the four new proposed policies for the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025.

Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan			Likely Significant Effect						
New Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
17	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, of least sensitivity. Proposals for new renewable energy and low carbon development, subject to	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>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</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	Uncertainty of Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion – Version 1

New Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>consideration of the impact of the development and whether this can be made acceptable, will be supported.</p> <p>Proposals will be considered having regard to the extent to which there are:-</p> <p>a. adverse impacts on the local landscape;</p> <p>b. designated and non-designated heritage assets assessed;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>d. an irreversible loss of the highest quality agricultural land;</p> <p>e. adverse impacts upon designated wildlife sites; nature conservation interests; and biodiversity;</p>	<p>in areas of least environmental and social impact.</p> <p>Given the proximity of the River Wensum SAC it could be negatively impacted in the construction phase of any such commercial development of solar or wind generation of electricity.</p> <p>Any such proposals will be required to identify any likely significant effects on these environmental assets and provide mitigation, where necessary.</p> <p>There is uncertainty of the negative effect of this type of development would have on the River Wensum SAC and, whilst the policy seeks to guide to locations of least sensitivity, there could still be a detrimental impact on the SAC from any individual proposal or in</p>							

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New Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>f. applications will be expected to demonstrate that any adverse impacts can be mitigated; and</p> <p>g. for the continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Where appropriate consideration should be given</p>	combination with multiple proposals.							

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New Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>								
18	<p>New Policy 18: Parking Provision</p> <p>New residential developments must provide the following minimum number of off-street associated car parking spaces per dwelling:</p> <p>1 or 2 bedrooms2 spaces 3 bedrooms3 spaces 4 or more bedrooms ..4 spaces</p> <p>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</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to ensure adequate off-road parking is available to residents of new homes to prevent the mistakes of recent development, generally to reduce indiscriminate and pavement parking.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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New Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>the homes expected to make use of this type of off-street car parking.</p> <p>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.</p>	features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.							
19	<p>New Policy 19: Provision of Street-lighting</p> <p>Where streetlighting is provided by new development it should meet the following criteria:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 or switched off 	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of 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, wildlife and encourage greater use of energy efficient infrastructure.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects,</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion – Version 1

New Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>between certain hours (as set by the Parish Council); and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	with other projects and plans.							
20	<p>New Policy 20: Management of Community Infrastructure</p> <p>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:</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>With the delivery of sustainable open space and community assets,</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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New Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>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</p> <p>b) an effective transition to the Local Authority ownership; or</p> <p>c) an appropriate legally binding arrangement for management by an established management company with a viable and sustainable business case and operating model.</p>	<p>conserving and enhancing the natural environment.</p> <p>Seeking appropriate steps are taken to ensure open spaces (play areas, etc...) are managed and maintained in a sustainable way.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>							

4.8 Assessment of the two amended existing policies for the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025.

Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
1	<p>Protecting the Identity of Swanton Morley</p> <p>Outside the defined settlement boundary (as defined in Map 4 Swanton Morley Settlement Boundary) development will not be supported unless it involves:</p> <p>1 Rural exception sites;</p> <p>2 Dwellings to meet the essential need for a rural worker;</p> <p>3 Development involving the re-use of redundant or disused buildings;</p> <p>4 Farm diversification; and</p> <p>5 Rural tourism related development.</p> <p>The development of residential curtilages in the countryside will be resisted where it would lead to significant change to the landscape character.</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to maintain Swanton Morley as a distinct and separate village with its own identity.</p> <p>This should help to preserve Swanton Morley's appearance, character and identity as a Norfolk village. It aims to stop Swanton Morley becoming just a suburb of Dereham.</p> <p>The assessed impact of the changes to this policy, also remain unchanged.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
7	<p>Local Green Space</p> <p>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:-</p> <p>1) Gray Drive;</p> <p>2) Thompson Close; and</p> <p>3) Middleton Avenue</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan now seeks to designate the following three new locations also as Local Green Spaces (as shown on Maps 8b, 8c, 8d and 8e):-</p> <p>4) Village Hall Playing Fields, Manns Lane;</p> <p>5) Allotments, Manns Lane;</p> <p>6) Playing field, Manns Lane; and</p> <p>7) Cricket Ground, Hoe Road South.</p> <p>Applications for development which would adversely affect</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The changes to this policy resulting from the Review 2025 is to propose for designation a further four areas as Local Green Space.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy remains unchanged to provide special protection for key areas of green space through its designation as 'Local Green Space', as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 106 and 107 which the local community has identified of particular importance to them.</p> <p>The assessed impact of the changes to this policy, also remain unchanged.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	the function and local character of designated Local Green Space will not be supported unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.	of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.							

4.9 Assessment of the remaining unchanged existing policies in the adopted Swanton Morley Neighbourhood – as assessed in 2017 and updated in 2025.

Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
2	<p>Growth in the Right Places</p> <p>The primary focus of new residential development in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan area will be within the three allocated housing sites identified on the Map 5 as:</p> <p>1) LP(098)013;</p> <p>2) LP(098)014; and</p> <p>3) LP(098)016</p>	<p>This Policy seeks to guide the location of the allocated growth identified for Swanton Morley in the emerging Breckland Local Plan.</p> <p>The ambition is to achieve, needs based, growth that will guide the location of new development in Swanton Morley in a holistic manner. Enhancing the village, making it 'more joined up', providing better</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	Uncertainty of Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	Planning applications up to 205 dwellings on for these three allocated residential sites will be supported where they comply with the other policies within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan and the requirements of other development plan policies.	<p>connectivity and access whilst enabling the infrastructure to be improved.</p> <p>As all three locations were seen in the emerging Breckland Local Plan as 'acceptable alternatives' and located between current built areas to the north and south.</p> <p>The River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located to the north of the Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>The sites were subject to a specific Sustainability Appraisal - Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives which concluded the cumulative effect may result in a likely significant impact on the River Wensum SAC.</p> <p>The sites are a minimum 300m away from the waterways connected to the River Wensum</p>							

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
		<p>SAC. The construction phase of the proposed 205 homes could possibly result in siltation and pollution of the SAC due to large quantities of dust and other contaminants or pollutants that are a by-product of any construction entering a watercourse of the SAC. Each site is within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of the River Wensum SAC.</p> <p>Within this IRZ development proposals of 50 or more homes in a rural location require consulting on with Natural England before being granted permissions due to the potential impacts on the SAC.</p> <p>The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan, in-combination with the Local Plan, propose a total of 205 new homes on three greenfield sites which are adjacent to</p>							

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
		<p>one another within this IRZ.</p> <p>Mitigation measures should be imposed by planning conditions to reduce and control any likely impact. The sites have been phased to reduce any possible impact.</p>							
3	<p>Enabling Growth on Allocated Sites</p> <p>Masterplanned proposals for the development in conjunction of the three linked housing allocation sites identified in Policy 2, including the following specific provisions offered as planning obligations, together with the expectations identified in Policy 6, will be supported:</p> <p>a. site LP(098)014 will include provision within the site for around 40 park car spaces to serve the school with a safe road crossing point and local improvements of Manns Lane to be agreed with the Highways Authority;</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to see sustainable growth of Swanton Morley whilst providing specific benefit to the local community associated with allocated sites in Policy 2 LP(098)014 and LP(098)016.</p> <p>The requirements listed will provide the necessary additional community benefit and facilities to offset the potential effect of these sites being developed.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>b. site LP(098)016 will be required to improve Hoe Road East to include provision for two-way traffic taking account of the requirements of the Cemetery on the north of the road to be agreed with the Highways Authority;</p> <p>c. the northern border of site LP(098)016 will be screened by hedging and landscaping and with any new dwellings positioned along this border being of a maximum height of 1.5 storeys;</p> <p>d. provision of a continuous vehicle, cycle and pedestrian access from Rectory Road to Manns Lane; and</p> <p>e. provision of a footpath and cycleway from Rectory Road to Manns Lane.</p>	It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.							
4	<p>Housing for the Local Community (Local Lettings)</p> <p>In order to meet the housing needs of the parish, proposals which make provision by way</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition is to create the opportunity</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>of a s106 agreement for eligible households with a local connection to the parish of Swanton Morley are given preference for the lifetime of the development on new affordable housing for rent on sites LP(098)014 and LP(098)016 will be supported.</p> <p>A local connection is defined by one or more of the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households containing one or more individuals who have resided within Swanton Morley parish for the last three years Households who need to move to Swanton Morley Parish to give or receive support from or to a close family or relatives who are residents of Swanton Morley Households where one or more member has been employed within the parish of Swanton Morley for three years Former residents of Swanton Morley parish 	<p>for Swanton Morley residents or those with connections to Swanton Morley to have the ability to access affordable housing should any be built in Swanton Morley.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>							

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	<p>who have lived in the parish for at least three years of the past six years</p> <p>If at the time of letting there are no eligible households with a local connection, and/or the pool of eligible applicants with a local connection has been exhausted, allocations will be made in accordance with the local housing authority's prevailing housing allocation policy and associated district-wide local connection criteria.</p>								
5	<p>Affordable Housing on Exception Sites</p> <p>Development of affordable housing on an exception site will be permitted where it satisfies the adopted local development plan and the following additional requirements:</p> <p>The allocation of dwellings should be to those in housing need and with a connection to the Parish of Swanton Morley in accordance with the following cascade criteria:</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to create clarity of outcome for 'exception site' development if or when it occurs in Swanton Morley.</p> <p>Creating the mechanism to demonstrate whether there is local support or not should proposals come forward.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>a. Residents of Swanton Morley Parish for the previous three years;</p> <p>b. Households with a local family connection;</p> <p>c. Former residents of Swanton Morley Parish including those who have had to leave the Parish due to a lack of suitable affordable housing;</p> <p>d. People with an employment connection to the Parish;</p> <p>e. Residents of adjacent parishes; and</p> <p>f. Residents of Breckland District.</p>	<p>Should this type of development occur the policy ensures local people can access the affordable housing.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>							
6	<p>Delivery of Planning Obligations</p> <p>Where a planning obligation is necessary in relation to development proposals on land within the Neighbourhood Area, the Applicant shall provide a supporting statement that identifies how their proposals take into account and provide appropriate local community infrastructure in mitigation.</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to enable local involvement, by Swanton Morley Parish Council to deliver better outcomes for local residents of Swanton Morley through the delivery of planning obligations.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	Applicants are encouraged to seek early engagement with the Parish Council and Breckland District Council to establish the scope of any such statement.	<p>The policy creates a framework to provide the accountability for actions.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>							
8	<p>Protection of Existing Open Space</p> <p>Proposals for development, which would result in the loss of an Area of Existing Open Space, as defined in Table 3 and Location Maps in Appendix 3, will not be permitted unless</p> <p>a) an assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows the open space to be surplus to requirements; OR</p> <p>b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition is to recognise through this policy is the importance of these areas to the village and as areas of recreational and visual value. The policy is not seeking 'Local Green Space' designation.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects,</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>replaced by the equivalent provision in a suitable location; OR</p> <p>c) the development is for an alternative sports or recreation provision, the need for which clearly outweighs the loss of the existing open space.</p>	with other projects and plans.							
9	<p>Important Views</p> <p>All development proposals having a significant visual impact on those parts of the River Wensum Valley and Castle Farm Valley Floor within the Parish boundary must maintain and protect important views from the following public places identified on Map 9:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primrose Hill; 2. The Churchyard; 3. The Bowling Green; and 4. Worthing Road. 	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to protect and retain the outstanding views enjoyed across open landscapes to the north east of Swanton Morley as visual amenities.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
10	<p>Accessibility & Biodiversity</p> <p>Where green infrastructure is provided as part of any new development it should aim to improve biodiversity and connections with existing open spaces in and around Swanton Morley.</p> <p>All new development should maximise opportunities to enhance the existing local green infrastructure and, create network links to encourage the use of existing footpath and cycleway links to the wider parish and countryside.</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to enhance the rural setting and provide habitats for wildlife whilst improving countryside and woodland access.</p> <p>It is intended that any new development that comes to the Parish will improve biodiversity and connectivity.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect
11	<p>Design of Development</p> <p>New development, including infill development and residential extensions, should</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>preserve and, where possible, enhance the character of the village of Swanton Morley and be in accordance with all of the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Respecting and protecting local heritage assets and their settings; 2) Protecting natural assets, enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity; 3) Recognising and reinforcing the distinct local character in relation to height, scale, density, spacing, layout orientation, features and materials of buildings; 4) Provide a mix of house types and tenures, with an emphasis on local needs; first time buyers, starter homes and good quality accommodation for elderly people; 5) Designing housing proposals to reflect existing residential densities in the locality of the scheme; 	<p>The ambition of this policy is to improve any new development that comes to Swanton Morley. Ensuring it is designed to a high standard with the provision of better quality homes for residents to live in. Whilst promoting a village community that is vibrant and diverse.</p> <p>Any development should be sympathetic to the natural and built environment of Swanton Morley.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>							

Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>6) Design of roads and parking areas within any site should minimise the effects on pedestrians, in particular safeguarding children in areas where they walk or play, and avoid the opportunity for indiscriminate parking by residents and visitors and design in measures to avoid it;</p> <p>7) Incorporating adequate landscaping to mitigate the visual impact of the development and to ensure that proposals merge into the existing rural village context and respond to the wider countryside setting;</p> <p>8) Ensuring boundary treatments reflect the distinct local character in relation to materials, layout, height and design. In areas where there is no boundary treatment and gardens are unenclosed, new development should seek to replicate this openness;</p>								

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>9) Landscape proposals should form an integral part of the site's design, with particular trees and hedgerows retained unless their value is deemed low following surveys in accordance with established practice;</p> <p>10) Where sites contain or abut a watercourse or land drainage ditch, provision must be made for maintenance by ensuring appropriate access for clearing silt and controlling vegetation.</p> <p>11) Incorporation of appropriate methods of energy generation and conservation in all new builds;</p> <p>12) New development should provide private external amenity space, appropriate to the size and type of dwelling, and refuse and recycling storage facilities;</p> <p>13) Where street lighting is provided it should meet the</p>								

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>configuration and standard of the parish; and</p> <p>14) All planning applications for developments of 10 or more dwellings and all commercial development are to undertaken a sewage capacity assessment. Where a need for mitigation is identified within the foul sewerage network, any foul drainage solution to be implemented prior to the development being occupied</p>								
12	<p>Flooding</p> <p>Proposals for new development of more than 1 hectare within the Swanton Morley area should be accompanied by an appropriate flood risk assessment which gives adequate and appropriate consideration to all sources of flooding and proposed surface water drainage; demonstrating that it would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not increase the flood risk to the site or wider area from fluvial, surface water, groundwater, 	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to ensure that new development does not cause flood related problems, especially associated with surface water run-off. There is recognition that some open land can perform many functions, such as recreation, biodiversity, wildlife and flood risk mitigation.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	<p>sewers or artificial sources following, if necessary, the installation of appropriate mitigation measures; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a neutral or positive impact on surface water drainage. <p>Proposals must demonstrate engagement with relevant agencies and seek to incorporate appropriate mitigation measures to manage flood risk and to reduce surface water runoff to the development and wider area such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of appropriate measures to address any identified risk of flooding (in the following order or priority: assess, avoid, manage and mitigate flood risk); • Locate only compatible development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the proposed vulnerability of land use; 	<p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>							

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of appropriate allowances for climate change; • Inclusion of a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) with an appropriate discharge location, subject to feasibility; • Priority use of source control Sustainable Drainage Systems such as permeable surfaces, rainwater harvesting and storage or green roofs and walls. Other Sustainable Drainage Systems components which convey or store surface water can also be considered; • To mitigate against the creation of additional impermeable surfaces, attenuation of greenfield (or for redevelopment sites as close to greenfield as possible) surface water runoff rates and runoff volumes within the development site boundary; • During construction of any proposed allocated 								

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	<p>sites a Construction Environmental Management Plan is required to be produced and agreed in writing by the LPA prior to commencement of any works (include ground clearance) and include specific measures to avoid issues relating to surface water management; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear maintenance and management proposals of structures within the development, including Sustainable Drainage Systems elements, riparian ownership of ordinary watercourses or culverts, and their associated funding mechanisms. 								
13	<p>Broadband and Mobile Communications</p> <p>Enhancement of mobile communications and implementation of new 'superfast broadband'</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to facilitate the improvement of modern and future</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
	infrastructure that serves the Parish will be supported.	communications and enable greater access to on-line services. It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.							
14	Employment and Local Shops The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan supports planning applications that seek the creation of employment opportunities in new small commercial and office units that are compatible with their surroundings, which are appropriate both in scale and environmental impact and new local shops that enhances and increases the range and type of shop. Where they comply with the other policies within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan and the requirements of other development plan policies.	This Policy may deliver new development in seeking to support local business and employment. The ambition of this policy is to see the continuation of a thriving local community, supporting local business and employment. Any development will be in keeping and of small scale. It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
		negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.							
15	<p>Additional Community Facilities</p> <p>Planning applications relating to the provision of additional community facilities, additional recreational space, play space and sports facilities will be supported where they comply with the requirements of other policies within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan and the requirements of other development plan policies.</p> <p>The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that provision of additional local facilities meets the growing local community needs.</p>	<p>This Policy may deliver new development in seeking to the delivery of additional community facilities.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is the provision of additional facilities and amenities that support village life for residents.</p> <p>Any development will need to comply with the requirements of other policies within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan and the requirements of other development plan policies.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects,</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
		with other projects and plans.							
16	<p>Traffic Impact</p> <p>New development that generate a significant amount of traffic will be expected to assess the impact of traffic generated by the proposals and include appropriate and proportionate measures to mitigate any significant impacts on road safety, pedestrians, safe road crossings, cyclists, parking and congestion within Swanton Morley.</p>	<p>This Policy does not seek to deliver new development.</p> <p>The ambition of this policy is to maintain and, where possible, improve road safety. Where potential additional traffic levels are identified then appropriate measures are implemented to mitigate any likely impact.</p> <p>This policy is focused on practical solutions to improve road safety throughout Swanton Morley by seeking to reduce the negative impacts of traffic, speed and congestion.</p> <p>It seeks to understand and address the accumulative effect of development on local traffic movements.</p>	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect	No Likely Significant Effect

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Policy	Policy Detail	Comment	Breckland SPA	Broadland SPA	Breckland SAC	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	River Wensum SAC	Broads SAC	Broadland Ramsar
		<p>It is hoped, through mitigation measures, that traffic impacts can be reduced with less reliance on motorised transport and more sustainable transport methods are introduced.</p> <p>It is, therefore, unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features or any in-combination effects, with other projects and plans.</p>							

5. Consultation Response

5.1 Natural England's opinion is summarised below:-

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 sites, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.

5.2 The full response received from Natural England can be seen in Appendix 3.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The assessment suggests that of the four new policies detailed within in the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 only one, **New Policy 17: Commercial Scale Solar & Wind Generation of Electricity**, has raised uncertainty in the likely significant effect on the River Wensum SAC. With all the remaining new policies being assessed as likely to be **no significant negative effects on the European Designated Sites** resulting from these policies.
- 6.2 Of the existing “saved policies” only existing **Policy 2: Growth in the Right Places** in allocating sites for development continues to raise concern of uncertainty in the likely significant impact, although through the use of planning conditions and good construction methods mitigation has prevented any actual significant impact on the River Wensum SAC as the phased development has come forward.
- 6.3 It is Natural England's opinion that the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 is unlikely to have significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination. Therefore, a **full Habitat Regulations Assessment** is **not required**.

Appendix 1: Details of Relevant European Sites

The information relating to each site has been taken from the reports produced in support of the Breckland Local Plan, or the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk or directly from Natural England.

a. Breckland Special Protection Area

(i) Site Description and Qualifying Features

The Breckland of Norfolk and Suffolk lies in the heart of East Anglia on largely sandy soils of glacial origin. In the nineteenth century the area was termed a sandy waste, with small patches of arable cultivation that were soon abandoned. The continental climate, with low rainfall and free-draining soils, has led to the development of dry heath and grassland communities. Much of Breckland has been planted with conifers throughout the twentieth century, and in part of the site, arable farming is the predominant land use.

The remnants of dry heath and grassland which have survived these recent changes support heathland breeding birds, where grazing by rabbits and sheep is sufficiently intensive to create short turf and open ground. These breeding birds have also adapted to live in forestry and arable habitats. Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) and nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) breed in clear-fell and open heath areas, whilst stone curlews (*Burhinus oedicanus*) establish nests on open ground provided by arable cultivation in the spring, as well as on Breckland grass-heath.

The Breckland Special Protection Area SPA covers an area of 39,434 ha. and encompasses all or parts of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) of:

- Barnham Heath;
- Barnhamcross Common;
- Berner's Heath, Icklingham;
- Breckland Farmland;
- Breckland Forest;
- Bridgham and Brettenham Heaths;
- Cavenham-Icklingham Heaths;
- Cranberry Rough, Hockham;
- Cranwich Camp;
- Deadman's Grave, Icklingham;
- East Wretham Heath;
- Eriswell Low Warren;
- Field Barn Heaths, Hilborough;
- Foxhole Heath, Eriswell;
- Gooderstone Warren;

- Grimes Graves;
- How Hill Track;
- Lakenheath Warren;
- Little Heath, Barnham;
- Old Bodney Camp;
- Rex Graham Reserve;
- Stanford Training Area;
- Thetford Golf Course and Marsh;
- Thetford Heaths;
- Wangford Warren and Carr;
- Weather and Horn Heaths, Eriswell;
- Weeting Heath; and
- West Stow Heath.

Breckland Special Protection Area Qualifying Features

Qualifying species: The site qualifies under article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Annex I species	Count & Season	Period	Percentage of GB Population
Stone curlew <i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	115 pairs – breeding	5 year mean (1994 – 98)	60.1%
Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	415 males – breeding	Count as at 1998	12.2%
Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	430 pairs – breeding	Count as at 1997	28.7%
<i>Noteworthy: Breckland regularly supports small numbers (less than 1% of the GB population) of wintering Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) and breeding Goshawk (<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>), both of which are listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive.</i>			

(ii) Conservation Objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring the:-

- extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- population of each of the qualifying features; and,
- distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

(iii) Vulnerability

External pressures overwhelming the natural balance of the eco-system and habitat disturbance.

- Intensification of farming techniques, as arable farming is the predominant land use; and
- Pressure from tourism and recreation.

b. Broadland Special Protection Area**(i) Site Description and Qualifying Features**

Broadland is a low-lying wetland complex straddling the boundaries between east Norfolk and northern Suffolk in eastern England. The Broads are a series of flooded medieval peat cuttings. The area includes the river valley systems of the Bure, Yare and Waveney and their major tributaries. The distinctive open landscape comprises a complex and interlinked mosaic of wetland habitats including open water, reedbeds, carr woodland, grazing marsh and fen meadow, forming one of the finest marshland complexes in the UK. The differing types of management of the vegetation for reed, sedge and marsh hay, coupled with variations in hydrology and substrate, support an extremely diverse range of plant communities.

Broadland Special Protection Area Qualifying Features

Article 4.1	Breeding	Over Winter	Passage
Bewick's Swan		X	
Whooper Swan		X	
Bittern	X		
Marsh Harrier	X		
Hen Harrier		X	
Ruff		X	
<i>Noteworthy: Gadwall</i>			

(ii) Conservation Objectives

To restore to favourable condition, if the feature is not currently in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of Annex 1 bird species of European importance (Bewick's swan, whooper swan, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, marsh harrier, hen harrier, ruff), migratory bird species of European importance (pink-footed goose, gadwall, shoveler) and populations of waterfowl that contribute to the wintering waterfowl assemblage of European importance with particular reference to:

- Open water
- Swamp
- Fen
- Reed Bed
- Fen meadow with ditches and water bodies, and
- Lowland wet grassland with ditches and water bodies.

(iii) Vulnerability

The site has suffered from management neglect and natural succession during this century. Sea level rise and reduced summer flows in the river Bure brought about by abstraction are resulting in increasing saline intrusion into the site and generally drier summer conditions. The site also suffers from eutrophication, brought through the build up of nutrients over a long period, primarily through sewage outfalls and, to a lesser degree, agriculture. The region as a whole is a centre for tourism and recreation, however this pressure is now starting to be brought under control by the Broads Authority via the Broads Plan. Efficient drainage within much of the reclaimed parts of the wetland has reduced the wildlife value.

c. Breckland Special Area of Conservation

(i) Site Description and Qualifying Features

Inland dunes with open *Corynephorus* and *Agrostis* grasslands for which this is the only known outstanding locality in the United Kingdom and is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1,000 hectares.

Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition*-type vegetation for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. They are examples of hollows within glacial outwash deposits and are fed by water from the underlying chalk aquifer. Natural fluctuations

in groundwater tables mean that these lakes occasionally dry out. The flora is dominated by stonewort – pondweed *Characeae* – *Potamogetonaceae* associations.

European dry heaths for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. Breckland has an average annual precipitation of only 600 mm, relatively hot summers and cold winters. Frosts can occur in any month of the year. The sand sedge-dominated *Carex arenaria* sub-community (H1d) is typical of areas of blown sand – a very unusual feature of this location. The highly variable soils of Breckland, with underlying chalk being largely covered with wind-blown sands, have resulted in mosaics of heather-dominated heathland, acidic grassland and calcareous grassland that are unlike those of any other site.

Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. The grassland is rich in rare species typical of dry, winter-cold, continental areas, and approaches the features of grassland types in central Europe more than almost any other found in the United Kingdom. The terrain is relatively flat, with few physical variations, but there are mosaics of calcareous grassland and heath/acid grassland, giving rise to patterns of structural variation.

Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.

Breckland Special Area of Conservation Qualifying Features – Habitats

- Inland dunes with open *Corynephorus* and *Agrostis* grasslands
- Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* type vegetation
- European dry heaths
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies.

Special Area of Conservation Qualifying features- Species (although not a primary reason for site selection)

- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

(ii) Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitat features of the designation, and to maintain, in favourable condition,

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the habitats for the populations of the qualifying species, with particular
reference to:

- Dunes and grassland;
- Open water and lakes; and
- Heaths and scrublands.

(iii) Vulnerability

Breckland is most vulnerable to the impact of changes in the biotic conditions and modifications to the ecosystem. These are most likely to occur as a result of: -

- forest and plantation management and use
- air-borne pollutants
- livestock grazing.

d. Norfolk Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation

(i) Site Description and Qualifying Features

Norfolk Valley Fens contains one of the main concentrations of lowland alkaline fens and is one of two sites selected in East Anglia. This site comprises a series of valley-head spring-fed fens. Such spring-fed flush fens are very rare in the lowlands. Most of the vegetation at this site is of the small sedge fen type, mainly referable to M13 *Schoenus nigricans* – *Juncus subnodulosus* mire, but there are transitions to reedswamp and other fen and wet grassland types.

The individual fens vary in their structure according to intensity of management and provide a wide range of variation. There is a rich flora associated with these fens, including species such as grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, common butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and narrow-leaved marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri*.

Special Area of Conservation Qualifying features- Habitats

- Alkaline fens
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*
- European dry heaths

- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (important orchid sites)
- Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae)
- Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae
- Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)

Special Area of Conservation Qualifying features- Species

- Narrow-mouthed whorl snail
- Desmoulin's whorl snail

(ii) Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitat features of the designation, and to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of the qualifying species, with particular reference to:

- Alkaline fens
- Marshes and swamps
- Water quality with suitable levels of dissolved oxygen, un-ionised ammonia, pH, and metals
- Water table close to surface layer so ground remains moist throughout year.

(iii) Vulnerability

The Norfolk Valley Fens are most vulnerable to the impact of water levels, pH levels and insufficient moisture to maintain habitats and flora.

- Habitat management: reduction in traditional cutting and grazing causing scrub and woodland to encroach on open habitats.
- Water quantity: vulnerable to reductions in water table due primarily to groundwater abstraction. This is being addressed by the Environment Agency's review of the AMP3 programme.

e. River Wensum Special Area of Conservation

(i) Site Description & Qualifying Features

The River Wensum represents an example of an enriched, calcareous lowland river and represents sub-type 1 in lowland eastern England. Although extensively regulated by weirs, the River has over 100 plant species including *Ranunculus* vegetation occurring sporadically throughout much of the river's length. The River It supports a rich invertebrate assemblage and together with its relatively natural corridor, represents the best whole river of its type in conservation terms. Stream water-crowfoot *R. penicillatus* ssp. *pseudofluitans* is the dominant *Ranunculus* species but thread-leaved water-crowfoot *R. trichophyllus* and fan-leaved water-crowfoot *R. circinatus* also occur.

The River Wensum is a chalk-fed river in eastern England, and is an eastern example of riverine white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* populations. As with most of the remaining crayfish populations in the south and east of England, the threats from non-native crayfish species and crayfish plague are severe. Designation of the river as a SAC provides as much protection as can be afforded to such vulnerable populations.

Special Area of Conservation Qualifying features- Habitats

- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation

Special Area of Conservation Qualifying features- Species

- White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*
- Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*

(ii) Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitat features of the designation, and to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of the qualifying species, with particular reference to:

- Maintain the Water courses of plain to montane levels
- Habitats for bullhead, brook lamprey, white-clawed crayfish.

(iii) Vulnerability

The River Wensum is most vulnerable to the impact of intensive farming with the 'run-off' of chemicals and the spread of the urban footprint.

- Water quality: input of silt and agricultural chemicals as a result of agriculture has been a problem and a strategy is required to control eutrophication. Reversion of arable fields to low input grassland should be encouraged.
- Water quantity: further development of the floodplain has the potential to alter the flow regime and river ecology is threatened by water abstraction. Bullhead and brook lamprey are vulnerable to the modification of riffle habitats through changes in water level.
- Habitat loss: desmoulines whorl snail is vulnerable to interference with bankside vegetation.
- Introduced/invasive species: the further spread of the signal crayfish would threaten the long term viability of the white-clawed crayfish whilst may be vulnerable to the introduction of non-native fish species.

f. The Broads Special Area of Conservation

(i) Site Description & Qualifying Features

The Broads Special Area of Conservation covers roughly the same area as the Broadland SPA and Ramsar sites. The Broads Special Area of Conservation is the richest area for charophytes in Britain. The core of this interest is the Thurne Broads and particularly Hickling Broad, which is the richest site in the UK. Sixteen species have been recorded within Hickling Broad, a large shallow brackish lake. Within the Broads examples of *Chara* vegetation are also found within fen pools (turf ponds) and fen and marsh ditch systems.

The Broads also contain several examples of southern natural eutrophic lakes for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. The lakes are artificial and originated from peat digging in medieval times support relict vegetation of the original Fenland flora, and collectively this site contains one of the richest assemblages of rare and local aquatic species in the UK.

This flood plain mire site in East Anglia has the largest example of calcareous fens in the UK and possibly the largest occurrence in the EU outside Sweden. The *Cladium* habitat occurs in a diverse set of conditions that maintain its species-richness and forms a large-scale mosaics with other fen types, open

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water and woodland, and important associated plant species including the
fen orchid, *Liparis loeselii*.

The Broads is one of two sites selected for alkaline fens in East Anglia, where a
main concentration of lowland fen occurs. The fens are principally of the flood
plain mire type. The site contains a range of rare and local plant species,
including the Annex II fen orchid *Liparis loeselii*, lesser tussock-sedge *Carex*
diandra, and slender sedge *C. lasiocarpa*.

The complex of sites in the Broads of East Anglia contains the largest blocks of
alder *Alnus glutinosa* wood in England containing a complex complete
successional sequence from open water through reedswamp to alder
woodland, which has developed on fen peat.

The Broads is the main stronghold of Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo*
moulinsiana in East Anglia and is one of several sites selected in this part of its
range. Several large populations are known, associated with standing and
flowing water and ditch systems. This is a very important area for its wetland
invertebrate fauna, and many Red Data Book and nationally scarce species
occur here.

Also present in the Broads with significant numbers is the otter, *Lutra lutra*.

Special Area of Conservation Qualifying features- Habitats

- Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of *Chara* spp.;
- Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation;
- Transition mires and quaking bogs;
- Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the Caricion davallianae, Priority feature;
- Alkaline fens;
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) Priority feature, and;
- Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae).

Special Area of Conservation Qualifying features- Species

- Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*, and;
- Otter *Lutra lutra*.

(ii) Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitat features of the designation, and to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of the qualifying species, with particular reference to:

- Open water;
- Swamp; and
- Fen.

(iii) Vulnerability

The Broads are most vulnerable to sea level rise and reduced summer flows, due to abstraction in the northern rivers and drier summer conditions. The major consequence of these pressures is the saline intrusion into the site.

Eutrophication due to nutrients increase from sewage outfalls and agriculture is also considered a problem. Measures to reverse trophic state include phosphate stripping in some of the sewage works and mud-pumping to remove enriched material from lakes, followed by biomanipulation.

Pressure from tourism and recreation is being considered by the Broads Authority through the Broads Plan. Water levels are being addressed through the Water Level Management Plans and the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme. Appropriate standards of flood defence are necessary for the wetland, and works are currently proceeding under the Environment Agency Broads Strategy.

g. Broadland Ramsar

(i) Site Description & Qualifying Features

Broadland is a low-lying wetland complex straddling the boundaries between east Norfolk and northern Suffolk. The area includes the river valley systems of the Bure, Yare and Waveney and their major tributaries. The open distinctive landscape comprises a complex and interlinked mosaic of wetland habitats including open water, reedbeds, carr woodland, grazing marsh and fen meadow. The region is important for recreation, tourism, agriculture and wildlife.

Broadland Ramsar Qualifying Features

Criterion 6	Breeding	Over Winter	Passage
Bewick's Swan		X	

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Wigeon		X	
Gadwall		X	
Shoveler		X	
Noteworthy: Bean goose (<i>fabalis</i>), white-fronted goose (<i>albifrons</i>), teal, Pochard, smew, cormorant (<i>carbo</i>), bittern, marsh harrier, hen harrier, water rail, coot, ruff.			

Ramsar criteria for designation:

Criterion 2:

The site supports a number of rare species and habitats within the biogeographical zone context, including the following Habitats Directive Annex I features: Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davalliana*; Calcium-rich fen dominated by great fen sedge (saw sedge); Alkaline fens Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens; Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) and Alder woodland on floodplains.

It includes also the Annex II species: *Vertigo moulinsiana* Desmoulin's whorl snail; *Lutra lutra* Otter; *Liparis loeselii* Fen orchid. The site supports outstanding assemblages of rare plants and invertebrates including nine British Red Data Book plants and 136 British Red Data Book invertebrates.

Criterion 6:

The site supports bird species and populations at levels of international importance.

(ii) Vulnerability

Broadland Ramsar vulnerability is similar to The Broads Special Area of Conservation, please see section f (iii) above.

Appendix 2: HRA Screening Opinion June 2017

Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan 2017 – 2037



Habitat Regulations Assessment(HRA)
Screening Opinion
June 2017

Prepared on behalf of Swanton Morley Parish Council by

ABZAG Ltd

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

If you would like this document in large print
or in any another format
please contact
Parish Clerk, Swanton Morley Parish Council,
parishcouncil@swantonmorley.org.uk
or telephone 01362 637166

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Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion

1.0 Introduction

The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan is assessed by Natural England to evaluate the impact of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan on the natural environment, especially the internationally designated sites, and the contribution made to sustainable development.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body whose 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.

The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report was assessed by Natural England to provide their 'opinion' on the likely impact of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan and to establish whether there is a requirement to undertake a full Habitat Assessment.

2.0 Consultation Response & Actions

Natural England's opinion is summarised below:-

- *Can confirm that Natural England agrees with the conclusion of your HRA screening report for the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan; and*
- *has no issues to raise regarding the SEA.*

The full response received from Natural England can be seen in Appendix 1.

3.0 Conclusion

The 'opinion' expressed by Natural England is that the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan can be screened out from further stages of assessment and there is no need to undertake a full Habitat Assessment.

Appendix 1: Natural England's Full Response

From: Shapland, Francesca (NE) Francesca.Shapland@naturalengland.org.uk
Subject: 216625 Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan: Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening
Date: 8 June 2017 at 15:47
To: shaun.vincent@ABZAG.com

FS

Dear Shaun

Thank you for your email and sorry to have missed your calls earlier. I can confirm that Natural England agrees with the conclusion of your HRA screening report for the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan and has no issues to raise regarding the SEA.

Best wishes

Francesca

Francesca Shapland
Lead Adviser, Planning & Conservation
Norfolk & Suffolk Team
Tel: 0208 0265792

www.naturalengland.org.uk

We are here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

In an effort to reduce Natural England's carbon footprint, I will, wherever possible, avoid travelling to meetings and attend via audio, video or web conferencing.

From: ABZAG [<mailto:shaun.vincent@ABZAG.com>]
Sent: 25 May 2017 16:34
To: Consultations (NE); Plan Cons Area Team (Norfolk, Suffolk) (NE)
Cc: Swanton Morley Parish Council
Subject: Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan: Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you to consult and request your opinion on the HRA Screening of the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan (SMNP). Please find attached the HRA Screening document and draft Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan Examination Version.

Also attached are the final version of the SMNP Sustainability Appraisal Report and Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. In your response, date 20 February 2017 from Francesca Shapland, to the Regulation 14 consultation you said you had no further issues to raise. Please could you kindly confirm this also applies to the SEA in Appendix T of the SA Final Report.

I look forward to receiving your 'opinion' and response in the near future. If you have any questions or require any further clarification please let me know.

Appendix 3: 2025 Review -Natural England's Full Response

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".

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion – Version

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](#).

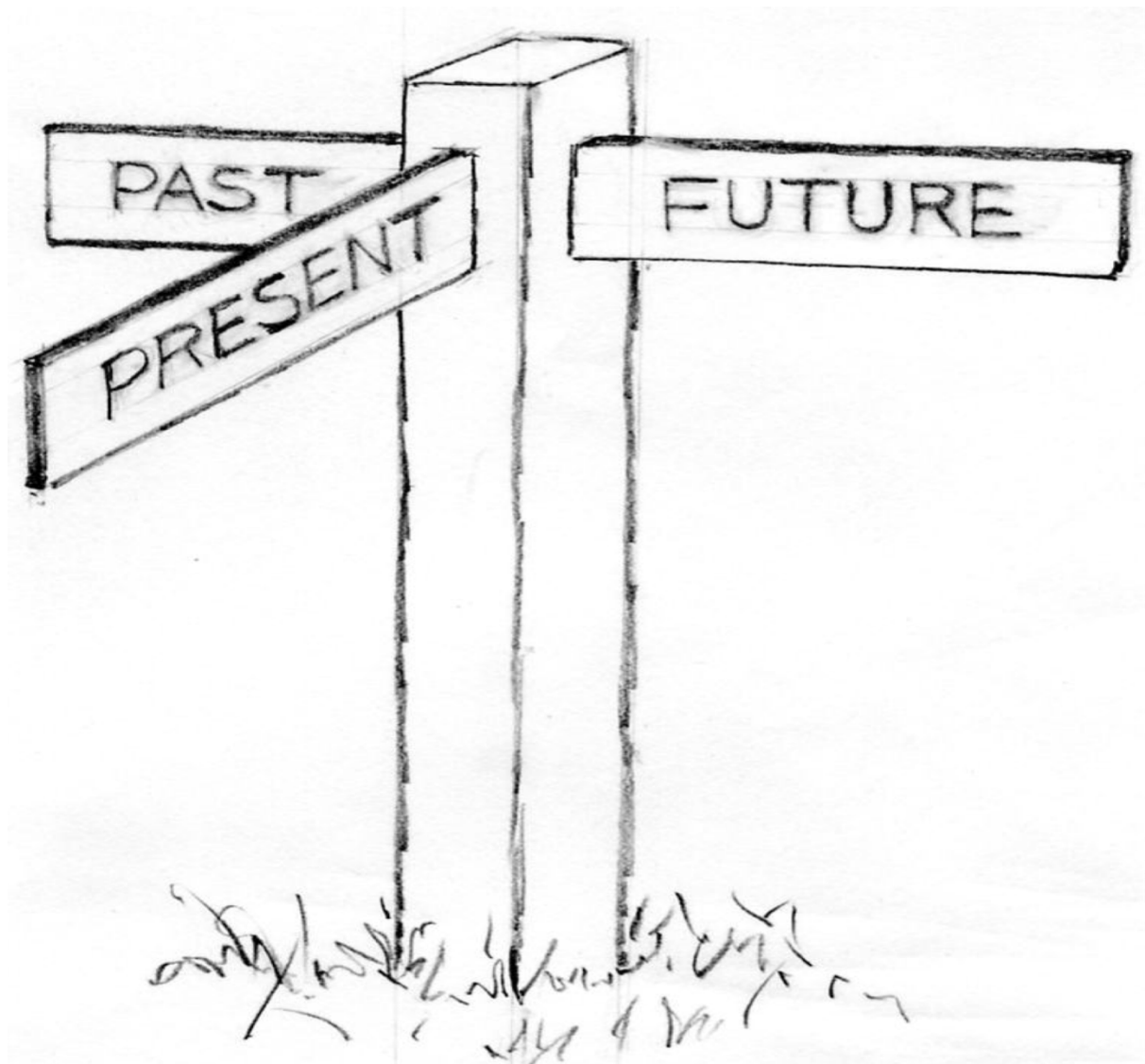
We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before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

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