

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Alton Neighbourhood Plan

Scoping Report

Alton Town Council

June 2023

Quality information

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Revision History

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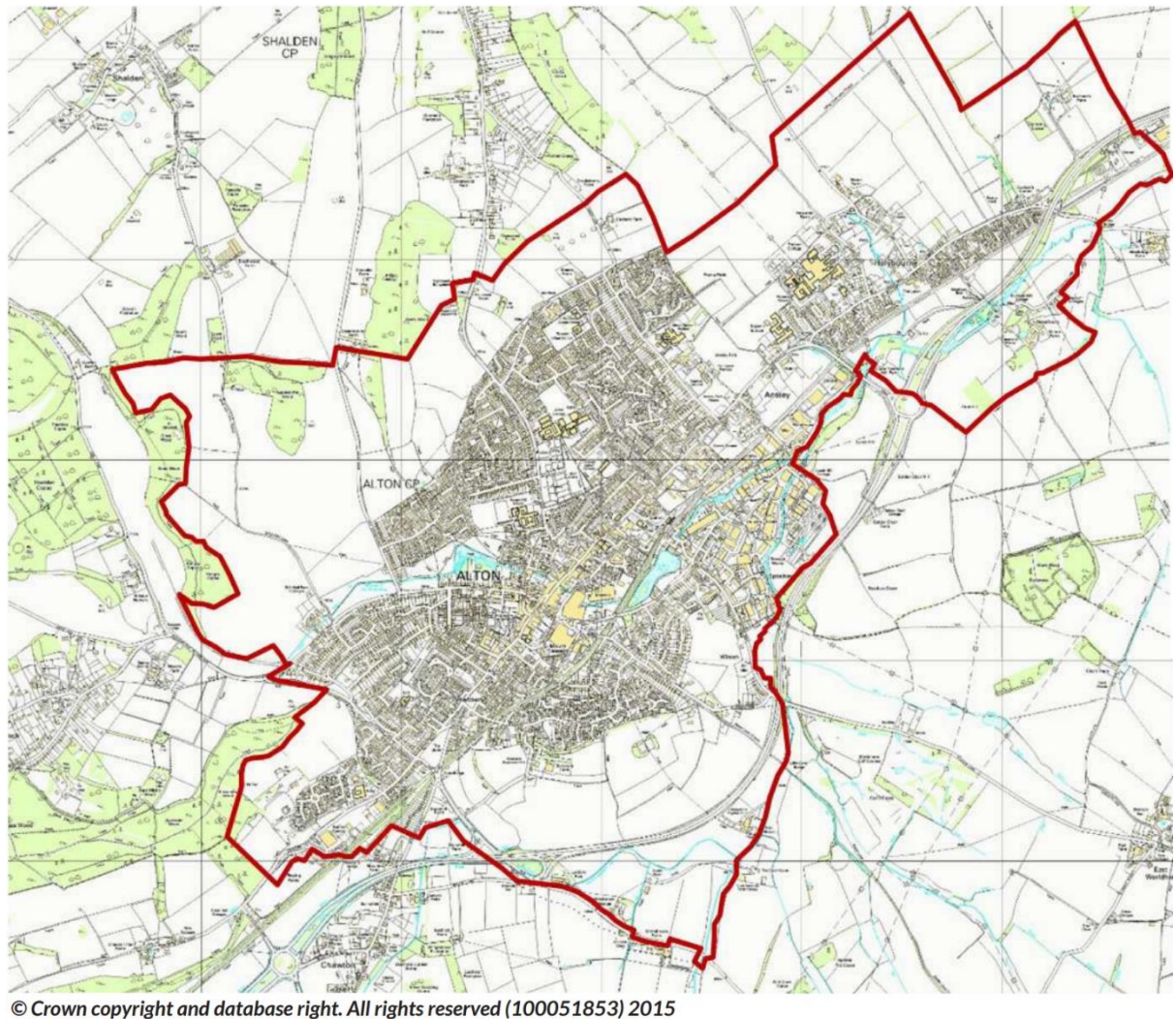
1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Alton Neighbourhood Plan (ANP).
- 1.2 The ANP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of East Hampshire District Council.
- 1.3 Designated in 2014, the Alton neighbourhood plan area (**Figure 1.1**) covers all of the Town Council area except for a small strip of uninhabited farmland at the southern tip, which falls within the South Downs National Park.
- 1.4 Alton sits just off the A31 dual carriageway – which acts as a southern bypass – running from Guildford to Winchester, and it is connected to Basingstoke to the north by the A339. The town is served by Alton railway station which provides regular direct trains to central London.
- 1.5 Alton had a population of 17,816 in 2011. The latest 2021 Census¹ data gives the parish a population of 19,435, representing a 9% growth (1,619 individuals) since the 2011.

¹ Source nomisweb.co.uk based on 2021 output areas corresponding to the Alton NP area.

Figure 3-1 Alton Neighbourhood Area



Planning policy context

1.6 Alton Parish lies within East Hampshire District Council (EHDC). The adopted planning framework consists of:

- The Joint Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan) (JCS) adopted in 2014.
- The Housing and Employment Allocations (Part 2 Local Plan) (LP2) adopted in 2016.
- The South Downs Local Plan (adopted 2019).
- Extant policies from the Local Plan second review (adopted 2006).

1.7 The JCS identifies Alton as a 'Market Town' within the 'North of the South Downs National Park' area (one of four distinct areas identified in the JCS). Market Towns are identified as the first level of the settlement hierarchy, considered as the most sustainable locations for new development in terms of access to services and facilities.

- Policy CP3 allocates 7ha of new employment land in Alton up to 2028.
- Policy CP8 seeks to maintain the vitality and viability of the District's centres including Alton's town centre, identified as one of the District's principal centres.

- Policy CP10 makes provision for 10,060 new dwellings for district over the plan period (2011-2028) including 700 for Alton. The site identification is left to the Alton Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Policy CP31 promotes improved access to Alton's rail station by sustainable modes of transport and additional car and cycle parking if appropriate.
- 1.8 The Housing and Employment allocations (LP2) includes the following provisions relevant to the ANP:
- Allocations and commitments total 877 in Alton representing a 25% uplift to the target set in the JCS.
 - The housing site allocated in the saved East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review Policy H1, Land at former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital, will remain.
 - Employment land provision of 10 ha is made through policy EMP1 (Land at Lynch Hill) and policy EMP2 (Land at Wilsom Rd.).
- 1.9 The emerging EHDC Local Plan 2021-2040 is currently in the early stages of preparation having undergone public consultation (Regulation 18 part 1) between November 2022 and January 2023.

SEA explained

- 1.10 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of the SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the ANP seeks to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.11 SEA is undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).
- 1.12 The NPA includes four Conservation Areas (the historic centre, Anstey, The Butts and Holybourne Village). There are also a number of Listed Buildings, a Scheduled Monument, Priority Habitats, Ancient Woodland as well as areas subject to fluvial and surface water flooding. Due to the presence of these environmental designations, EHDC has confirmed, that an SEA is required.
- 1.13 This Scoping Report seeks to establish a suggested scope for the SEA. A key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations is to present this scope for the SEA, so that the designated authorities (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency) can provide timely comment.

SEA scoping explained

1.14 Developing the draft scope for the SEA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:

- Exploring the policy context for the ANP and SEA to summarise the key messages arising.
- Establishing the baseline for the SEA (i.e., the current and future situation in the area in the absence of the ANP) to help identify the plan's likely significant effects.
- Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA; and
- Considering this information, developing an SEA framework comprising SEA objectives and assessment questions, which can then be used as a guiding framework for the subsequent assessment.

1.15 The scope is explored and presented under a series of key environmental themes as follows:

- Air quality
- Biodiversity
- Climate change
- Community wellbeing
- Historic environment
- Landscape
- Land, soil and water resources
- Transportation

1.16 The selected environmental themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive². These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects. The discussion of the scoping information for each theme is presented in Chapters 2 to 10, and the proposed SEA framework is brought together as a whole in Chapter 11. Each proposal within the emerging ANP will be assessed consistently using this framework.

² The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on 'the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'.

2. Air quality

2.1 This theme focuses on air pollution, in particular: sources of air pollution, air quality hotspots, and areas known to exceed objectives for air quality.

Policy context

2.2 **Table 2.1** (below) presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 2.1 Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to air quality

Document Title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>The Clean Air Strategy</u>	2019
<u>UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations</u>	2017
<u>A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</u>	2018
<u>Joint Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations</u>	2016
<u>Our Green Action Plan</u>	2023
<u>Climate and Environment Strategy 2020-2025</u>	2020

2.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which predominantly seeks early planning to reduce/ mitigate air quality impacts in development and to take advantage of opportunities to improve air quality. Measures to improve air quality include traffic and travel management and green infrastructure provision. Strategic development is expected to be focused on locations that have or will be provided with high levels of accessibility; supporting both a reduced need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Smaller-scale development should consider the potential for cumulative effects in relation to air quality.
- The ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the JCS and the Housing and Employment allocations (LP part 2) which contains policies relating to air quality and pollution.
- To improve air quality across the UK, national strategies have in the last few decades focused on regulatory frameworks, investment by industry in cleaner processes and a shift in the fuel mix towards cleaner forms of energy (largely at point sources). Whilst there are dedicated strategies to reducing roadside emissions (as a significant source of nitrogen dioxide emissions), recent objectives outlined in the Clean Air Strategy seek to recognise wider sources (including smaller contributors and diffuse sources) that contribute to poor air quality. This includes power generation, heating our homes, producing food, manufacturing consumer goods and powering transport.

- ‘Our Green Action Plan’ sets out the projects and initiatives that EHDC will deliver in the short term (by May 2023) while developing a longer-term action plan.
- EHDC Climate and Environment Strategy 2020-2025 sets out the Council’s objective to reduce carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050; and to protect and enhance the local natural environment.

Current baseline

- 2.4 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) are declared in areas which exceed national objectives for levels of particulates, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, benzene, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, butadiene, carbon monoxide, lead and/ or nitrogen oxides. There are no AQMA declared within Alton or the wider district. Therefore, the neighbourhood area is not constrained in this respect.
- 2.5 There is 1 monitoring site in Alton (Orchard House). The monitoring data³ show no exceedances of NO₂ levels since the start of monitoring in 2016.
- 2.6 In terms of localised air quality, commuting flows into, out of and through the town often lead to congestion at some junctions and pinch points at peak times. Congestion also occurs on the A339 Whitedown Lane. In some of the older residential parts of the town the lack of off-street parking leads to kerbside parking which impedes traffic flow leading to congestion. Similar problems occur in the vicinity of the railway station and schools at peak times.

Future baseline

- 2.7 Whilst it is likely that suitable planning and mitigation measures will be incorporated in the design of new development, the growth proposed within the neighbourhood area has the potential for adverse effects on air quality, due to increased levels of traffic and associated pollutants.
- 2.8 In line with higher level planning policy, future development should contribute towards improving air quality, supporting opportunities to improve accessibility, particularly in terms of the use of sustainable modes of transport, including active travel modes, working from home and electric vehicle use.
- 2.9 Development in the neighbourhood area could lead to increased vehicular traffic exacerbating congestion issues at busy junctions and traffic pinch points. This can lead to potentially significant increases in emissions, both locally and within the wider area.

Key issues

- 2.10 There are not AQMA within the district and there have been no instances of exceedance of national thresholds for NO₂ in Alton since monitoring started in 2016.
- 2.11 Future development within the ANP area has the potential to lead to increased congestion and reduced air quality. This is particularly likely to be an issue around

³ [EHDC Combined 2020 and 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report \(ASR\)](#)

existing traffic pinch points. The effects of the ANP in relation to traffic and congestion will be explored under the 'transportation' SEA theme (Chapter 9).

2.12 The ANP also presents opportunities to enhance accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections around the neighbourhood area. These opportunities will also be explored under the 'transportation' theme (Chapter 9).

2.13 Designated biodiversity sites in the vicinity of the Plan area are potentially sensitive to air pollution. The effects of the ANP in relation to this issue will be explored under the 'Biodiversity' SEA theme.

SEA Objectives

2.14 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective and assessment questions.

SEA objective	Assessment questions to consider for the allocations/proposals within the ANP
Improve air quality in the ANP area and minimise and/or mitigate against all sources of environmental pollution.	Will the option/proposal help to: - Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? - Promote development that will not contribute to the degradation of air quality? - Implement measures (such as appropriate planting and provision of green infrastructure) to help support air quality in the neighbourhood plan area?

3. Biodiversity

Focus of theme

- 3.1 This theme focuses on nature conservation designations, habitats, and species within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

Policy context

- 3.2 **Table 3.1** presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 3.1 Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to biodiversity

Document Title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</u>	2018
<u>Biodiversity 2020 Strategy</u>	2011
<u>The Environment Act</u>	2021
<u>UK Biodiversity Action Plan</u>	1994
<u>The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act</u>	2006
<u>Joint Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations</u>	2016
<u>Our Green Action Plan</u>	2023
<u>Climate and Environment Strategy 2020-2025</u>	2020

- 3.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which highlights that opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. This includes utilising a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure at the wider catchment or landscape scale.
- Support is provided through the NPPF in establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. Trees notably make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards).
- Over the past decade policy (for example, The Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020) has demonstrated a move away from the traditional approach of protecting biodiversity, to a wider landscape approach to enhancing biodiversity, as part of the overall aims to halt biodiversity loss.

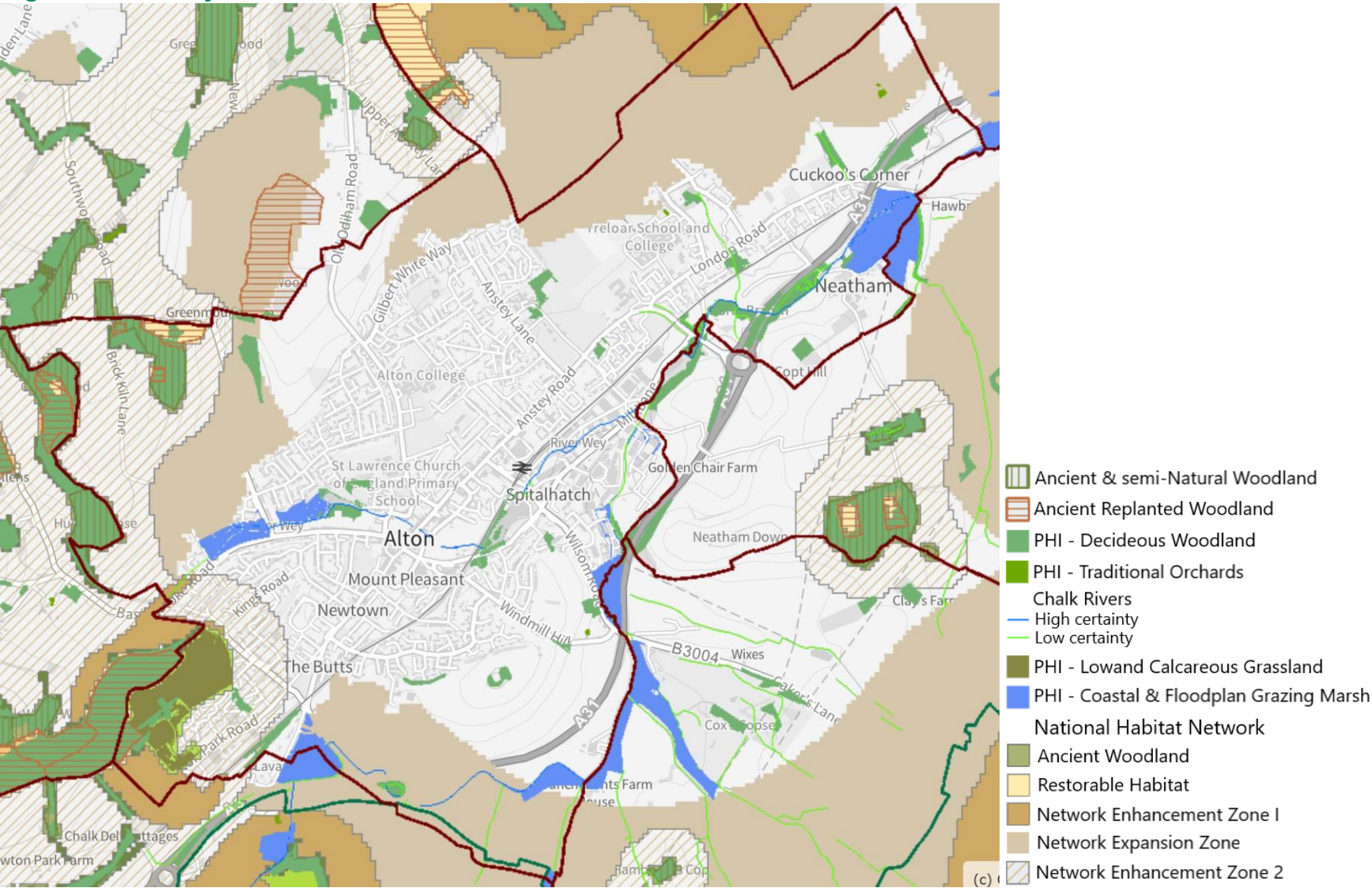
The 25 Year Environment Plan places emphasis on improvements to the natural environment; identifying the need to “replenish depleted soil, plant trees, support wetlands and peatlands, rid seas and rivers of rubbish, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cleanse the air of pollutants, develop cleaner, sustainable energy and protect threatened species and habitats.” Working at a landscape scale transformation is expected to connect habitats into larger corridors for wildlife.

- The Environment Act provides further provisions in relation to biodiversity. The Bill sets parameters for biodiversity gain as a condition of planning permission, as well as biodiversity gain site registers and biodiversity credits. The Act identifies a general duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including through biodiversity reports and local nature recovery strategies. Local nature recovery strategies will identify biodiversity priorities for the strategy area as well as a local habitat map. Furthermore, habitat maps are expected to include recovery and enhancement areas which are or could become of importance for biodiversity.
- The ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies in the JCS and the Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations relating to biodiversity and geodiversity.

Current baseline

- 3.4 There are no international or nationally designated biodiversity sites within or adjacent to the neighbourhood area. There are eight nationally designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest or SSSI) within 2.5-4.5 km distance from the ANP boundary to the southeast at Selborne, Binsted, Worldham and Kingsley. The neighbourhood area falls within the identified Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) associated with some of the above SSSIs; but the IRZs does not relate to residential development.
- 3.5 The neighbourhood area is interspersed with a range of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats. These include Deciduous Woodland areas and a small area of Traditional Orchards (**Figure 3.1**) which could be particularly vulnerable to settlement expansion. A Network Expansion Zone extends across the northwest boundary of the neighbourhood area and there is a Network Enhancement Zone to the east of the parish. These Zones are recognised areas close to existing habitats that are either suitable for habitat re-creation, new habitats or restoration that addresses habitat fragmentation

Figure 3-1 Priority Habitats - ANP area⁴



⁴ Source: MAGIC Map

Future baseline

- 3.6 Although there are no designated biodiversity sites in the neighbourhood area, settlement expansion has the potential to lead to habitat loss, fragmentation, and disturbance. However, targeted enhancement opportunities can be sought through spatial planning and the development of the ANP.

Key issues

- 3.7 Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity:
- Growth in the ANP area should seek to avoid the loss or fragmentation of Priority Habitat. The ANP provides an opportunity to develop a spatial strategy that minimises impacts on the local habitat network and delivers development gains in respect of biodiversity net gain, habitat expansion, and new green infrastructure.

SEA objective

- 3.8 Considering the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective and assessment questions in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity:

Table 3-1: Proposed SEA objective for biodiversity and geodiversity

SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the option / proposal help to...)
To maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity habitats and networks within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	• Protect and enhance nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? • Protect and enhance priority habitats and the links between them? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Support habitat restoration or new habitat creation within the identified Network Enhancement / Expansion Zones? • Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks and the network of open spaces?

4. Climate change

- 4.1 This theme focuses on activities in the neighbourhood area that contribute to climate change and climate change mitigation, as well as the effects of climate change, including flood risk, and climate change adaptation.

Policy context

- 4.2 **Table 4.1** presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 4-1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to climate change and flood risk

Document title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>UK Climate Change Act</u>	2008
<u>UK (second) National Adaptation Programme 2018 to 2023</u>	2018
<u>The Clean Air Strategy</u>	2019
<u>Clean Growth Strategy</u>	2019
<u>UK Sixth Carbon Budget</u>	2020
<u>25-Year Environment Plan</u>	2019
<u>National Infrastructure Assessment</u>	2018
<u>UK Climate Change Risk Assessment</u>	2022
<u>Flood and Water Management Act</u>	2010
<u>National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy</u>	2020
<u>How Local Authorities Can Reduce Emissions and Manage Climate Change Risk</u>	2012
<u>The National Design Guide</u>	2021
<u>National Model Design Code</u>	2021
<u>Heat Networks: Building a Market Framework</u>	2020
<u>Joint Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations</u>	2016
<u>Our Green Action Plan</u>	2023
<u>Climate and Environment Strategy 2020-2025</u>	2020

4.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which requires proactive planning to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies are expected to improve the resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, avoid inappropriate development in the flood plain, and support the move to a low carbon economy. The NPPF recognises the potential for planning to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and deliver long-term resilience, including through reuse, regeneration, and conversion.
- Notably, access to a network of high-quality open spaces can deliver wider benefits for nature, supporting efforts to address climate change, while improvements in green and other infrastructure can reduce the causes and impacts of flooding.
- Planning Practice Guidance presents the following list of ‘examples’ of ways local planning can support adaptation:
 - *“Considering future climate risks when allocating development sites to ensure risks are understood over the development’s lifetime.*
 - *Considering the impact of and promoting design responses to flood risk for the lifetime of the development.*
 - *Considering availability of water and water infrastructure for the lifetime of the development and design responses to promote water efficiency and protect water quality.*
 - *Promoting adaptation approaches in design policies for developments and the public realm relevant.”*
- The UK Climate Change Act requires Government to present to Parliament an assessment of the climate change risks for the UK every five years. Following the publication of each Change Risk Assessment, the Government must lay out its objectives, policies, and proposals to address the climate change risks and opportunities. The second National Adaptation Programme (NAP2, 2018-2023), setting out these objectives, policies, and proposals, was published in 2018. The ASC is required by the Act to assess the NAP and present progress reports. The most recent report was published in 2019, concluding that climate change adaptation needs to be addressed at a national scale and the Government’s response to date has not been successful.⁵ The Sixth Carbon Budget, required under the Climate Change Act, provides ministers with advice on the volume of greenhouse gases that the UK can emit during the period 2033 to 2037.
- The Clean Growth Strategy, Clean Air Strategy and the 25-year Environment Plan are a suite of documents which seek to progress the government’s commitment under the UK Climate Change Act to becoming net zero by 2050. The documents set out detailed proposals on how the government will tackle all sources of air pollution, whilst maintaining an affordable energy supply and increasing economic growth. This parallels with the 25-year Environment Plan, which further seeks to manage land resources sustainably, recover and reinstate nature, protect soils and habitats, increase resource efficiency, improve water quality, and connect people with the

⁵ Climate Change Committee (n.d.) ‘UK adaptation policy’ can be accessed [here](#).

environment. The documents also interlink with the government's commitment to decarbonising transport, a recognised challenge that needs more work in a timely manner if government are to achieve net zero targets. Furthermore, the decarbonisation plan recognises the twinned need to undertake action to adapt the transport sector and increase resilience to climate change risks; and this challenge is more directly addressed through the UK's National Adaptation Programme.

- The National Infrastructure Assessment identified the key national challenges, and the government is developing a National Infrastructure Strategy. The NIC also published two key reports in 2019:
 - Strategic Investment and Public Confidence – this report is clear that *“the regulatory system has not adequately addressed societal interests: it needs to work more effectively to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, transition to full-fibre digital networks, and manage the increasing risks of floods and drought.”* It calls for a much more coordinated approach, explaining that:⁶ *“The current system leaves strategy primarily to infrastructure owners and providers. But they may not be best placed to assess the coming challenges, and they do not have the right incentives to build the right infrastructure to address them... There are some good examples of the system delivering strategic, long-term investment, however in general the system is not designed to deliver this... [R]egulators should demonstrate how they have taken consideration of the strategic vision of... local government...”*
- The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report aiming to understand the current and future climate risks and opportunities. The evidence report contains six priority risk areas requiring additional action between 2017 and 2022, see below:
 - Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses, and infrastructure.
 - Risks to health, well-being, and productivity from high temperatures.
 - Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry.
 - Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine, and freshwater ecosystems, soils, and biodiversity.
 - Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
 - New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants, and animals.
- The Flood and Water Management Act was introduced in 2010 as a response to the need to develop better resilience to climate change. The Act requires

⁶ NIC (2019) 'Strategic Investment and public confidence' can be accessed [here](#).

better management of flood risk, creating safeguards against rises in surface water drainage charges, and protecting water supplies for consumers. Good flood and coastal risk management is further outlined through the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2020).

- The Committee of Climate Change's 2012 report entitled 'How Local Authorities Can Reduce Emissions and Manage Climate Change Risk' emphasises the crucial role councils have in helping the UK meet its carbon targets and preparing for the impacts of climate change. It outlines specific opportunities for reducing emissions and highlights good practice examples from Local Authorities.
- The National Design Guide (NDG) and the National Design Code address how the Government recognises "*well-designed places*" including opportunities for climate change measures. Notably the NDG defines what constitutes a well-designed place using ten characteristics under three themes of climate, character, and community. Under the climate theme, homes and buildings should be functional, healthy, and sustainable, resources should be efficient and resilient, and buildings should be made to last.
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy released a framework for heat networks which includes proposals to increase access to renewable heat sources and achieve a net zero target by 2050.
- The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2017) sets several priorities for the next five years in line with the Climate Change Act, in order to mitigate and adapt to rising temperatures from greenhouse gas emissions.
- The ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the adopted Local Plan (JCS and LP2) which contains policies directly relating to the climate change theme, including flood management and sustainable design.
- EHDC adopted a wide-ranging climate and environment strategy in August 2020. The climate and environment strategy 2020-25 focuses on reducing emissions and protecting and enhancing local green spaces with a target to be carbon neutral by 2050. The strategy is supported by the 'Our Green Action Plan' which sets out the initiatives the Council intends to take in the short terms to support the above objectives.

Current baseline

4.4 EHDC declared a climate emergency in July 2019 setting the district on a carbon reduction pathway. The Council's Climate and Environment Strategy 2020-2025 sets out the Council's aim for the district to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The strategy includes community engagement and guidance and incentives for businesses along measures to increase tree cover, open green space and partnership working to achieve these objectives.

4.5 Per capita emissions since 2005 in East Hampshire are displayed in **Figure 4.1**⁷.

⁷ DBEIS (2021) 'UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019' can be accessed [here](#).

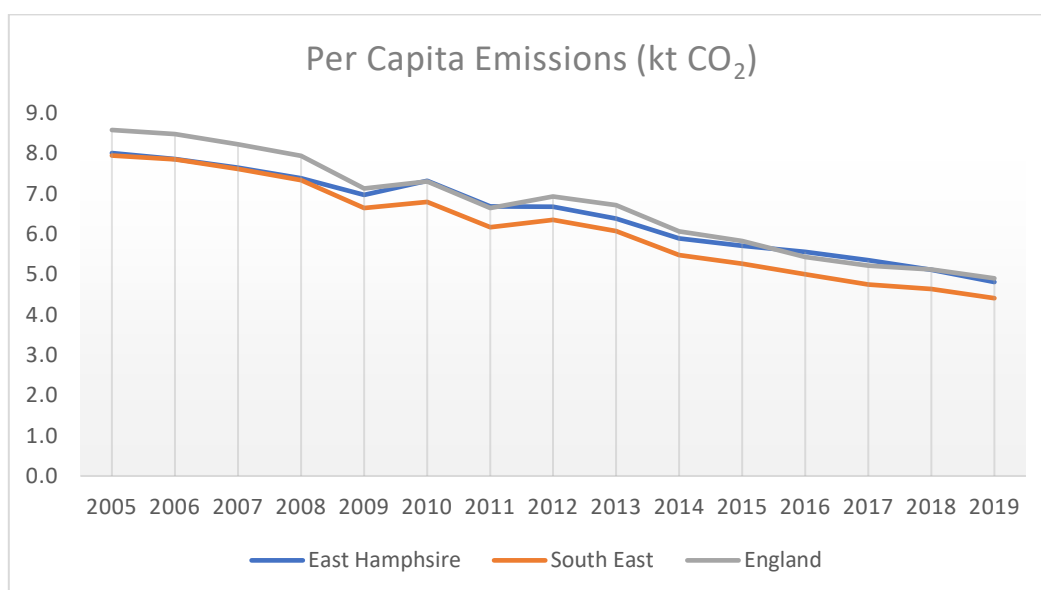


Figure 4.1: Per capita CO₂ emissions since 2005

- 4.6 The data demonstrates that whilst continual reductions in per capita emissions are being achieved, levels in East Hampshire are higher than those at regional level (for the South East) and only slightly below national levels.
- 4.7 **Figure 4.2** depicts emissions by sector⁸ and shows that the transport sector has remained the biggest contributor to emissions in East Hampshire since 2005. A road traffic, particularly HGV traffic is a major contributor to this. The domestic sector is also a significant contributor, though greater emissions reductions have been achieved within this sector overall.

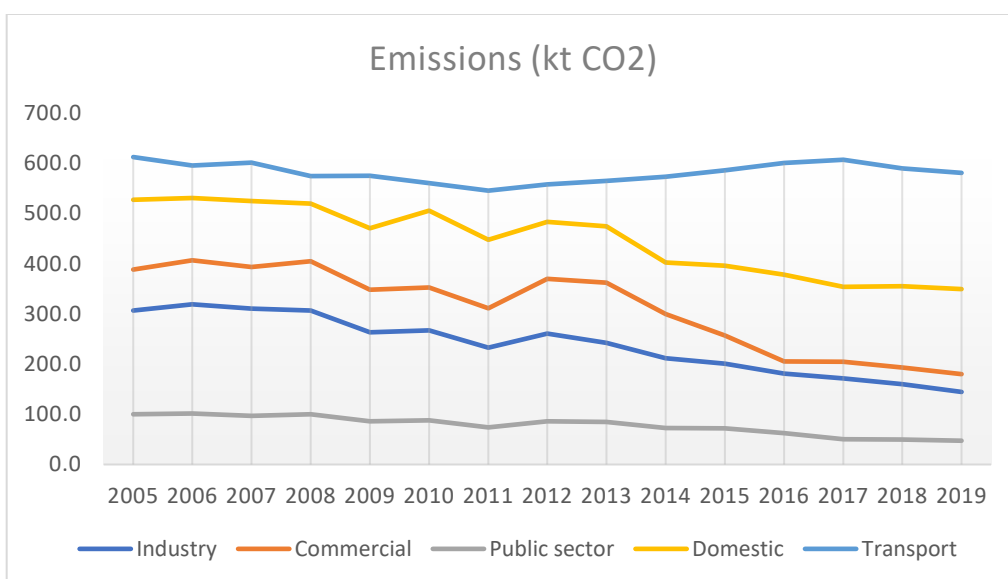


Figure 4.2: Emissions by sector since 2005 (East Hampshire)

- 4.8 With regards to transport emissions, the uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) will contribute positively towards the reduction of road transport related emissions. In line with assumptions made by the Department for Transport's

⁸ DBEIS (2021) 'UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019' can be accessed [here](#).

'Road to Zero' Report (2018)⁹, it is assumed that ULEV uptake will increase rapidly in the coming decade and aside from Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), all vehicles could be ultra-low emission (powered either by hydrogen or electricity) by 2030.

4.9 Electric Vehicles (EVs) do not burn fuel and create almost no noise. They are battery powered and have the potential to be 'zero-emission vehicles' (ZEVs) if powered by renewable electricity. As of October 2022, there were 40 public electric charging devices in East Hampshire¹⁰, three of which are within the neighbourhood area.¹¹

4.10 In terms of renewable energy, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy publishes annual statistics on renewable energy generation, disaggregated by Local Authority.¹² The most recent data (to 2021) shows that East Hampshire has a total of 4,031 renewable energy (electricity) installations. All of these installations are photovoltaics, and they amount to a total renewable electricity capacity of 50.2MW.

4.11 Research on the probable effects of climate change in the UK was released in 2018 by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP18) team. UKCP18 gives climate information for the UK up to the end of this century and projections of future changes to the climate are provided, based on simulations from climate models. Projections are broken down to a regional level across the UK and are shown in probabilistic form, which illustrate the potential range of changes and level of confidence in each prediction.

4.12 As highlighted by the research, the effects of climate change for the South East of England by 2040 in a 'medium emissions' scenario are likely to be as follows¹³:

- An increase in winter mean temperature of 1°C and an increase in summer mean temperature of 2°C; and
- A change in winter mean precipitation up to +10% and summer mean precipitation up to -10%.

4.13 Resulting from these changes, a range of risks exist for the neighbourhood area, including:

- Effects on water resources, such as a reduction in availability of groundwater for extraction and a need to increase capacity of wastewater treatment plants and sewers;
- Adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain;
- Increased risk of flooding and a need to upgrade flood defences;
- Soil erosion due to flash flooding;
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their southerly distribution and spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution;

⁹ HM Gov (2018) 'The Road to Zero – Next steps towards cleaner road transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy' can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁰ HM Gov (2022) 'Electric vehicle charging device statistics: October 2022' can be accessed [here](#).

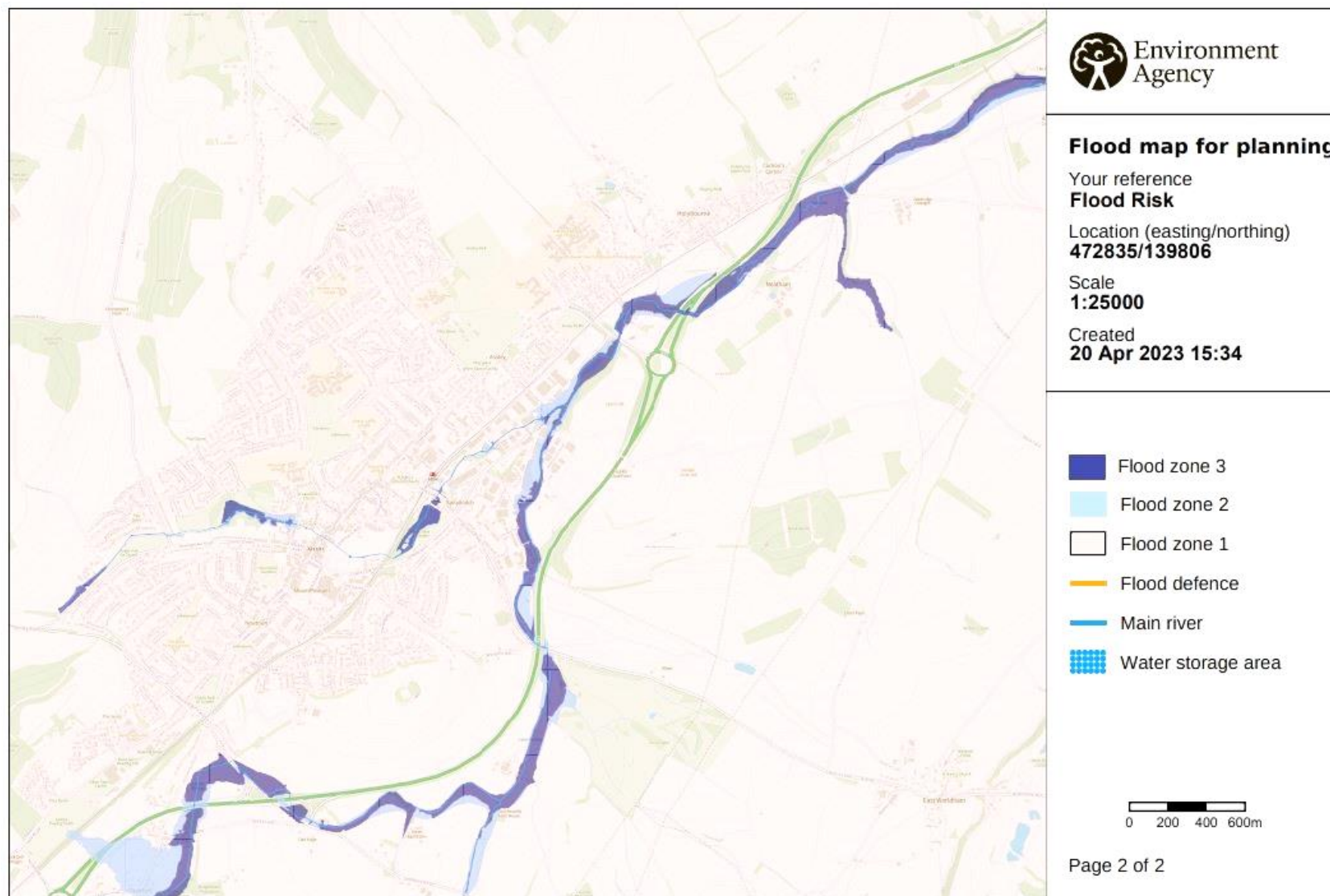
¹¹ Zap Map (2023) can be accessed [here](#).

¹² DBEIS (2022) 'Regional Renewable Statistics' can be accessed [here](#).

¹³ Met Office (2019) 'Climate change projections over land' can be accessed [here](#).

- Increased demand for air-conditioning; and
- Heat stress related issues with infrastructure due to increased temperature.

4.14 Fluvial flood risk in the neighbourhood area largely follows the water courses associated with the River Wey and Caker Stream, with the areas closest to these watercourses being within Flood Zone 3 (**Figure 4.3**). Additionally there is an area of Flood Zone 2 along Marsh End Lane/ Willen Rd. to the south of the parish. The risk of surface water flooding broadly follows these watercourses as well, as shown in **Figure 4.4**.



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Figure 4.3: Fluvial flood risk in the neighbourhood area

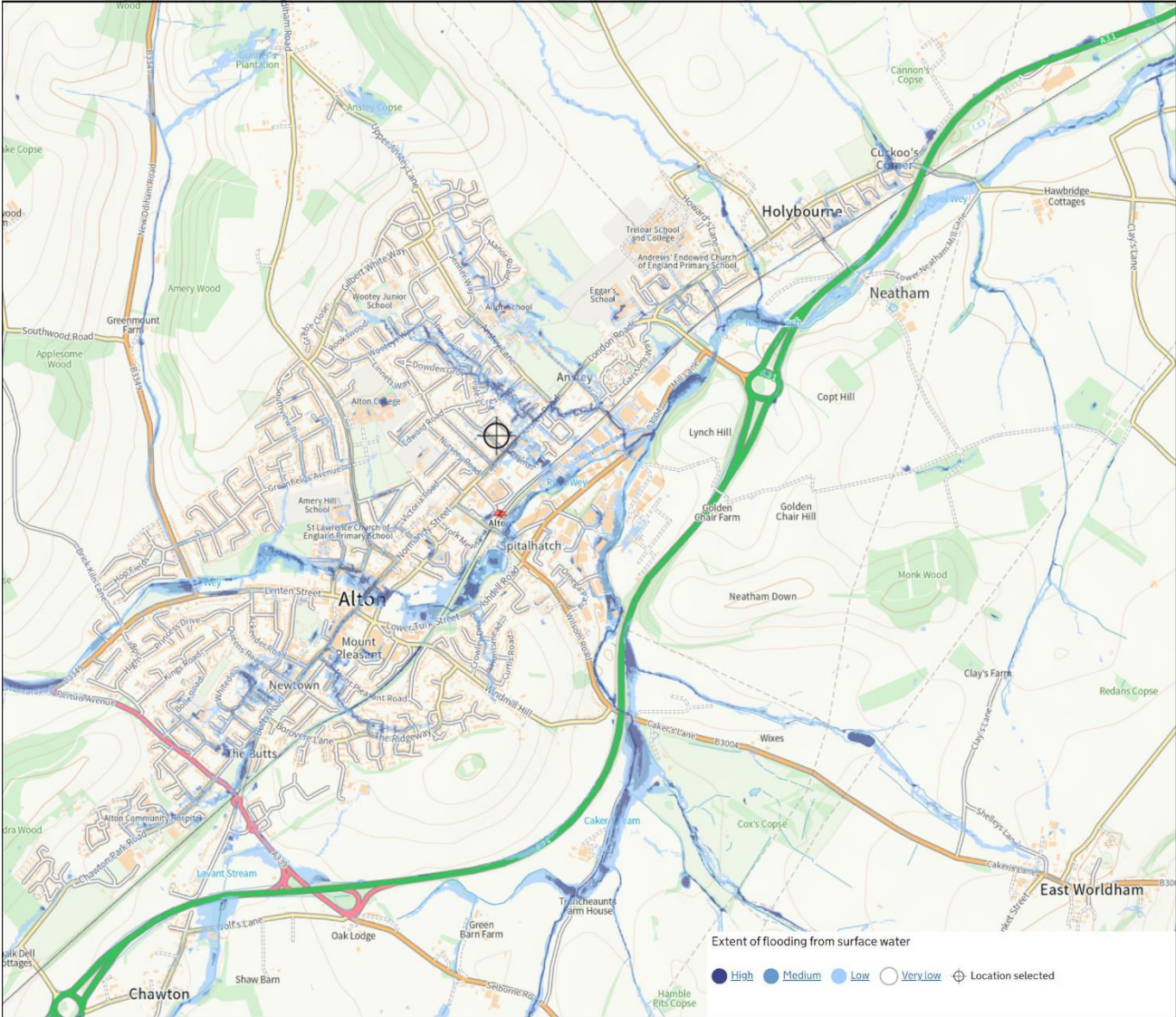


Figure 4.4: Surface water flood risk in the neighbourhood area

4.15 Groundwater poses a significant risk of flooding to the District, this is predominantly associated with the extensive chalk bedrock geology underlying the majority of East Hampshire. EHDC's Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment¹⁴ (SFRA) mapping shows that a large part of Alton falls within an area of 'potential groundwater flooding to occur at surface' (Figure 4.5). Several instances of groundwater flooding have been recorded for Alton in recent times; in 2014 there were 5 recorded instances of flooding (a mixture of internal, basement and garden flooding) and in 2019/2020 significant flooding took place in Northbrook Park near Alton and Holybourne.

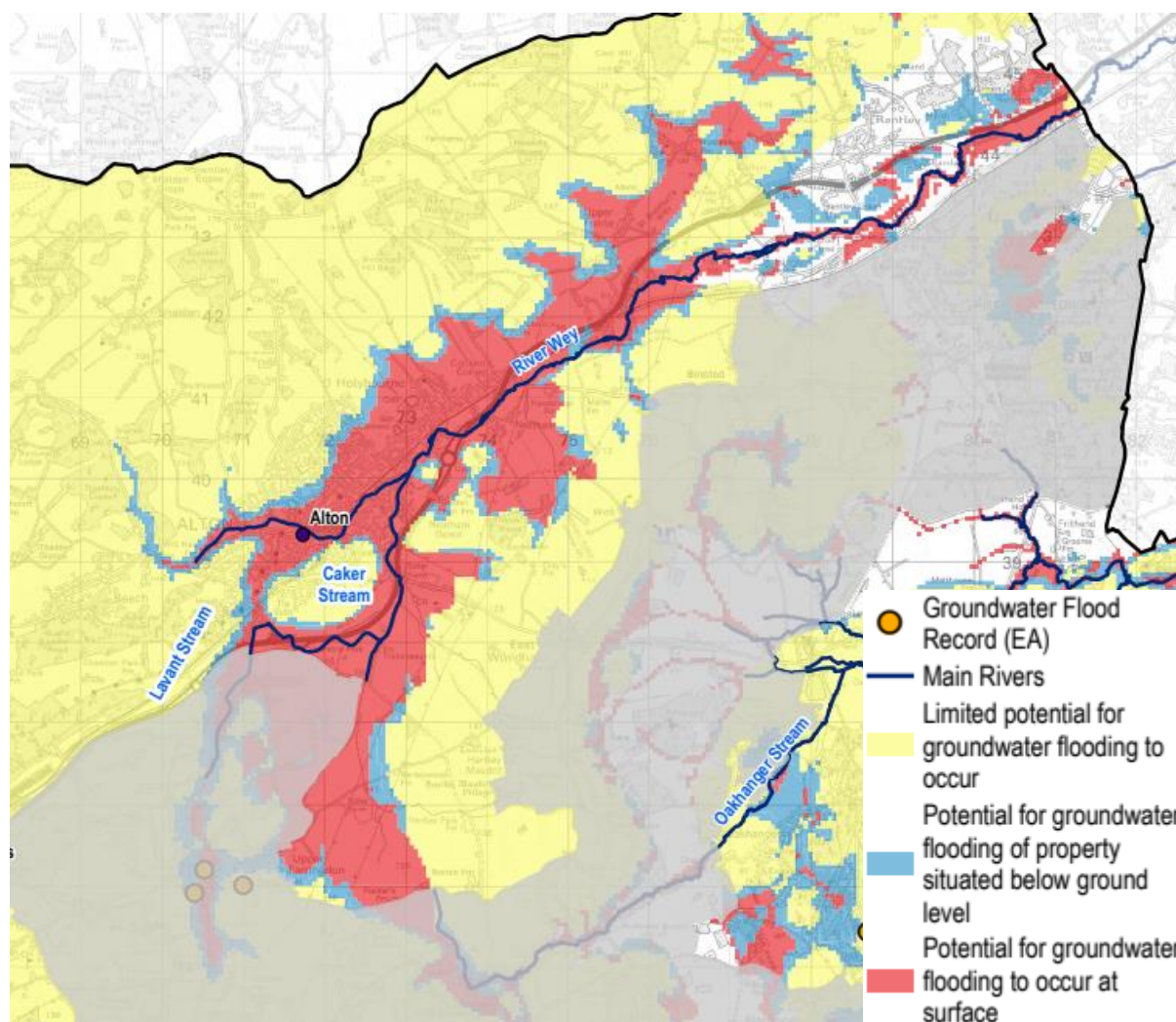


Figure 4-5 Susceptibility to Groundwater Flooding (EHDC's SFRA Map)¹⁵

Future baseline

4.16 In line with UK trends and national commitments, emissions are likely to continue to fall as energy efficiency measures, renewable energy take-up and new technologies, such as EVs and solar PV, become more widely adopted.

4.17 In the future, new development could have the potential to increase flood risk through factors such as changing surface and ground water flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing flood risk. It is further

¹⁴ EHDC Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

¹⁵ Source: <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/media/7789/download?inline>

recognised that climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events. This has the potential to put residents, property, and development at a high risk of flood exposure. However, in line with the NPPF (2021) sequential testing is likely to ensure that development within areas at highest risk of flooding is largely avoided, and development is likely to deliver mitigation such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Key issues

4.18 Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to climate change and flood risk:

- The flood plain of the River Wey (and its tributaries) affects Alton and its surroundings. Therefore, a proportion of the ANP area, including the main settlement, is in areas that have a medium to high probability of flooding from rivers (i.e. Flood Zones 2 and 3). These areas broadly follow the watercourses present. Parts of the ANP area are also potentially at risk from groundwater flooding at the surface. Development should ensure appropriate mitigation (e.g., through design and sustainable drainage systems) and seek opportunities to improve drainage and reduce flood risks where they exist.
- The transport sector continues to be a key challenge in terms of reducing emissions. The ANP provides opportunities to guide development towards the most accessible available locations in the neighbourhood area and require local infrastructure (including walking and cycling) improvements where appropriate.
- The ANP should seek to maximise opportunities for local renewable energy and electric vehicle infrastructure development, as well as new green infrastructure and improved ecological links, to support climate resilience.

SEA objectives

4.19 Considering the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives and assessment questions in relation to climate change and flood risk:

Table 4-2: Proposed SEA objectives for climate change and flood risk

SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the option / proposal help to...)
Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the neighbourhood area.	• Reduce the number of journeys made by polluting vehicles? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Improve or extend local footpaths, cycle paths or strategic green infrastructure routes? • Increase the number of new development meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? • Support the transition to electric vehicles?
Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk.	• Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the ANP area? • Sustainably manage water runoff? • Increase the resilience of the local built and natural environment? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are duly considered in the design of new development in the ANP area?

5. Community wellbeing

- 5.1 This theme focuses on health indicators and deprivation, healthcare provision in the neighbourhood area and influences on resident health and wellbeing, including access to open space and the countryside.

Policy context

- 5.2 **Table 5.1** presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 5-1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to health and wellbeing

Document Title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>Planning Practice Guidance</u>	2019
<u>The 25 Year Environment Plan</u>	2018
<u>Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On</u>	2020
<u>Planning for Sport Guidance</u>	2019
<u>Joint Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations</u>	2016

- 5.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The ANP will need to have regard for the principles set out in the NPPF, which seek to retain and enhance access to community services and facilities such as educational facilities and open spaces. The NPPF recognises the benefits of having a range of local provision to support community needs. In addition, the NPPF recognises the benefits of creating cohesive communities in safe environments where the fear of crime (and crime itself) does not undermine resident quality of life. This contributes to ensuring settlement and community identities are protected.
- As set out in the NPPF, it should be ensured that the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. The Design Guide and Model code illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring, and successful can be achieved in practice.
- The NPPF recognises the role of development plans in helping to deliver access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity, therefore contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities. The health benefits of access to nature, green spaces and green infrastructure are further reiterated in the 25-year Environment Plan.

- The 2020 Health Equity in England Report identifies that the health gap between less and more deprived areas has grown in the last decade, where more people can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health, and where improvements to life expectancy have stalled, or even declined for the poorest 10% of women.
- The Planning for Sport Guidance seeks to help the planning system provide formal and informal opportunities for everyone to take part in sport and be physically active. The Guidance outlines 12 'planning-for-sport' principles.
- The ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies in the JCS and the Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations relating to housing, community facilities and green space provision.

Baseline summary

5.4 As of the 2021 Census, the population of Alton was 19,435 – an increase from 17,816 in 2011¹⁶ representing a 9.1% increase which is slightly higher than the wider district which grew by 8.7%. It is recognised that an increasing population has the potential to impact upon the vitality of the local community and community infrastructure.

5.5 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation and is the combination of seven different domains as described below:

- **Income:** the proportion of the population experiencing a deprivation relating to low income. There are a further two subsets of this measure:
 - **Income deprivation affecting children:** the proportion of children aged 0-15 living in income deprived families; and
 - **Income deprivation affecting older people:** the proportion of all adults aged 60 and above that experience income deprivation.
- **Employment:** the proportion of the working-age population involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those who want to work but cannot.
- **Education, skills, and training:** the lack of attainment and skills in the population.
- **Health deprivation and disability:** the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health.
- **Crime:** the risk of personal and material victimisation at the local level.
- **Barriers to housing and services:** the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, split into 'geographical barriers' linked to physical proximity and 'wider barriers' linked to access to housing.
- **Living environment:** the quality of the local environment, categorised into 'indoors living environment' to measure the quality of housing and 'outdoors living environment' to measure indicators like air quality and road traffic accidents.

¹⁶ Source: www.nomisweb.co.uk based on the sum of 2021 statistical output areas within the ANP area.

- 5.6 Lower super output areas (LSOAs)¹⁷ are designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardised geographies intended to be as consistent as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. In relation to the IMD 2019, LSOAs are ranked out of the 32,844 in England and Wales, with 1 being the most deprived.
- 5.7 There is relatively little deprivation within the neighbourhood area which overlaps several LSOAs with majority being within the 10-20% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country in 2019. However, there are some neighbourhoods that fall within the 40% most deprived, located near the centre of the parish as shown in **Figure 5.1**. Looking at the component indicators shows the more deprived areas are affected by education/ skills deprivation (within the 20% most deprived) and income and employment deprivation (within the 30% most deprived).

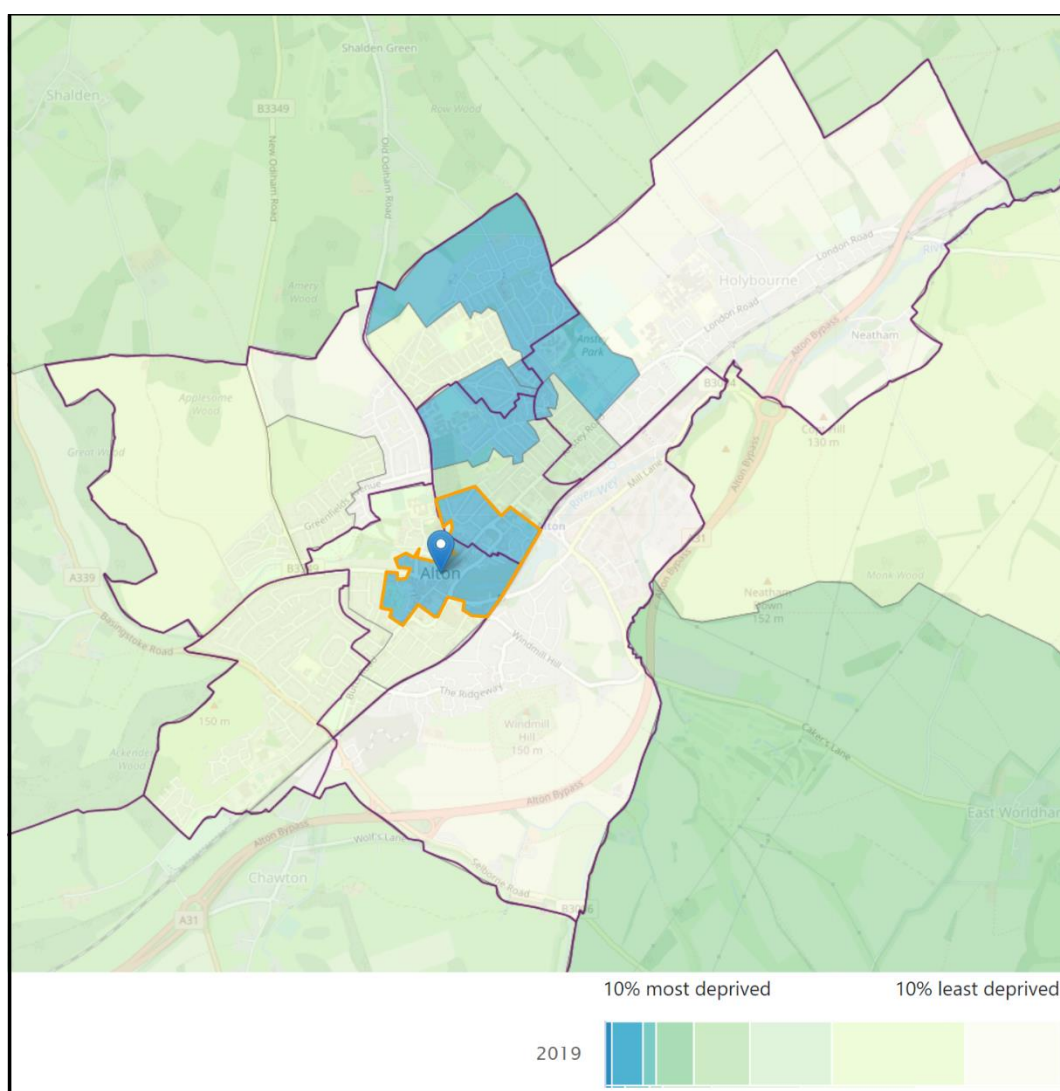


Figure 5-1 Indices of Deprivation 2019 - ANP area

¹⁷ The Indices of Deprivation Explorer can be accessed [here](#).

- 5.8 According to the Zoopla¹⁸ website, the average house price in Hampshire is £413,284 – with flats selling for an average of £208,416, terraced houses selling for an average of £316,140, semi-detached houses selling for an average of £385,797 and detached houses selling for an average of £654,817. According to Rightmove¹⁹, the average house price in Alton is £404,578 – with terraced properties fetching £349,529 on average, semi-detached houses are £399,398 on average and detached houses sell for an average of £646,215. This suggests that house prices in the parish are generally similar, if slightly lower on average, than those in Hampshire as whole.
- 5.9 The 2019 health profile for East Hampshire²⁰ indicates that the health of residents is generally better than the national average for England. Life expectancy for both men (81.1) and women (84.6) is higher than national average (79.6 and 83.2 respectively). However life expectancy is around 4.3 years lower for men and 1.1 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of East Hampshire than in the least deprived areas. About 8% of children live in low income families. East Hampshire performs significantly worse than the England average in relation to road related fatal/ serious injuries. Otherwise, most health indicators are either similar to, or better than, the national average. Currently, there are 5 GP surgeries within the ANP area. The nearest A&E department is at Basingstoke & North Hampshire Hospital (c.11 miles from central Alton). There are 3 dental surgeries and 4 pharmacies within the ANP area.
- 5.10 Broadly speaking, a reasonable level of provision of access to infrastructure and services in the neighbourhood area. However it is likely that residents will need to travel to larger neighbouring settlements such as Basingstoke to access a wider range of services and facilities.
- 5.11 In terms of access to recreational opportunities and green space, the East Hampshire Open Space Assessment²¹ found that around half of Alton lacks access to open space and the rest of the town has access to local level open space including parks and gardens and semi-natural green space. It identifies only one site in Alton as being of high quality and value; the Public Gardens. All other sites were judged to be of low quality and/or low value. The study also notes that whilst amenity green spaces in Alton offer access to open space in some areas there are still areas deficient in any access to green space, particularly in the north east of the town.
- 5.12 The Open Space Assessments concludes that Alton has low provision of play space and teen/youth provision, adding that whilst the quality and value of Alton's two play spaces is high, there are significant areas of the settlement outside the access catchment of these sites.
- 5.13 The ANP area's Blue and Green Infrastructure is shown in Figure 5-2.

¹⁸ Zoopla (2023) 'House prices in Hampshire' can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁹ Rightmove (2022) 'House Prices in Alton' can be accessed [here](#).

²⁰ Public Health England (2020) 'East Hampshire Local Authority Health Profile 2019' can be accessed [here](#).

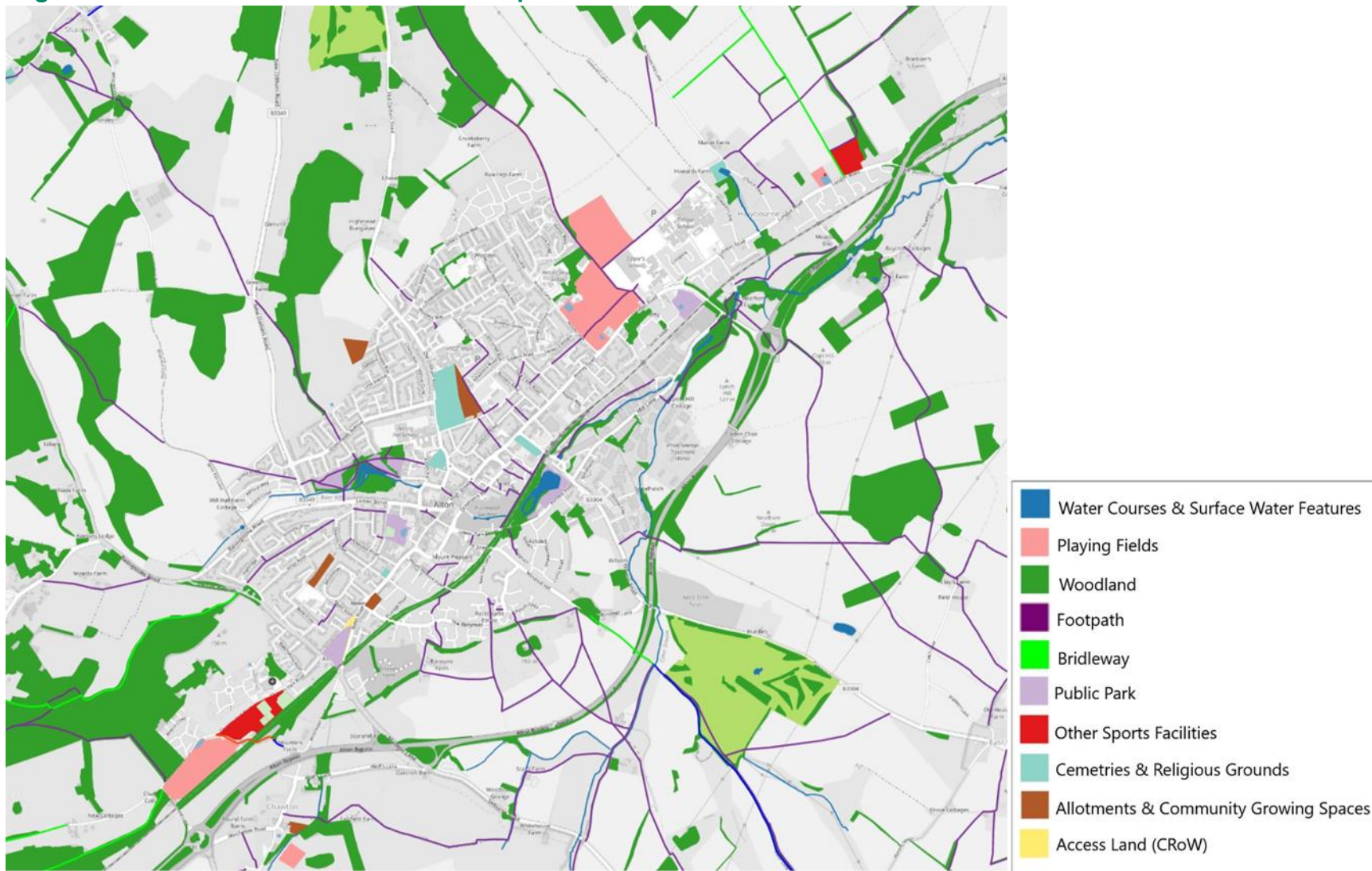
²¹ East Hampshire Open Space Assessment [here](#).

Future baseline

- 5.14 As the population of the neighbourhood area increases through development brought forward by the ANP, it is likely there will be an increase in pressure on the existing services within the neighbourhood area, and those outside of it. This highlights the need to support the retention of existing community facilities in the area and seek new services/ infrastructure where possible. This is more likely to be appropriately considered and addressed through planned development rather than ad hoc development.
- 5.15 The suitability and affordability of housing for local requirements depends on the implementation of appropriate housing policies throughout the neighbourhood area. Unplanned development may have wider implications in terms of transport and access to infrastructure, or the natural environment.
- 5.16 The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the way people work and shop. For many people, working from home is likely to continue to form part of a more flexible approach. Access to green space is therefore likely to be increasingly important, playing a key role in day to day life (being active, relaxing or even commuting). The potential impacts associated with increased levels of home working is also considered within the 'Transportation' SEA theme in **Chapter 9** of this SEA Scoping Report.

Key issues

- 5.17 Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to population and communities:
- The ANP provides the opportunity for enhanced policy provisions which seek to deliver the right mix of housing types, tenures and sizes according to local needs, in suitably connected places; and reduce deprivation in this respect.
 - The neighbourhood area has reasonable levels of community infrastructure, services and facilities but parts of the NP area lack accessible green space – the ANP presents an opportunity to provide enhance and expanded GI and infrastructure.
 - The ANP provides the opportunities to plan for development which accommodates for changing working patterns and lifestyles, and places greater emphasis on high levels of accessibility.

Figure 5-2 Green & Blue Infrastructure Map – ANP

Source: [Natural England Green Infrastructure Map](#)

SEA objective

5.18 Considering the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective and assessment questions in relation to population and communities:

Table 5-2: Proposed SEA objective for population and communities

SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the option/ proposal help to...)
Ensure growth in the ANP area is aligned with the needs of all residents and in suitably connected places, supported by the appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure to enable cohesive and inclusive communities.	• Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality and affordable housing? • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes targeted at aligning the housing stock with local needs? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's changing needs? • Improve the availability and/ or accessibility of local services and facilities? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Contribute to improving aspects of deprivation in the Plan area? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing and future residents?

6. Historic environment

6.1 This theme focuses on designated and non-designated heritage assets and features (including archaeology) and their setting.

Policy context

6.2 **Table 6.1** presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 6-1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to this historic environment

Document Title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>The 25 Year Environment Plan</u>	2018
<u>The National Design Guide</u>	2019
<u>National Model Design Code</u>	2021
<u>Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management</u>	2019
<u>Historic England Advice Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets</u>	2017
<u>Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)</u>	2016
<u>Joint Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations</u>	2016

6.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The key high-level principles for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are as follows:
 - The historic environment is a shared resource
 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment
 - Understanding the significance of places is vital
 - Significant places should be managed to sustain their values
 - Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent
 - Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.²²
- The significance of places is the key element which underpins the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Significance is

²² Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance

a collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, be it a building an archaeological site or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape

- The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which ultimately seeks to conserve and enhance historic environment assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. The NPPF seeks planning policies and decisions which are sympathetic to local character and history without preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation of change. The NPPF supports the use of area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.
- As set out in the NPPF, it should be ensured that the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. Design Codes can set out a necessary level of detail in sensitive locations, for example, with heritage considerations, and they can set out specific ways to maintain local character.
- Planning Practice Guidance expands on the NPPF recognising the proactive rather than passive nature of conservation.
- The role of the historic environment, as part of healthy and thriving ecosystems, landscapes and cultural values, including settlement identity, is reiterated through the key messages of the 25 Year Environment Plan and National Design Guide.
- Historic England's Advice Notes provide further guidance in relation to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Of particular relevance for the ANP is the emphasis on the importance of:
 - Understanding the different types of special architectural and historic interest which underpin designations, as well as how settings and/ or views contribute to the significance of heritage assets.
 - Recognising the value of implementing controls through neighbourhood plans, conservation area appraisals and management plans; and
 - Appropriate evidence gathering, including clearly identifying those issues that threaten an area or assets character or appearance and that merit the introduction of management measures.
- The ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies in the JCS and the Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations relating to the historic environment and conservation areas.
- In addition to conserving the historic environment, the ANP should seek to identify opportunities to enhance the fabric and setting of the historic environment. It should also seek to rejuvenate features and areas which are at risk of neglect and decay.

Current baseline

6.4 The ANP has a rich historic environment, some aspects of which, such as historic landscape values, are discussed under other scoping themes. Designated historic environment features are shown in **Figure 6.1**.

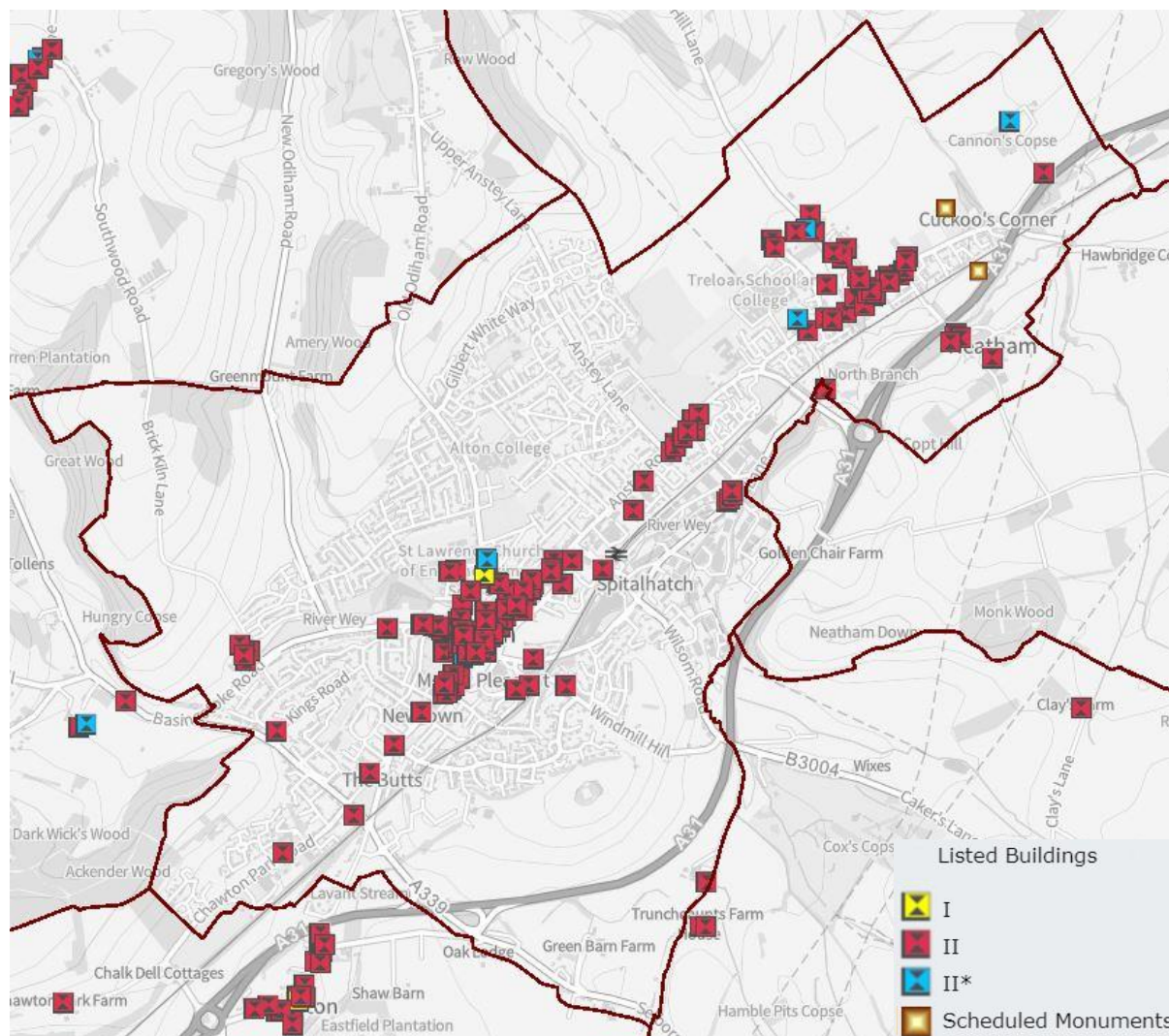


Figure 6.1: Historic environment assets in the ANP area

6.5 None of the identified designated assets are known to be at risk²³ of being lost due to neglect, decay, or inappropriate development. However, it is important to recognise that Heritage at Risk registers for areas outside of London do not contain information about the status of Grade II listed buildings. As such, it is currently not possible to determine whether any of the Grade II listed buildings within the neighbourhood area are at risk.

6.6 There are four Conservation Areas in the parish (Figure 6.2). The Historic Centre (designated in 1970 and extended in 1982) comprises a medieval street layout, numerous historical structures, St. Lawrence Church and the market square. Anstey (designated in 1995) is mostly residential and comprised of 18th and 19th-century buildings. The Butts, (designated in 1975), is a grassy medieval archery ground encircled by mature trees and late Victorian housing. Holybourne Village (designated in 1977) is home to several Listed Buildings constructed

²³ Historic England (2022) 'Heritage at Risk 2022 Registers' can be accessed [here](#).

between the 16th and 19th centuries, as well as the partially Norman Church of the Holy Rood.

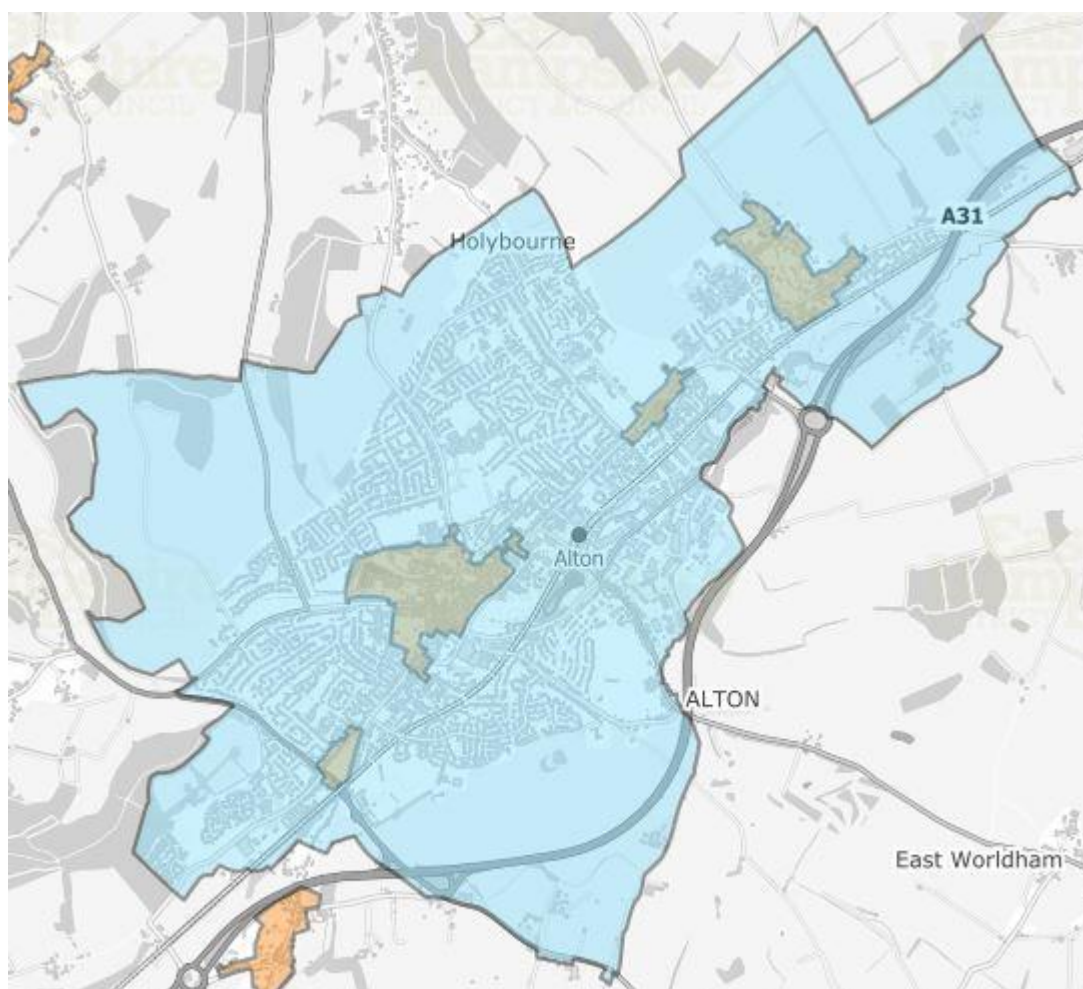


Figure 6.2: Alton Conservation Areas²⁴

Future baseline

- 6.7 Whilst designated and non-designated assets will continue to be afforded protection under the provisions of the NPPF and the JCS/ LP2. It is recognised that future development has the potential to negative affect historic character and settings, detract from historic settlement qualities and disrupt valued viewpoints; being susceptible to insensitive design and layout in new development.
- 6.8 Planning for future growth through the ANP will support the minimisation of impacts. It can also seek opportunities for public realm improvements, and accessibility improvements which can indirectly benefit access to and enjoyment of the historic environment.

Key issues

- 6.9 Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to the historic environment:

²⁴ Source: www.easthants.gov.uk

- With a variety of designated assets and locally identified historic/archaeological assets in the neighbourhood area, it will be important to ensure that future development avoids / minimises impacts upon the historic environment and maximises opportunities to improve the public realm and green infrastructure to the indirect benefit of heritage settings.
- The ANP provides an opportunity to bolster evidence in relation to the significance of the Alton's Conservation Areas and to conserve and enhance their character and appearance and to implement local controls where appropriate.

SEA objective

6.10 Considering the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective and assessment questions in relation to the historic environment:

Table 6-2: Proposed SEA objective for the historic environment

SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the option/ proposal help to...)
To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Plan area.	• Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the Alton's Conservation Areas and locally important features and their settings? • Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the HER and the Local List? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the ANP area? • Respond positively to the Alton's history and heritage assets. • Are proposals likely to harm the setting of heritage assets or archaeological remains within (or adjacent to) the proposed sites.

7. Landscape

- 7.1 This theme focuses on designated and protected landscapes within or near to the neighbourhood area, as well as landscape character, landscape quality and visual amenity.

Policy Context

- 7.2 **Table 7.1** presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 7-1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to landscape

Document Title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</u>	2018
<u>The National Design Guide</u>	2019
<u>Joint Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations</u>	2016
<u>EHDC Landscape Character Assessment</u>	2006
<u>EHDC Landscape Capacity Study</u>	2018
<u>EHDC Landscape Capacity Study Addendum</u>	2022

- 7.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing protected landscapes, as well as landscape character and scenic beauty. The NPPF recognises the role of green infrastructure in landscape settings, as well as the importance of designated biodiversity sites, habitats, woodland, historic features, agricultural land and cultural landscapes. The positive contribution that land remediation can make in terms of addressing despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land is also recognised. Paragraph 174 makes it clear that policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by: *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, ... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)*.
- The 25-year Environment Plan and National Design Guide complement each other with their aims for a cleaner, greener country which puts the environment first and celebrates the variety of natural landscapes and habitats. Design is focused on beautiful, enduring and successful places, which respond to local character and provide a network of high quality green open spaces.

- The ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the JCS and PL2 which contains policies directly relating to valued landscapes, landscape character, settlement identity, green infrastructure and design.
- The ANP will be informed by the EHDC Landscape Character Assessment, and the EHDC Landscape Capacity Study and its 2022 Addendum).

Baseline summary

7.4 The setting of the neighbourhood area is in a distinctive chalk landscape at source of the River Wey. It sits in a valley surrounded by the Hampshire Downs within National Character Area (NCA): 130 Hampshire Downs.

7.5 The Hampshire Downs NCA²⁵ is part of the central southern England belt of Chalk, rising to 297 m in the north-west on the Hampshire–Wiltshire border. A steep scarp face delineates the Downs to the north, overlooking the Thames Basin, and to the east, overlooking the Weald. The majority of the area is an elevated, open, rolling landscape dominated by large arable fields with low hedgerows on thin chalk soils, scattered woodland blocks and shelterbelts. To the east hedgerows are often overgrown and there are larger blocks of woodland. Six per cent of the NCA is within in the South Downs National Park.

7.6 Opportunities for this NCA include:

- Implementing sustainable management regimes that conserve, enhance and restore the priority habitats and species of the watercourses and associated wetlands
- Ensure that the remnant areas of biodiversity-rich chalk grassland are retained and managed to ensure good condition, and seek opportunities to restore areas in poor condition and extend the area of this habitat. Protect and manage the associated historic features of these sites.
- Encourage sustainable food and fodder production that also retains or enhances landscape character, provides habitats for wildlife, and minimises the impacts on ecosystems such as water and soil and on the historic features in the landscape.
- Encourage woodland management regimes that: ensure good condition of priority habitats and species; maximise the potential ecosystem benefits of woodland such as carbon sequestration, water quality and regulation, timber provision, recreation and biomass potential; and enhance the landscape visually

7.7 The ecosystem services provided by these NCAs should be protected, including food provision, water availability, regulating soil erosion, regulating soil quality, regulating water quality, sense of place / inspiration, sense of history, recreation, biodiversity, and geodiversity.

7.8 The EHDC Landscape Character Assessment²⁶ identifies Alton as primarily lying within the Chalk Valley Systems (Character area: Northern Wey Valley 4b) and Downland Mosaic (Character area: Lasham 3d) Landscape Character Types (LCT). Key characteristics in this area include:

²⁵ Natural England (2014) 'NCA Profile: 130 Hampshire Downs (NE549)' can be accessed [here](#).

²⁶ EHDC (2008) 'Landscape Character Assessment' can be accessed [here](#).

Chalk Valley Systems

- Broad, branching valleys carved from the chalk downs with smoothly rounded valley sides.
- On the valley sides the chalk soils support intensive arable cultivation on shallower slopes, with pasture, calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland on steeper slopes.
- Valleys are often winterbournes in their upper reaches – wells and springs are features.
- Lower valley floors contain clear, chalk rivers that flow within a flat, narrow floodplain characterised by permanent pasture, wet woodland, water meadows, and open water, all of which are of great ecological interest.
- Historically, meadowland alongside the river provided valuable winter and spring grazing for the extensive communal sheep flocks.
- The valleys provide important routeways often containing a road or winding lane connecting a string of regularly spaced nucleated flint villages. Stone built medieval bridges are located at historic river crossing points.
- Farms, including distinctive flint barns, are located on lower valley sides. Gentry houses and landscape parks provide evidence of the wealthy population of the past.
- Extensive blocks of early enclosure occur throughout the valleys.
- Weirs, mill ponds and mills, as well as fish farms, trout lakes, and watercress beds are distinctive features of the landscape.
- Away from transport corridors the valleys retain an unspoilt and tranquil pastoral character.

Downland Mosaic

- Large scale rolling landform, dissected by dry valleys, with localised secondary escarpments marking the division between different formations of chalk.
- A prominent ridgeline follows the line of the Meon anticline with a series of upstanding hills e.g. Butser Hill from which there are panoramic views.
- Varying extents of surface clay capping resulting in varying soils, woodland cover, and sense of enclosure.
- Views are constantly changing from panoramas at high points e.g. Butser Hill, to enclosed views along hedged lanes.
- A mixture of 18th and 19th century arable fields and early post medieval pasture fields, surrounded by woodland. This mosaic of habitats supports arable weeds and farmland birds.
- A strong pattern of woodland cover, many of which are of ancient origin and some of which are of national importance, and hedgerows providing enclosure which contrasts with the open farmland.

- Occasional areas of unimproved chalk grassland and associated woody scrub, including juniper scrub which is of particular biodiversity interest.
- Iron Age hillforts on the most prominent hills with panoramic views.
- Low density of dispersed settlement across the downland with a scattering of nucleated settlement in preferred lower lying areas. Distinctive churches are often landmarks.
- The downs contain a well established network of public rights of way and a strong hierarchical network of roads.
- A landscape with a generally strong rural, secluded character.

7.9 Much of East Hampshire District is designated as the South Downs National Park (SDNP). This designation gives national recognition to the special importance of the area and offers the highest level of protection. A Landscape Character Assessment (2006), covering the East Hampshire District, identifies the distinctive features and character of the East Hampshire countryside and aims to ensure their retention and, where possible, enhancement.

Future baseline

7.10 New development has the potential to lead to incremental changes in landscape quality within and the ANP area and the surrounding countryside. This could place increased pressure on the surrounding countryside and local settings. Development also has the potential to disrupt the setting of the SDNP and views to and from the neighbourhood area.

7.11 Coordinated delivery of green infrastructure, recreational spaces, and any regeneration opportunities could support landscape enhancements. The ANP therefore presents an opportunity to plan for development in a way which minimises landscape impacts and maximises improvement/ enhancement to the landscape resource where possible.

Key issues

7.12 Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to landscape:

- Alton is under development pressures for further expansion which is likely to impact on the character of the adjacent rural areas. It will be important to take into consideration the key characteristics and features supporting local landscape designations present (as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study / Addendum), and enhance these where possible to increase access to and understanding of the natural environment.
- The ANP is within the setting of the SDNP, therefore development or change to the landscape has the potential to impact the overall significance of the SDNP and alter people's experience of it. It will be important to ensure that future development in the parish does not adversely impact the SDNP or its setting.

- The growth strategy for the ANP should seek to minimise impacts on the wider landscape, including through avoidance / protection of key landscape features, such as valued trees and hedgerows.

SEA objective

7.13 Considering the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective and assessment questions in relation to landscape:

Table 7-2: Proposed SEA objective for landscape

SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the option / proposal help to...)
To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including green infrastructure corridors.	• Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Protect the setting of the SDNP? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? • Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Protect and extend/ enhance green infrastructure corridors? • Protect visual amenity? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the rural setting, including trees and hedgerows? • Protect

8. Land, soil and water resources

8.1 This theme focuses on the quality of soil resources, the extent of mineral resources, water supply resources and water quality in the Plan area.

Policy context

8.2 **Table 8.1** presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 8-1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to land, soil, and water resources

Document Title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>The 25 Year Environment Plan</u>	2018
<u>Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England</u>	2009
<u>Future Water: The government's water strategy for England</u>	2011
<u>Water for Life</u>	2011
<u>The National Waste Management Plan</u>	2021
<u>South East Water's Resource Management Plan (WRMP)</u>	2019
<u>Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan</u>	2013
<u>Joint Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>Local Plan Housing and Employment Allocations</u>	2016

8.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which seeks to protect high quality soil resources, and improve the water environment; recognising the wider benefits of natural capital and derived from ecosystem services. Furthermore, the NPPF recognises the need to take account of the long-term implications of climate change and build resilience in this respect. The NPPF encourages efficient land use, utilising brownfield land opportunities and land remediation schemes where appropriate and delivering environmental gains.
- The 25-year Environment Plan presents a focus for environmental improvement in the next couple decades, with aims to achieve clean air, clean and plentiful water, and reduced risk from environmental hazards. This includes measures to improve soil quality, restore and protect peatlands, use water more sustainably, reduce pollution, maximise resource efficiency and minimise environmental impacts. This leads on from and supports the soil strategy for England (Safeguarding our soils) which seeks to ensure that all England's soils will be managed sustainably, and degradation threats tackled successfully by 2030, as well as the national

water strategies which seek to secure sustainable and resilient water resources and improve the quality of waterbodies, and the national waste plan which seeks to identify measures being taken to move towards a zero-waste economy.

- South East Water's WRMP outlines how South West Water aims to manage water supply issues to ensure the timely provision of clean water to residents in the period up to 2045. The ANP is within the water Resource Zone 4 (Bracknell WRZ4) where measures will include leakage reduction, demand management and water efficiency improvements.
- The ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan which forms part of the Local Development Framework. The plan identifies and safeguards sites and resources important to the continued sustainable management of mineral extractions and waste arisings.
- Furthermore, the ANP will also be required to be in general conformity with the JCS and LP2 which contains policies specifically relating to efficient land use (including prioritising brownfield land for development) and the sustainable use of resources.

Baseline summary

- 8.4 As shown in **Figure 8.1** below, a large proportion of the ANP area is urban/ non-agricultural land. Parts of the NP area to the north and north east are underlain by Grade 2 'Very Good' agricultural land and Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural land. It is not possible to determine whether this is Grade 3a or Grade 3b land given the map resolution. It will therefore be important to protect the remaining higher quality agricultural land from future development, and promote the use of previously developed land where possible.

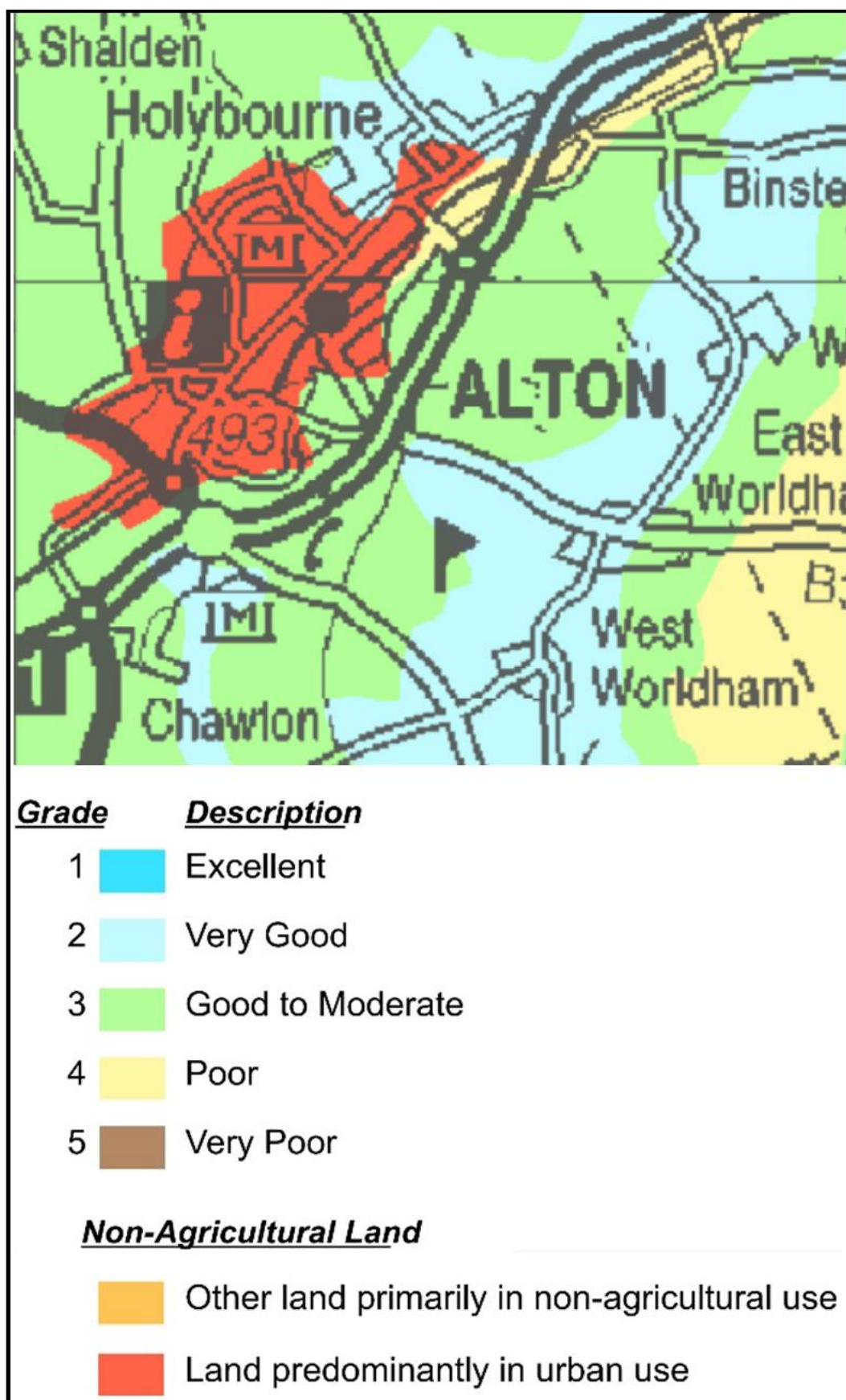


Figure 8.1: Agricultural land classification for the ANP area²⁷

²⁷ Natural England (2010) 'Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)' can be accessed [here](#).

- 8.5 In relation to minerals, the ANP overlaps areas of Malmstone (hard chalk/ sandstone) and Clunch (hard chalk/ clay). These resources have not been worked for over 50 years and there is no evidence that they are sourced from the area. Therefore no mineral safeguarding areas (MSA) are associated with these deposits. Oil is exported from the Humbly Grove Oilfield (and Gas storage facility) near Alton via a pipeline to a rail export terminal transporting oil to the Fawley Oil Refinery via the railway. These facilities are safeguarded to ensure production capacity is maintained.
- 8.6 In relation to waste and recycling, there are safeguarding sites associated with aggregate recycling, material recovery facilities (MRFs) and a waste recycling centre within the Plan area. Development proposed through the ANP likely to impact a safeguarded minerals/ waste site will need to take this into consideration, and it is likely that consultation with EHDC/ Hampshire County Council will be necessary.
- 8.7 In terms of water quality, the ANP area falls within the Wey operational catchment (in the Thames River Basin District). There are three waterbodies crossing the ANP area – the North Wey at Alton²⁸ which crosses west to north east of the parish, North Wey (Alton to Tilford)²⁹ and Caker Stream³⁰ to the north east of the parish. All three water bodies were classed as being in ‘moderate’ ecological status (in 2019) and a ‘failed’ chemical status due to the presence of priority hazardous substances such as polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE), Perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS). It is important to note that all water bodies have a failed chemical status due to a change in the method of assessment in 2019.
- 8.8 In relation to water resources, the neighbourhood area is served by South East Water (SEW). The Environment Agency have published a document entitled ‘Water Stressed Areas – 2021 classification’ which included a map of England, identifying areas of relative water stress. In this regard, the whole of SEW’s supply area is shown as an area of ‘Serious’ water stress, based upon the amount of water available per person both now and in the future³¹.
- 8.9 Within their Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs) water companies refer to their Water Resource Zones (WRZs). WRZs are the largest possible zone in which all resources, including external transfers, can be shared and hence the zone in which all customers experience the same risk of supply failure from a resource failure³². In this respect, the Plan area falls within the Bracknell Zone WRZ4, where a supply deficit is forecast to start in the 2040-45 period, with the largest deficits appearing in the 1:500 dry year summer peak scenario. The deficits are being caused by sustainability reductions (in the most severe situations), and population growth across the planning period, with only minor increases due to climate change.

Future baseline

- 8.10 Future development has the potential to affect soil resources in the Plan area through the loss of ‘Very Good’ and ‘Good to Moderate’ quality agricultural land.

²⁸ Environment Agency (2022) ‘North Wey at Alton Water Body’ can be accessed [here](#).

²⁹ Environment Agency (2022) ‘North Wey (Alton to Tilford) Water Body’ can be accessed [here](#).

³⁰ Environment Agency (2022) ‘Caker Stream Water Body’ can be accessed [here](#).

³¹ Environment Agency and DEFRA (2021) ‘Water stressed areas – 2021 classification’ can be accessed [here](#).

³² South East Water (2022) ‘Supply-demand balances and adaptive planning’ can be accessed [here](#).

The ANP provides the opportunity to direct future growth away from areas of Grade 2 and Grade 3a quality agricultural land, thereby minimising the likely impacts on soil resources by focusing growth on lower quality land.

8.11 Future development also has the potential to affect water quality through increased consumption, diffuse pollution, waste-water discharges, water run-off, and modification. That said, it is expected that South East Water will continue to address any water supply and wastewater management issues over the plan period, in line with the WRMP 2019.

8.12 It is also noted that the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, as transposed into national legislation, are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality within the ANP and wider area. Nonetheless it will be important for new development to avoid impacts on water quality, and to support demand management measures by contributing to reduced consumption and improved efficiency.

Key issues

8.13 Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to land, soil, and water resources:

- It is predicted that parts of the NP area are underlain by Grade 2 and Grade 3 quality agricultural land. The ANP provides opportunities to minimise the loss of higher grade agricultural land by focusing development in areas underlain by lower grade agricultural land and non-agricultural land.
- As the ANP area overlaps safeguarding areas associated with Oil/ Gas storage and transport and waste recycling, it will be important for development to not compromise these resources and access to them. It is expected consultation with Hampshire County Council will be necessary.
- It will be important for future development to ensure that it avoids any detrimental impacts on water quality both on and off-site. Furthermore, the ANP should seek to capitalise on any potential opportunities to improve water quality within the water bodies, particularly chemical quality.
- The ANP could also seek to support extended measures to improve the resilience of water supplies, including through local water recycling schemes and opportunities to increase efficiency in water use, given the population of the local area and the demand for water is expected to rise.

SEA objectives

8.14 Considering the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives and assessment questions in relation to land, soil, and water resources:

Table 8-2: Proposed SEA objectives for land, soil, and water resources

SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the option/ proposal help to...)
To ensure the efficient and effective use of land	• Avoid the loss of high-quality agricultural land resources? • Promote any opportunities for the use of previously developed land, or vacant / underutilised land?
To protect and enhance water quality, and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner	• Avoid impacts on water quality? • Support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside development? • Protect the North Wey and Caker Stream waterbodies? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/ or water recycling?

9. Transportation

This theme focuses on transport infrastructure, transport usage, traffic flows and congestion, and accessibility levels in the Plan area.

Policy Context

9.1 **Table 9.1** presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 9-1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to transportation and movement

Document Title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>The Transport Investment Strategy – Moving Britain Ahead</u>	2017
<u>The Department for Transport's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy</u>	2016
<u>Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge</u>	2020
<u>The National Design Guide</u>	2019
<u>HCC Draft Local Transport Plan 4</u>	2022
<u>Alton Transport Strategy</u>	2015

9.2 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which seeks the consideration of transport issues from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals to address any known issues and maximise opportunities to increase accessibility, particularly by walking, cycling and public transport. Larger developments are expected to be delivered in areas which are or can be made sustainable by limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is recognised that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural environments.
- National transport strategies set out investment priorities which ultimately all seek to improve the connectivity, effectiveness and reliability of transport networks, whilst reducing impacts on the natural environment (including through decarbonisation). Furthermore, they place great emphasis on making cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journeys. This includes investment in new and upgraded infrastructure, changing perceptions, and increasing safety.
- Hampshire County Council's Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP4) sets out proposed transport solutions for the plan area up to 2050, with a focus on enabling sustainable travel, decarbonising the transport system, supporting sustainable economic growth and promoting active lifestyles.

- Alongside the JCS/ LP2, the ANP will be required to be in general conformity with the strategic policy aims of the LPT4.
- The ANP will be informed by the Alton Transport Strategy which assesses the transport implications of the residential development of sites identified within the EHDC's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as well as wider growth to outline, at a strategic level, the necessary transport improvements to support the development.

Baseline summary

- 9.3 Alton is served by the A31 at the southern boundary of the parish. This is a dual carriageway that operates at the national speed limit and runs west towards Winchester and the M3 and east towards Guildford and links to the A32 at the Chawton Roundabout. The A32 serves villages to the south of Alton and ultimately connects to the A3, M27 and Fareham. The A339 (Selborne Road) crosses southwest of the parish providing a route to Basingstoke to the north and Selborne to the south. South of the A31 the A339 becomes the B3006 all the way to Selborne; an important route for through traffic.
- 9.4 Commuting flows into, out of and through the town often lead to congestion at some junctions and pinch points at peak times. Congestion also occurs on the A339 Whitedown Lane. In some of the older residential parts of the town the lack of off-street parking leads to kerbside parking which impedes traffic flow leading to congestion. Similar problems occur in the vicinity of the railway station and schools at peak times.
- 9.5 Slow traffic tends to occur at Pepper Mill La., Mill La., Turk St., Lower Turk St. and Draymans Way and the High Street during peak times. Similarly, congestion often occurs around schools (school drop off and pick up) at peak times.
- 9.6 The parish is served by Alton train station which provides regular direct trains to central London. It also provides services to Guilford and Basingstoke (indirect).
- 9.7 The parish is served by 4 main bus routes³³. A half-hourly service from Alton to Winchester; an hourly service from Basingstoke to Liphook; an hourly service from Alton to Guildford; and five journeys a day from Alton to Petersfield. There are also five routes serving Alton College (inbound in the morning and outbound late afternoon), which are also available for the wider public. Services are most frequent on weekdays between 8 am and 6 pm with low levels of service at weekends and early morning and evening.
- 9.8 The ANP area has reasonable level of parking provision with nine off street car parks in Alton town centre, providing a total of 703 spaces³⁴. Some of the older residential areas of the town lack off-street parking leading to kerbside parking, which often impedes traffic flow. Similar problems occur in the vicinity of the rail station and the sixth-form college. A community questionnaire revealed that bad parking was considered the second biggest highway safety concern by Alton residents.
- 9.9 Within the ANP neighbourhood area there are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and footpaths that provide access to much of the town and into the

³³ Source: [Alton Neighbourhood plan 2021](#)

³⁴ Ibid. p.52

surrounding countryside. Some of the network serves to connect public open spaces providing attractive routes for recreational walkers. The town has been accredited as a 'Walkers are Welcome' town; part of UK wide, community led, network of accredited towns promoting walking. A community questionnaire revealed walking as a popular activity amongst residents.

9.10 There are numerous cycle routes through the town centre (Figure 9.1) and the Route 224 of the National Cycle Network runs through the town, linking it to Winchester and Basingstoke (via Route 23).

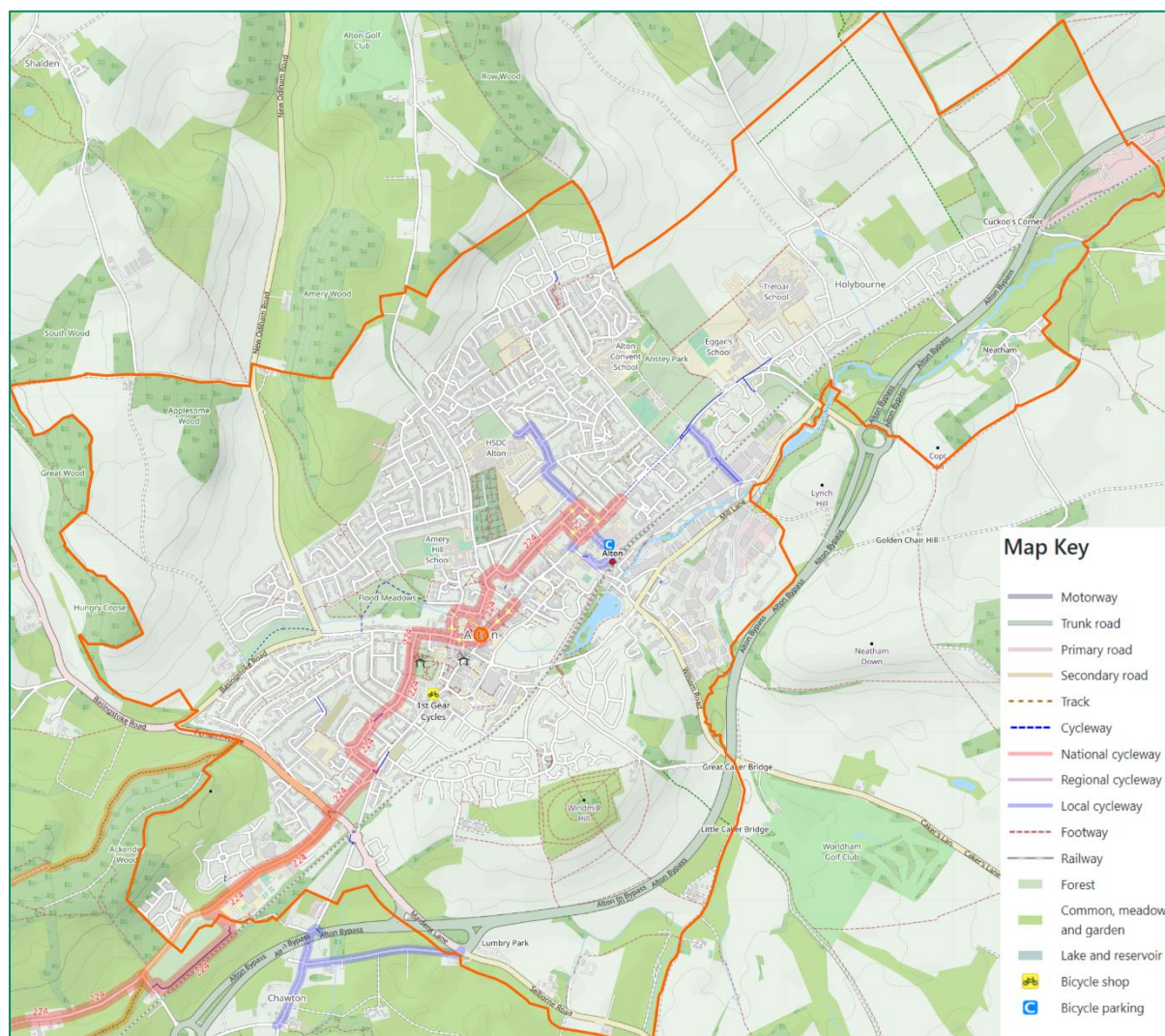


Figure 9-1 Footpaths and Cycleways - ANP area.³⁵

³⁵ Source: [Open Street Map](#)

Future baseline

- 9.11 There is some sustainable transport provision in parts of the parish, growth in the ANP area is likely to lead to increased reliance on the private vehicle. This is likely to exacerbate the current local traffic and congestion issues, which could reduce road safety leading to a reduction in active travel. Conversely, it is recognised that new development can facilitate improved active travel infrastructure and public transport provision.
- 9.12 Given the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a shift to more working from home. It will be important for new development to accommodate this shift, which could encourage a reduction in commuter traffic, particularly at peak times.

Key issues

- 9.13 Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to transportation and movement:
- The ANP area benefits from a local railway station, and there is a reasonably good level of bus services at weekdays though weekend and off-peak services are more limited. The new developments planned are expected to provide enhanced/ expanded sustainable transport provision. That said, growth in the ANP area is likely to cause an increase in private vehicles on the local road network. It will therefore be important to locate any additional growth in areas which maximise pedestrian and cycle route connections within the settlement and beyond.
 - Following the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a shift towards increased working from home. Opportunities to capitalise on this should be maximised to reduce the need to travel for work.

SEA objective

9.14 Considering the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective and assessment questions in relation to transportation and movement:

Table 9-2: Proposed SEA objective for transportation and movement

SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the option / proposal help to...)
Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	• Encourage more use of sustainable transport modes? • Encourage the uptake of active travel opportunities? • Extend or improve active travel networks? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure improvements? • Facilitate on-going high levels of home and remote working? • Improve road safety? • Reduce impacts on residents from the road network? • Improve parking facilities?

10. Next steps

- 10.1 The next stage of the SEA will involve exploring reasonable alternatives for the ANP. This will consider alternative spatial strategies and policy approaches for the Plan. The findings of this work will be fed back to the Town Council so that they might be taken into consideration when producing the draft ANP. The draft ANP will then be subject to appraisal, and the Environmental Report will be prepared for consultation alongside the Plan.

Consultation on the Scoping Report

- 10.2 Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SEA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public.
- 10.3 The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. This scoping report has been released to these three statutory consultees.
- 10.4 Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this scoping report, particularly the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues, and the proposed SEA Framework.
- 10.5 The consultation period runs from 05/05/2023 to 12/06/23. Comments on the scoping report should be sent to:
- Omar Ezzet, AECOM
- Email address: omar.ezzet@aecom.com
- 10.6 All comments received on the scoping report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

Appendix A Proposed SEA Framework

The SEA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position and policy context that has been prepared for a range of SEA themes (as set out in Chapters 2-9).

The framework consists of a set of headline objectives and supporting assessment questions, which will be used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft Plan (and reasonable alternatives).

Table A.1 below outlines the proposed SEA framework, bringing together the objectives and assessment questions that have been set out at the end of each SEA theme.

Table A.1 Proposed SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting questions (will the option/ proposal help to...)
Air quality	Improve air quality in the ANP area and minimise and/or mitigate against all sources of environmental pollution.	- Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? - Promote development that will not contribute to the degradation of air quality? - Implement measures (such as appropriate planting and provision of green infrastructure) to help support air quality in the neighbourhood plan area?
Biodiversity	To maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity habitats and networks within and surrounding the Plan area.	- Protect and enhance nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? - Protect and enhance priority habitats and the links between them? - Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? - Support habitat restoration or new habitat creation within the identified Network Enhancement / Expansion Zones? - Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks and the network of open spaces?
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made	Reduce the number of journeys made by polluting vehicles?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting questions (will the option/ proposal help to...)
	by activities in the Plan area.	- Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? - Improve or extend local footpaths, cycle paths or strategic green infrastructure routes? - Increase the number of new development meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? - Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? - Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? - Support the transition to electric vehicles?
	Support the resilience of the Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk.	- Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? - Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the ANP area? - Sustainably manage water runoff? - Increase the resilience of the local built and natural environment? - Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are duly considered in the design of new development in the ANP area?
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the ANP area is aligned with the needs of all residents and in suitably connected places, supported by the appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure to enable cohesive and inclusive communities.	- Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality and affordable housing? - Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes targeted at aligning the housing stock with local needs? - Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's changing needs? - Improve the availability and/ or accessibility of local services and facilities? - Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting questions (will the option/ proposal help to...)
		• Contribute to improving aspects of deprivation in the Plan area? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing and future residents?
Historic environment	To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Plan area.	• Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the Alton's Conservation Areas and locally important features and their settings? • Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the HER and the Local List? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the ANP area? • Respond positively to the Alton's history and heritage assets. • Are proposals likely to harm the setting of heritage assets or archaeological remains within (or adjacent to) the proposed sites.
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including green infrastructure corridors.	• Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Protect the setting of the SDNP? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? • Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Protect and extend/ enhance green infrastructure corridors? • Protect visual amenity? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the rural

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting questions (will the option/ proposal help to...)
		setting, including trees and hedgerows?
Land, soil, and water resources	To ensure the efficient and effective use of land	• Avoid the loss of high-quality agricultural land resources? • Promote any opportunities for the use of previously developed land, or vacant / underutilised land?
	To protect and enhance water quality, and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner	• Avoid impacts on water quality? • Support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside development? • Protect the North Wey and Caker Stream waterbodies? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/ or water recycling?
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	• Encourage more use of sustainable transport modes? • Encourage the uptake of active travel opportunities? • Extend or improve active travel networks? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure improvements? • Facilitate on-going high levels of home and remote working? • Improve road safety? • Reduce impacts on residents from the road network? • Improve parking facilities?

