

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan

**Environmental Report to accompany Regulation 14
consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan**

Bloxham Parish Council

July 2025

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
EH, Senior Environmental Planner	RC, Principal Environmental Planner	NCB, Technical Director	NCB, Technical Director

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V1	July 2025	Draft for QB comment	NCB	Technical Director
V2	July 2025	Consultation version	NH	QB's Consultant

Prepared for:
Bloxham Parish Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
6th Floor, 3 Rivergate
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6ER
United Kingdom

T: +44 (117) 901 7000
aecom.com

© 2025 AECOM Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Limited (“AECOM”) for sole use of Locality (the “Client”) in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. No third party may rely upon this document without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

Table of Contents

Non-Technical Summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. What is the Bloxham NP seeking to achieve?	3
3. What is the scope of the SEA?	5
Part 1: Assessment of reasonable alternatives	12
4. Introduction (to Part 1)	13
5. Establishing reasonable alternatives	14
6. Preferred approach for the Neighbourhood Plan	27
Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?	28
7. Introduction (to Part 2)	29
8. Assessment of the plan	31
9. Conclusions and recommendations	40
Part 3: What are the next steps?	41
10. Next steps	42
Appendix A Regulatory requirements	43
Appendix B Scoping information	49

Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as “the Bloxham NP”).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the Bloxham NP is a legal requirement.¹

The Bloxham NP is being prepared by the Parish Council in the context of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (CLP) 2011-2031 (Part 1) (2015) and the emerging Cherwell Local Plan Review (LPR) 2042. Once ‘made’, the Bloxham NP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications alongside the adopted CLP and emerging LPR.

This report is the Environmental Report for the Bloxham NP. It is published alongside the ‘pre-submission’ version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).

Structure of the Environmental Report / Non-Technical Summary

SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

1. Assessment of reasonable alternatives
2. What are the SEA findings at this stage? — i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
3. What happens next?

Each of these questions is answered in turn within a discrete ‘part’ of the Environmental Report and summarised within this Non-Technical Summary (NTS). However, firstly there is a need to set the scene further by answering the questions ‘What is the Plan seeking to achieve?’ and ‘What’s the scope of the SEA?’

What is the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan seeking to achieve?

The Bloxham NP has a clear vision, which is summarised as follows:

“Over the next few years the village will have successfully accommodated its new population into village life with a larger, outstanding primary school and new community facilities and public open spaces. In managing this growth the village will

¹ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a ‘screening’ process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (‘the SEA Regulations’). The Bloxham NP was subject to screening by Cherwell District Council in 2024 and Scoping consultation in March-April 2025 sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

have maintained its essential historic, rural character by preserving its special countryside setting and heritage assets.”

A total of four objectives have been identified to support the delivery of the vision, which are:

1. To plan for a scale of housing growth that can be accommodated within the constraints of the village infrastructure.
2. To use opportunities to improve the village infrastructure.
3. To conserve and enhance the special historic character of the village and its countryside setting.
4. To manage development so that it fits well with existing residential amenity.

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is summarised in a list of topics, objectives, and assessment questions, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological ‘framework’ for assessment. A summary framework is presented below, and a full framework which includes assessment questions is provided within the main Environmental Report (see **Table 3.2**).

SEA topic	SEA objective
Air quality	Support objectives to improve air quality within and surrounding the neighbourhood area and minimise impacts on nearby AQMAs.
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel

Plan-making / SEA up to this point

An important element of the SEA process involves assessing ‘reasonable alternatives’ in time to inform development of the draft proposals and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the draft proposals.

As such, **Part 1** of the Environmental Report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a 'reasonable' range of alternative approaches to the allocation of land for housing, including alternative sites.

Specifically, **Part 1** of the report:

1. Presents an assessment of two options for development in Bloxham against the SEA framework.
2. Explains reasons for establishing the preferred option, in light of the assessment.

Consideration of site options

To further support the development of a spatial strategy to deliver an appropriate number of homes in Bloxham through the NP, the Steering Group has considered alternative locations for delivering housing in the neighbourhood area.

AECOM was commissioned to produce a Site Options and Assessment (SOA) Report for Bloxham, which was published in July 2025. Of the 14 sites that were assessed through the report – identified through CDC's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)² – only ten were considered potentially appropriate for development (i.e. given an amber rating), on the basis that the identified issues can be resolved or constraints mitigated.

Of these ten sites, only two were deemed 'reasonable' for the purposes of the SEA. This reflects their ability to deliver the indicative housing need for the neighbourhood area (75 homes) and the community benefits identified by the Parish Council; the findings of the SOA Report; and proposed mitigation measures. These sites are:

- **Site 1** – The land interest has submitted additional information that addresses the constraints identified in the SOA Report, most notably landscape impacts and pedestrian access. It has also committed to providing land for the expansion of Bloxham Church of England Primary School, which is adjacent to the site, and therefore would deliver the community benefit with the highest priority. In addition, it proposes land for a burial ground and the conversion of a barn for a variety of potential community uses (e.g. a library) once its agricultural use ends with the development of the surrounding land. As this is one of the largest of the nine remaining sites, it has the greatest potential to deliver community benefits alongside housing whilst also delivering mitigation measures to the site constraints.
- **Site 5** – The land interest has submitted additional information that addresses the constraints identified in the SOA Report. It also proposes to deliver land for a burial ground, allotments / orchard, and a new community facility (e.g. a library), and would therefore deliver the three identified community benefits with the highest priority. The SOA Report concludes that, given the heritage constraints associated with the site, it is not considered to be a favourable site for allocation through the NP if more suitable sites are available. However, the report also states that if development were to be contained within the western part of the site, or the two parcels of land straddling Milton Road, it is potentially suitable for development. As this is by far the largest of the nine remaining sites, it has the greatest potential to deliver further community benefits alongside housing whilst also delivering mitigation measures to the site constraints.

² Sites in the 2024 HELAA which have already secured planning permission have not been considered.

In light of the above, two options have been developed:

- **Option 1: Site 1** – Approximately 125 homes, land for the expansion of Bloxham Church of England Primary School, land for a burial ground, and the conversion of a barn for community use (e.g. a library).
- **Option 2: Site 5** – Approximately 230 homes, land for a burial ground, allotments / orchard, and a new community facility (e.g. a library)

Appraisal of reasonable alternatives

The table below provides a summary of the results of the site assessment. Full appraisal findings are presented in **Chapter 5** of the main body of the Environmental Report.

SEA topic		Option 1 – Site 1	Option 2 – Site 5
Air quality	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effects?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
	Rank	1	2
Historic environment	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Yes – negative
	Rank	1	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Significant effects?	No	Yes – negative
	Rank	1	2
Landscape	Significant effects?	Yes – negative	Yes – negative
	Rank	1	2
Transportation	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2

Development of the preferred approach

The group have provided the following reasoning as to why the preferred sites were chosen for allocation through the Bloxham NP:

“Selection was driven by the need to deliver as many community benefits as possible that could be justified from the allocated site, and a judgement about the scale of housing growth that could be planned for.

In both cases, the Parsh Council has had to be very mindful that it must win the support of a majority of the local electorate at the referendum for the project to be successful. As a result it has judged that planning for the future expansion of the primary school to support the growth in the village population is the most important benefit to secure. Hence, Painters Farm has been selected.

The Council acknowledges that the SEA has not identified a significant difference between the potential environment effects of developing that site versus developing Site 5 on the eastern side of the village. However, the potential for adverse heritage and land/soil/water resource effects on the latter does also weigh in favour of Site 1.”

Assessment findings at this stage

Significant positive effects are predicted under the community wellbeing SEA topic. This is because the draft Bloxham NP meets the indicative housing need of the neighbourhood area, including affordable housing and specialist housing; delivers growth in an accessible location; provides new community infrastructure; supports improvements to active travel infrastructure; protects open green spaces; and supports the local economy.

Broadly **neutral effects** are anticipated under the remaining SEA topics. With regard to air quality, climate change mitigation, and transportation, this reflects walkability; the low level of growth proposed; and the provisions made within the policy framework to improve active travel infrastructure. With regard to biodiversity and geodiversity, the site allocation is relatively unconstrained and the policy framework seeks to protect / enhance biodiversity and habitats. With regard to flood risk, the Plan suitably addresses surface water flood risk. With regard to the historic environment, the spatial strategy directs development to one of the least sensitive parts of the village, whilst the policy framework mitigates the potential impact of development on heritage assets. With regard to land, soil, and water resources, the spatial strategy avoids areas underlain by BMV land, and the policy framework appropriately addresses water resources. With regards to landscape, the policy framework addresses the potential impacts of development on landscape / villagescape character.

Next steps

This Environmental Report accompanies the Bloxham NP for Regulation 14 consultation.

Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Bloxham NP Steering Group, and the Bloxham NP and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Bloxham NP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, CDC, for subsequent Independent Examination.

Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Bloxham NP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the

Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

Assuming that the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Bloxham NP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by CDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Bloxham NP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the Bloxham NP will become part of the Development Plan for CDC, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as “the Bloxham NP”).
- 1.2 The Bloxham NP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (CLP) 2011-2031 (Part 1) (2015) and the emerging Cherwell Local Plan Review (LPR) 2042. Once ‘made’, the Bloxham NP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications alongside the adopted CLP and emerging LPR.
- 1.3 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the Bloxham NP is a legal requirement.³

SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transposed into national law EU Directive 2001/42/EC on SEA.
- 1.5 In line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that “identifies, describes and evaluates” the likely significant effects of implementing “the plan, and reasonable alternatives”.⁴ The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.6 More specifically, the report must answer the following three questions:
 1. Assessment of reasonable alternatives.
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage? — i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

³ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a ‘screening’ process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (‘the SEA Regulations’). The Bloxham NP was subject to screening by Cherwell District Council in 2024 and Scoping consultation in March-April 2025 sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

⁴ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

This Environmental Report

- 1.7 This report is the Environmental Report for the Bloxham NP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.8 This report essentially answers questions 1, 2 and 3 above in turn, to provide the required information. Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.9 However, before answering question 1, two initial questions are answered to further set the scene; what is the plan seeking to achieve? And what is the scope of the SEA?

2. What is the Bloxham NP seeking to achieve?

Introduction

2.1 This section considers the strategic planning policy context provided by the adopted CLP and emerging LPR, before then presenting the vision and objectives of the Bloxham NP. **Figure 2.1** below presents the neighbourhood area.

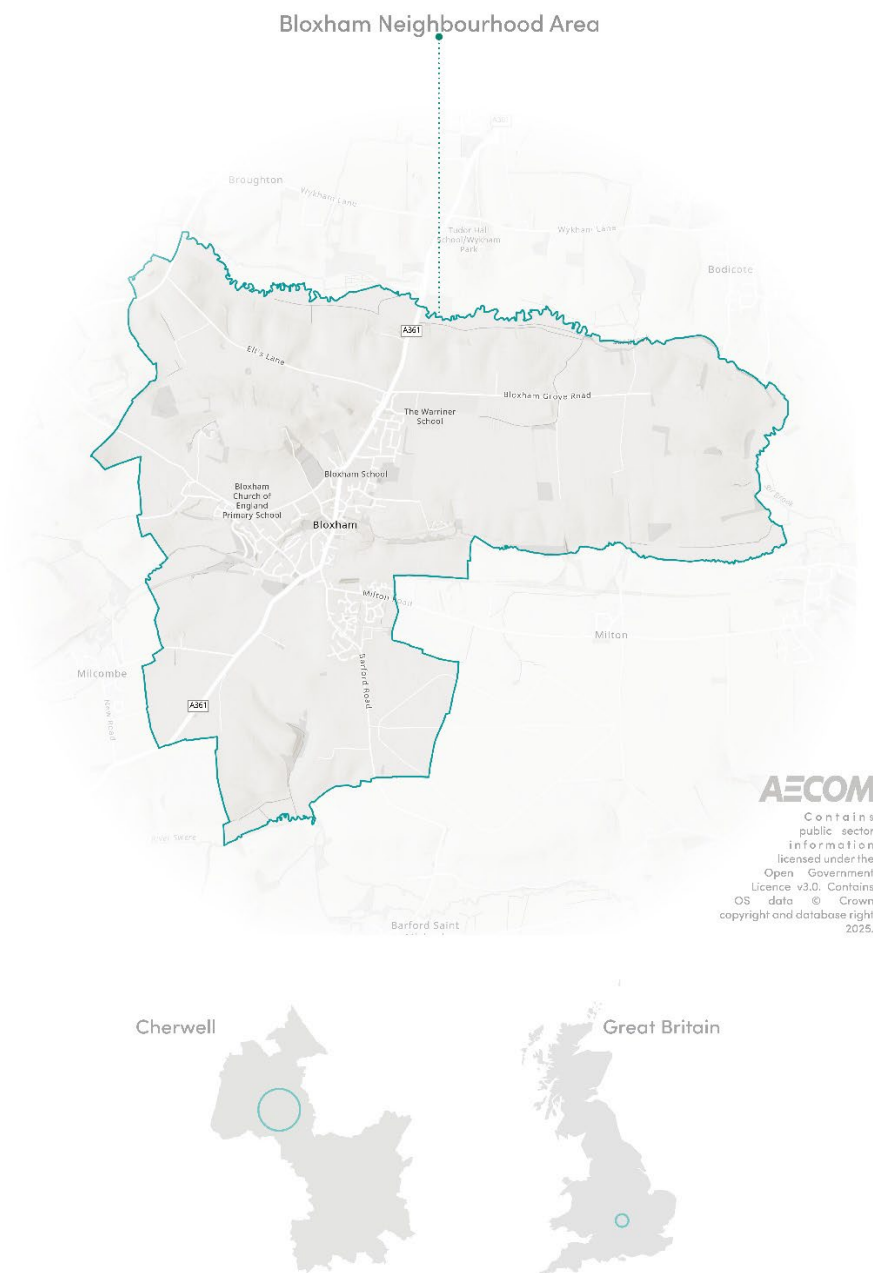


Figure 2.1 The Bloxham neighbourhood area

Strategic planning policy

- 2.2 The strategic policy context is also set by the Cherwell Local Plan (CLP) 2011-2031 (Part 1), which was adopted in 2015. The CLP identifies Bloxham as a Category A 'Service Village', which are settlements deemed suitable for minor development, infilling and conversions.
- 2.3 CDC are in the process of developing a new Local Plan – the Cherwell Local Plan Review (LPR) 2042 – which, once adopted, will replace the current CLP. Regulation 18 consultation on the LPR took place between 22nd September and 3rd November 2023. The LPR recently underwent Submission Consultation, which ran from 19th December 2024 to 25th February 2025.
- 2.4 Under Core Policy 35 (Settlement Hierarchy) of the LPR, Bloxham is identified as a 'Larger Village'. In these settlements there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development beyond the existing built limits will only be permitted on allocated sites, and development in settlements within the Green Belt will be considered against National Policy. It is anticipated that the 11 villages within this level of the settlement hierarchy will contribute to delivering 500 homes across the plan period.
- 2.5 Policy RUR1 (Rural Area Housing Strategy) of the LPR establishes an indicative housing figure for Bloxham of **75 homes**.

Bloxham NP vision and objectives

- 2.6 The Bloxham NP has a clear vision, which is summarised as follows:
- "Over the next few years the village will have successfully accommodated its new population into village life with a larger, outstanding primary school and new community facilities and public open spaces. In managing this growth the village will have maintained its essential historic, rural character by preserving its special countryside setting and heritage assets."
- 2.7 A total of four objectives have been identified to support the delivery of the vision, which are
1. To plan for a scale of housing growth that can be accommodated within the constraints of the village infrastructure.
 2. To use opportunities to improve the village infrastructure.
 3. To conserve and enhance the special historic character of the village and its countryside setting.
 4. To manage development so that it fits well with existing residential amenity.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability topics and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives. Further information, including the policy review and baseline information that has supported the development of key sustainability issues and objectives, is presented in **Appendix B**.

Consultation

- 3.2 The SEA Regulations require that “when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.⁵ Hence, these authorities were consulted from 18th March to 24th April 2025. Comments were only received from Historic England, who did not have any specific comments for the Scoping Report.

Key sustainability issues

- 3.3 The key sustainability issues for the neighbourhood area, identified through scoping, are presented below under each SEA topic.

Air quality

- The neighbourhood area is approximately 4.4km southwest of the Cherwell District Council Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) (no. 1), designated due to high nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels associated with vehicular emissions. As Banbury, where the AQMA is located, is the nearest town to the neighbourhood area, it is likely that many residents travel into this town to access wider services and facilities and employment opportunities.
- In light of the above, development in the neighbourhood area could increase travel into neighbouring and larger centres, such as Banbury, particularly via private car. This could worsen air quality in the AQMA.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- Whilst the neighbourhood area does not contain, or lie in proximity to, any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity, The Slade Local Nature Reserve (LNR) can be found in the centre of the neighbourhood area, adjacent to Bloxham village. Additionally, there are a variety of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats across the neighbourhood area. As such, it is likely Bloxham is an important area for local biodiversity, positively contributing to ecological networks. The Bloxham NP should make use of the opportunities these areas present to improve and enhance the biodiversity value of the neighbourhood area.

⁵ These consultation bodies were selected “by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

Climate change and flood risk

- The majority of the neighbourhood area is at a relatively low risk of fluvial and surface water flooding; however, there is a small strip of land at risk of fluvial flooding in the centre of the neighbourhood area, as well as higher levels of surface water flood risk to the west of Bloxham village. Recognising the varying levels of flood risk throughout the neighbourhood area, there is a need to consider flood risk through the Bloxham NP, for example, by managing, and where possible, improving drainage rates. The Bloxham NP could encourage the installation of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) to help manage flood risk across the neighbourhood area.
- The Bloxham NP is seeking to bring forward allocation(s) for housing. Whilst this may impact carbon emissions locally, the level of growth is likely to be relatively low. Nevertheless, it will be important for new development to adopt best building practices to limit the emissions linked to construction, as well as use sustainable features and incorporate renewable energy infrastructure where appropriate to reduce the overall carbon footprint of new housing.
- As with much of the country, extreme heat events are likely to occur more frequently in the future. In addition to this, drought is likely to become an increasing issue in summer, whilst surface water / groundwater flooding is likely to increase during winter months. In this respect, climate change resilience should form an integral part of the Bloxham NP policy framework.
- Whilst there has been a decrease in transport emissions in Cherwell district between 2005 and 2022, it remains the largest contributing sector to carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Reducing emissions linked to transport is largely the responsibility of the local transport authority. However, the Bloxham NP could seek to address transport emissions locally through encouraging opportunities to strengthen active and sustainable travel routes and reducing the need to travel outside of the neighbourhood area. This would likely help to reduce the number of private vehicles on the local road network in the neighbourhood area.

Community wellbeing

- The neighbourhood area has a relatively large senior population. The Bloxham NP presents an opportunity to ensure that infrastructure within the neighbourhood area is inclusive and accessible for all age groups. For example, by implementing age-friendly design principles in public spaces, such as ensuring accessible pedestrian pathways, benches, and lighting, the plan can enhance the quality of life for older adults while also benefiting residents of all ages.
- Whilst the neighbourhood area offers a range of services and facilities, these need to expand to address the needs of the growing population of Bloxham. There is also a need to strengthen public transport connections to neighbouring towns like Banbury to allow residents to access wider services and facilities.
- The neighbourhood area does not experience particularly high levels of deprivation. Development through the Bloxham NP can positively contribute to maintaining this low level of deprivation by bringing forward new housing to meet the local need and encouraging new community services and facilities to be brought into the neighbourhood area.

Historic environment

- The neighbourhood area contains several designated heritage assets that significantly contribute to the historic character of the village, particularly within and near the Bloxham Conservation Area. Therefore, the neighbourhood area is regarded as having a sensitive historic environment that could be affected by development. Consequently, any proposed development close to important heritage assets (both designated and non-designated) must carefully assess the potential impact on the inherent qualities of these assets and their surroundings.
- It is also acknowledged that development under the Bloxham NP provides an opportunity to enhance the understanding of, and access to, heritage assets of both local and national significance, which is likely to be a crucial factor in the emerging neighbourhood plan.
- By promoting greater understanding of and access to local and national designations within and around the neighbourhood area, the Bloxham NP offers a chance to establish a growth strategy that safeguards the area's historic character and specific heritage features. Additionally, the Bloxham NP can contribute to preserving and enhancing the historic environment by ensuring that new developments are designed and laid out with sensitivity to the historic context of the neighbourhood area.

Land, soil, and water resources

- Allocating land for development could trigger changes to land, soil and water resources. It will be important for development to be focused away from best and most versatile (BMV) land. It is noted that high quality agricultural land is focused away from Bloxham village, where development is more likely to be focused.
- The Bloxham NP should consider potential effects on waterbody catchments and water quality. Ensuring that future development does not harm water quality, both on-site and off-site, is vital. This might involve introducing measures to prevent water pollution during all stages of development. Additionally, the Bloxham NP should look for opportunities to improve water quality, particularly in terms of its chemical makeup.
- The Bloxham NP could also consider supporting additional measures to strengthen the resilience of water supplies. This could involve promoting local water recycling projects and finding ways to increase the efficiency of water usage, especially given the expected rise in population and the subsequent increase in water demand.

Landscape

- There are a number of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in the neighbourhood area, which are important features of the settlements and likely contribute to a number of views. New development through the Bloxham NP should avoid visual impacts to and from these TPOs where possible to maintain the character and quality of built-up areas in Bloxham.
- The neighbourhood area sits within a diverse landscape, including across two National Character Areas (NCAs) and multiple local character areas. As such, development will need to be considerate of the varying landscape features and sensitivities. The Bloxham NP has the potential to positively contribute to

landscape amenity through encouraging development to integrate with the various national and local landscape characters. This will maintain the unique landscape value of the neighbourhood area.

Transportation and movement

- There are good opportunities to engage with sustainable and public transportation in the neighbourhood area, given the bus service provision and the proximity of train stations to the neighbourhood area. However, whilst these are likely to be used by residents in the neighbourhood area for some journeys, private vehicles are potentially relied upon more given they allow for easier and more convenient access to nearby settlements. It is therefore likely that new development will contribute additional private vehicles to the local road network. The Bloxham NP can help to mitigate this increase by encouraging development to come forward within proximity to active travel opportunities, including pavement and the public right of way (PRoW) network, to encourage an uptake in walking and cycling for access to nearby services and facilities.
- Development should seek to connect with and where possible extend the existing PRoW network, thereby maximising pedestrian and cycling opportunities for leisure, working and shopping.

The SEA framework

- 3.4 The SEA scope is summarised in a list of topics, objectives, and assessment questions, known as the SEA framework. These draw on the key sustainability issues identified through scoping. **Table 3.2** below presents the SEA framework.

Table 3.2 SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Air quality	Support objectives to improve air quality within and surrounding the neighbourhood area and minimise impacts on nearby AQMAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement measures (such as green infrastructure) which will help to support good air quality in the neighbourhood area? • Promote and encourage more sustainable transport options? • Encourage development which reduces the need to travel?
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance designated sites for biodiversity and priority habitats, supporting the integrity of ecological networks? • Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support access to, interpretation of, and understanding of biodiversity?
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid vulnerable development in areas of elevated flood risk? Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure? Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area? Sustainably manage water runoff, and reduce runoff where possible?
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing? Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population? Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including health infrastructure? Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements, including improved access to open space? Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect the integrity of the historic setting of the Bloxham Conservation Area? Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, and their settings?

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of locally important features and their settings? • Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Oxfordshire County Council Historic Environment Record (HER)? • 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 neighbourhood area?
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible? • Identify and avoid the development of the BMV land? • Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste? • Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development? • Protect waterbodies from pollution? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling? • Avoid any negative impacts on mineral and waste infrastructure?
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and / or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? • Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the water setting, or rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the objectives within the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes? • Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement? • Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area? • Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change? • Improve road safety and reduce pollution from vehicles?

Part 1: Assessment of reasonable alternatives

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the Bloxham NP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives through the SEA process.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Bloxham NP, namely the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites.

Why focus on sites?

- 4.3 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:
- Bloxham NP objectives, particularly housing objectives to provide sufficient and appropriate high-quality housing to meet local needs.
 - Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders and is reflected in the emerging LPR indicative housing figure of 75 homes for Bloxham; and
 - The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Bloxham NP. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

Structure of this part of the report

- 4.4 This part of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 5 and Chapter 6** – discuss the options appraised as reasonable alternatives, and the findings of the appraisal of these options.
 - **Chapter 7** – explains reasons for selecting the preferred option, in light of the appraisal findings and wider evidence base for the Bloxham NP.

5. Establishing reasonable alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 This chapter describes the outline reasons for selecting the reasonable alternatives dealt with through the SEA process, and appraisal findings. The assessment comprises an appraisal of site options and an appraisal of spatial strategy options.

Strategic parameters

- 5.2 As discussed in **Chapter 2**, the Bloxham NP is being prepared in the context of the adopted CLP and emerging LPR.
- 5.3 The adopted planning framework consists of the CLP 2011-2031 (Part 1) (2015). As the Local Plan is over five years old, a LPR is now underway. Regulation 18 consultation on the LPR took place between 22nd September and 3rd November 2023. The LPR recently underwent Submission Consultation, which ran from 19th December 2024 to 25th February 2025.
- 5.4 Under Core Policy 35 (Settlement Hierarchy) of the LPR, Bloxham is identified as a 'Larger Village'. In these settlements there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development beyond the existing built limits will only be permitted on allocated sites, and development in settlements within the Green Belt will be considered against National Policy. It is anticipated that the 11 villages within this level of the settlement hierarchy will contribute to delivering 500 homes across the plan period.
- 5.5 Policy RUR1 (Rural Area Housing Strategy) of the LPR establishes an indicative housing figure for Bloxham of **75 homes**.

Appraisal of site options

- 5.6 To further support the development of a spatial strategy to deliver an appropriate number of homes in Bloxham through the NP, the Steering Group has considered alternative locations for delivering housing in the neighbourhood area.
- 5.7 AECOM was commissioned to produce a Site Options and Assessment (SOA) Report for Bloxham, which was published in July 2025. Of the 14 sites that were assessed through the report – identified through CDC's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)⁶ – only ten were considered potentially appropriate for development (i.e. given an amber rating), on the basis that the identified issues can be resolved or constraints mitigated. These ten sites are outlined in **Table 5.1** overleaf.

⁶ Sites in the 2024 HELAA which have already secured planning permission have not been considered.

Table 5.1 Sites assessed through the SOA Report with an amber rating

Site reference	HELAA reference	Site name	Area (ha)	Indicative capacity
1	HELAA094	Land at Tadmarton Road	8.4	75
2	HELAA467	Land east of South Newington Road	7.8	130
4	HELAA097	Land north of Bloxham	5.6	125
5	HELAA518	Land north and south of Milton Road, Bloxham	17.6	230
6	HELAA099	Land at Ell's Lane, Bloxham	2.6	30
9	HELAA357	Orchard House, Bardford Road	0.4	5
10	HELAA464	Land east of Barford Road	1.7	40
12	HELAA475	Land off Tadmarton Road	2.9	60
14	HELAA504	Land east of Barford Road	5.5	123
15	HELAA534	Land west of South Newington Road	6.0	75

5.8 As noted above, CDC's emerging LPR establishes an indicative housing figure for Bloxham of **75 homes**. It is noted that 160 homes have already received consent in that period. Whilst these sites exceed this figure, the Steering Group are still seeking to allocate a site through the emerging Bloxham NP for housing as this is only an indicative figure, which is subject to change as the LPR evolves.

5.9 **Site 2** is one of the sites that has received consent; this is for the residential development of up to 130 dwellings, alongside associated access, green and blue infrastructure (including public open space, a play area, and drainage), required ground remodelling, and supporting infrastructure. Therefore, this site is not considered for the purposes of the SEA.

5.10 In light of the significant increase in housing numbers due to come forward in the village, and subsequent increase in the population of the village, the Steering Group considered that it must use the emerging Bloxham NP to allocate land that would directly build new social infrastructure capacity.

5.11 In light of the above, the Steering Group have concluded that the level of growth due to come forward in the village will need to be accompanied by improvements to existing community infrastructure. The Parish Council produced a 'Community Benefits List' in 2023. Six of the community benefits identified in this list have been deemed deliverable as legitimate planning policy requirements (by allocating land and/or using S106 financial contributions). These community benefits are as follows:

- Expansion of Bloxham Church of England Primary School
- Traffic management works along the High Street
- Improvements to school parking at Bloxham Grove Road
- Provision of a new library
- Additional burial ground and allotments land

- Additional public sports pitches land

5.12 The Parish Council has decided that increasing the capacity of the primary school, as well as additional burial ground and allotments land, are the highest priority of all the community benefits. The Parish Council invited the land interests of the nine remaining sites to submit any further information on their site development ideas or proposals, so that it could identify which sites are able to deliver the community benefits outlined above, as well as mitigation measures. The responses from the land interests, linked to the findings of the SOA Report where relevant, are outlined below, alongside whether or not the site is being taken forward for the purposes of the SEA:

- **Site 1** – The land interest has submitted additional information that addresses the constraints identified in the SOA Report, most notably landscape impacts and pedestrian access. It has also committed to providing land for the expansion of Bloxham Church of England Primary School, which is adjacent to the site, and therefore would deliver the community benefit with the highest priority. In addition, it proposes land for a burial ground and the conversion of a barn for a variety of potential community uses (e.g. a library) once its agricultural use ends with the development of the surrounding land. As this is one of the largest of the nine remaining sites, it has the greatest potential to deliver community benefits alongside housing whilst also delivering mitigation measures to the site constraints. In light of these considerations, the site is **taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.
- **Site 4** – The land interest has not provided any additional information to show how it intends to address the constraints identified in the SOA Report, including whether it would be willing to provide a new public car park for the schools on the other side of Bloxham Grove Road. The SOA Report concludes that, given that development in this location would not relate well to the village, it is not considered to be a favourable site for allocation through the NP if more suitable sites are available. Due to this, the site is **not taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.
- **Site 5** – The land interest has submitted additional information that addresses the constraints identified in the SOA Report. It also proposes to deliver land for a burial ground, allotments / orchard, and a new community facility (e.g. a library), and would therefore deliver the three identified community benefits with the highest priority. The SOA Report concludes that, given the heritage constraints associated with the site, it is not considered to be a favourable site for allocation through the NP if more suitable sites are available. However, the report also states that if development were to be contained within the western part of the site, or the two parcels of land straddling Milton Road, it is potentially suitable for development. As this is by far the largest of the nine remaining sites, it has the greatest potential to deliver further community benefits alongside housing whilst also delivering mitigation measures to the site constraints. Hence, the site is **taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.
- **Site 6** – The land interest has not provided any additional information to show how it intends to address the constraints identified in the SOA Report, including landscape impacts and vehicular and pedestrian access. Given it is one of the smallest of the nine remaining sites, it is less likely to be able

to deliver any of the identified community benefits alongside housing whilst also delivering mitigation measures to the site constraints. Due to this, the site is **not taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.

- **Site 9** – This is a brownfield site that has capacity to deliver 5 homes, and therefore it will likely come forward as infill / windfall development. As such, it is **not taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.
- **Site 10** – The land interest has not provided any additional information to show how it intends to address the constraints identified in the SOA Report, including pedestrian access. In addition, the SOA Report concludes that the site would only be considered suitable for development provided that it comes forward as part of Site 14, which currently has a live planning application that does not include Site 10. Given it is one of the smallest of the nine remaining sites, it is also less likely to be able to deliver any of the identified community benefits alongside housing whilst also delivering mitigation measures to the site constraints. In light of these considerations, the site is **not taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.
- **Site 12** – A planning application for 60 homes is being reconsidered. It includes a new public open space and play area on the site frontage and flood risk and landscape mitigation measures. The SOA Report concludes that, given the landscape constraints associated with the site, it is not considered to be a favourable site for allocation through the NP if more suitable sites are available. Given it is one of the smallest of the nine remaining sites, it is also less likely to be able to deliver any of the identified community benefits alongside housing whilst also delivering mitigation measures to the site constraints. In light of these considerations, the site is **not taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.
- **Site 14** – A planning application for 100 homes has been submitted. It makes provision for attenuation land to address flood risk and some boundary landscaping. However, it does not make provision for any of the identified community benefits. Due to this, the site is **not taken forward** for the purposes of the SEA.

5.13 In light of the above, two options have been developed (see **Figure 5.1** overleaf):

- **Option 1: Site 1** – Approximately 125 homes, land for the expansion of Bloxham Church of England Primary School, land for a burial ground, and the conversion of a barn for community use (e.g. a library).
- **Option 2: Site 5** – Approximately 230 homes, land for a burial ground, allotments / orchard, and a new community facility (e.g. a library)

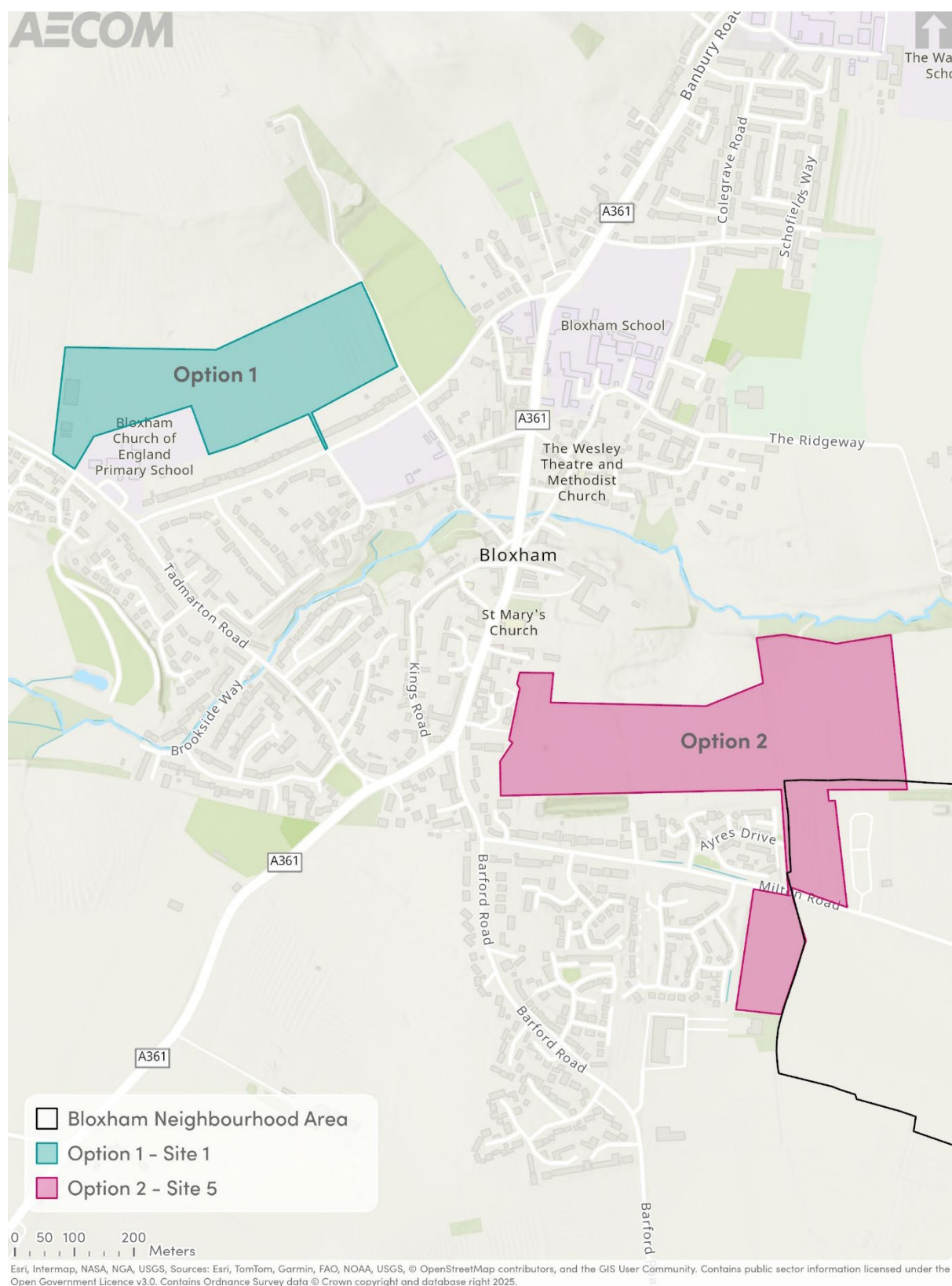


Figure 5.1 Options considered as reasonable alternatives through the SEA

Appraisal of reasonable alternatives

5.14 An appraisal of the reasonable alternatives, as set out above, is presented below under each of the SEA topics. **Table 5.2** overleaf provides a summary of the findings.

Methodology

- 5.15 For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through SEA scoping as a methodological framework. Green is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst red is used to indicate significant negative effects. Where appropriate, uncertainty will also be noted.
- 5.16 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions in order to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.
- 5.17 Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the most favourably.
- 5.18 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency and reversibility of effects.

Summary of findings

Table 5.2 Summary of findings

SEA topic		Option 1 – Site 1	Option 2 – Site 5
Air quality	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effects?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
	Rank	1	2
Historic environment	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Yes – negative

SEA topic		Option 1 – Site 1	Option 2 – Site 5
	Rank	1	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Significant effects?	No	Yes – negative
	Rank	1	2
Landscape	Significant effects?	Yes – negative	Yes – negative
	Rank	1	2
Transportation	Significant effects?	No	No
	Rank	1	2

Air quality

- 5.19 The nearest Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) to the neighbourhood area is 'Cherwell District Council Air Quality Management Area (No. 1)', which is located in the centre of Banbury. Growth through either option will ultimately lead to a net increase in trips to/from Banbury via private vehicle as Bloxham has limited services and facilities. Hence, residents will likely rely on Banbury to access wider services and facilities, employment opportunities (both within Banbury and those further afield accessed via the train stations in Banbury), and educational facilities. Nevertheless, both options are within walking distance (<800m) of the nearest bus stop and therefore some residents will likely opt to travel to/from Banbury via this mode of public transport.
- 5.20 Overall, **no significant effects** are considered likely under either option with regard to air quality. Whilst growth will ultimately lead to a net increase in trips via private vehicle, it is recognised that growth will likely come forward with or without the Bloxham NP. In this context, the Plan provides opportunities to ensure new development areas are connected to the existing active travel network and are in proximity to public transport nodes, which will positively impact air quality. **Option 1** is ranked slightly more favourably than **Option 2** as it proposes the deliver a slightly lower level of growth, with fewer anticipated additional trips via private car and associated vehicular emissions.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 5.21 There are no internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity or geodiversity within or within close proximity to the neighbourhood area. Bloxham does however fall within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Bestmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is located approximately 6.5km from the southeastern boundary of the neighbourhood area. Natural England's advice states that it would be for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to determine likely impacts on terrestrial SSSIs such as Bestmoor, and when to consult Natural England. Growth through either option would therefore need to involve the LPA to determine likely impacts on the SSSI and whether consultation is required.
- 5.22 In terms of locally designated sites for biodiversity or geodiversity, The Slade Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located on the southwestern edge of the village.

Option 1 is approximately 370m north of The Slade LNR, whilst **Option 2** is approximately 630m east of the LNR. However, there is existing development between both options and the LNR. As such, impacts on the LNR as a result of development will likely be limited to increased recreational disturbance.

- 5.23 With regard to Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats, **Option 1** is 370m from the nearest priority habitat; this is deciduous woodland associated with The Slade LNR. Conversely, **Option 2** is adjacent to two areas of deciduous woodland, and is in close proximity to a further area of deciduous woodland as well as an area of traditional orchard. In relation to this, Option 2 falls within a Conservation Target Area as identified in the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1). These areas have been identified to focus work to restore biodiversity at a landscape scale through the maintenance, restoration, and creation of BAP priority habitats. In this respect, whilst growth through Option 2 has the potential to disturb the species that inhabit nearby priority habitats, it also has the potential to contribute to the ecological network.
- 5.24 Bloxham as a whole has been identified as a priority area for countryside stewardship measures addressing Curlew habitat issues. In this respect, growth through either option has the potential to disturb this species. However, it is noted that this priority area covers a significant part of Oxfordshire, and that growth will likely come forward with or without the Bloxham NP. In addition, mitigation measures can likely help limit potential adverse effects.
- 5.25 Overall, **no significant effects** are considered likely under either option with regard to biodiversity and geodiversity. Neither option is particularly constrained from a biodiversity and geodiversity standpoint, especially with regard to internationally and nationally designated sites. Whilst Option 1 is in closer proximity to The Slade LNR, it is separated from the LNR by existing development and delivers a lower level of growth than Option 2, therefore it will likely lead to less recreational disturbance. Meanwhile, growth through Option 2 has the potential to disturb the species that inhabit nearby priority habitats. However, it also has the potential to contribute to the ecological network in this location as a result of biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements. Nevertheless, **Option 1** is ranked slightly more favourably than **Option 2**.

Climate change and flood risk

- 5.26 It is assumed that growth through either option will lead to an increase in overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the neighbourhood area due to an increase in the local population. Two of the largest contributors to emissions will likely be the construction and operation of new homes, as well as an uptake in trips by private vehicle. Growth will ultimately lead to a net increase in trips to/from Banbury via private vehicle as Bloxham has limited services and facilities. Nevertheless, both options are within walking distance (<800m) of the nearest bus stop and therefore some residents will likely opt to travel to/from Banbury via this mode of public transport. In addition, the increase in overall GHG emissions is unlikely to be significant given the scale of development proposed through both options. Strategic-scale interventions, such as decentralised energy schemes, are unlikely at this scale.
- 5.27 Neither option is connected to the existing public rights of way (PRoW) network. However, it is assumed that development through either of the options would include pedestrian access to the existing network of footpaths, which would

encourage the use of active travel to access local services and facilities. This will help minimise GHG emissions associated with new development.

- 5.28 With regard to fluvial flood risk, both options are within Flood Zone 1 and therefore at low risk of fluvial flooding. However, it is noted that the northern boundary of **Option 2** is in close proximity to the Sor Brook, which is associated with an area within Flood Zone 2/3. Hence, fluvial flooding could pose a risk to this option in the future as a result of increased rainfall due to climate change.
- 5.29 In terms of surface water flood risk, whilst **Option 2** is at low risk, isolated parts of **Option 1** are at medium/high risk of surface water flooding. This includes the site's boundary with Tadmarton Road, where vehicular and pedestrian access would be provided, which is at high risk of flooding. However, considering the size of the site and the other proposed uses, as well as the potential use of mitigation measures such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), this is not considered a significant constraint to development.
- 5.30 Overall, **no significant effects** are considered likely under either option with regard to climate change and flood risk. With regard to climate change mitigation, this recognises that climate change is a global issue, and the scale of growth being considered during the plan period is relatively low. In addition, both options are well connected to the local active travel and public transport network, helping limit GHG emissions associated with transport. Whilst both sites have associated flood risks, **Option 1** is ranked slightly more favourably than **Option 2** as fluvial flood risk is more difficult to mitigate.

Community wellbeing

- 5.31 Both options would meet the indicative housing figure for the neighbourhood area and perform well in this respect. However, **Option 2** has the potential to deliver the highest level of growth (and the highest level of affordable housing) and therefore performs most favourably in this respect. Both options are considered likely to deliver an appropriate housing mix in order to meet the specific needs of the community, including specialist housing for older people.
- 5.32 In terms of accessibility, both options are adjacent to and connected to the existing built-up area of Bloxham and are within walking distance (<800m) of the village centre, nearest open space, and nearest bus stop. **Option 1** is adjacent to the nearest primary school, whilst **Option 2** is within walking distance (<800m) of the nearest primary school. In addition, both options are within walking distance (<1.6km) of the nearest secondary school. However, neither option is within walking distance of the nearest train station, which is located in Banbury. However, Bloxham is served by an hourly bus service to Banbury (and Chipping Norton), and in this respect residents without access to a private vehicle will still be able to access the train station (alongside wider services and facilities and employment opportunities) in Banbury.
- 5.33 According to data from the 2021 census, well over a third (38.9%) of the working population in the neighbourhood area work mainly from home, which is higher than the national average (31.5%). Of those who do not mainly work from home, almost half (47.5%) drive a car or van to work. In this respect, growth through either of the options is likely to result in an increase in trips by private vehicle, which will likely worsen existing traffic and congestion on local roads. This has the potential to adversely impact human health through increased pollutants associated with vehicular emissions.

- 5.34 With regard to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (2019), the neighbourhood area overlaps with two LSOAs: Cherwell 009A and 008D. **Option 1** falls within Cherwell 008D, whilst **Option 2** falls predominantly within Cherwell 008D (but also 009A and 008B, as part of the option falls outside of the neighbourhood area). These LSOAs are amongst the 10-40% least deprived neighbourhoods in England. However, when looking at the 'barriers to housing and services' domain in isolation, Cherwell 009A (part of Option 2) is amongst the 50% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Whilst both options perform well by delivering new homes to the neighbourhood area, including affordable housing, Option 2 performs particularly well in this respect.
- 5.35 Notably, both options propose to deliver a new community facility (e.g. a library) and land for a burial ground, which are two of the identified community benefits for the village. In addition, **Option 1** safeguards land for the expansion of Bloxham Church of England Primary School, whilst **Option 2** proposes to deliver allotments / an orchard, which are also identified community benefits. Whilst both options perform well in this respect, **Option 1** performs particularly well by enabling the primary school to expand, which will likely be needed considering the level of growth due to come forward during the plan period.
- 5.36 Overall, both options are predicted to lead to **significant positive effects** with regard to community wellbeing. **Option 1** exceeds the indicative housing figure for the neighbourhood area, including affordable housing, and will enable the primary school to expand in line with local population growth whilst also delivering other community benefits. **Option 2** also exceeds the indicative housing figure for the neighbourhood area, including affordable housing, and will deliver some community benefits. However, the scale of growth proposed through this option would likely be too high, particularly in combination with other committed schemes, for the primary school's existing capacity to accommodate. Hence, **Option 1** is ranked more favourably than **Option 2**.

Historic environment

- 5.37 The southeastern corner of **Option 1** is approximately 150m from a cluster of listed buildings (predominantly grade II) in the centre of the village, covered by the Bloxham Conservation Area. However, there is existing development between the site and the conservation area, as well as Courtington Lane, which provide a significant level of screening between the site and the historic core of the village. Nevertheless, it is recognised that development of such a large site, in a relatively prominently position within the settlement, could ultimately adversely impact the overall historic character of the village.
- 5.38 With regard to locally important heritage assets, **Option 1** contains a monument listed on the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). This is 'Evidence of Roman settlement linked to a Roman cemetery', which is located at the proposed point of access to the site off Tadmarton Road. Hence, development in this location could disturb these archaeological remains.
- 5.39 The northwestern corner of **Option 2** overlaps with the Bloxham Conservation Area and is within 100m of numerous listed building. There are important views into/out of the conservation area across the site, including to the grade I listed St Mary's Church which is located approximately 65m to the northwest of the site. Notably, there is also a significant cluster of grade II listed buildings within the church grounds. In addition, Option 2 lies within an Archaeological

Constraint Priority Area. In this respect, development in this location – particularly in the eastern parcel of the site – would likely impact the overall interpretation of the historic part of the village, with adverse impacts anticipated.

- 5.40 With regard to locally important heritage assets, **Option 2** contains a monument listed on the Oxfordshire HER. This is ‘Undated agricultural and occupation activity’ in the central parcel of the site. In addition, the parcel to the north of Milton Road intersects with ‘Banbury and Cheltenham Direct Line of GWR’, also listed on the HER. The option is also adjacent to three sizeable monument areas listed on the HER, and in this respect, development in this location has the potential to disturb multiple archaeological remains.
- 5.41 Overall, given the number of constraints associated with this location, **Option 2** is considered likely to lead to **significant negative effects** with regard to the historic environment. Whilst mitigation measures could limit potential adverse effects on nearby heritage assets, the eastern parcel is particularly sensitive and therefore adverse impacts would be difficult to avoid in this part of the site. Meanwhile, **uncertainty** is noted under **Option 1**; whilst this location is relatively unconstrained from a heritage standpoint, the size and position of this site could still adversely impact the overall historic character of the village. This recognises that the impacts of development on heritage assets and the historic character of the village are largely dependent on the detailed design and layout of development, including the design of housing, which is currently unknown. **Option 1** is therefore best performing in relation to this SEA theme.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 5.42 Both options comprise large greenfield sites, and therefore development through either option would lead to the loss of greenfield land. However, it is recognised that brownfield sites are limited in the neighbourhood area, and in this respect the loss of greenfield land is largely unavoidable if the Bloxham NP is to meet the indicative housing figure provided by the emerging LPR.
- 5.43 According to the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (2017)⁷, the neighbourhood area does not overlap with any mineral safeguarding areas or consultation areas. In this respect, growth through either option is unlikely to result in the sterilisation of mineral resources in this location.
- 5.44 Notably, a dismantled railway line (Banbury and Cheltenham Direct Line of GWR) intersects **Option 2**, which is recorded as an area of potentially contaminated land. Due to this, development in this location would likely require ground remediation work to be carried out. This would likely incur additional costs to the developer, which could adversely impact house prices.
- 5.45 With regard to soil resources, and with a focus on agricultural land classification (ALC), **Option 1** is not underlain by best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land (i.e. grades 1, 2, or 3a). This option performs well in this respect. Conversely, the majority of **Option 2** – which is currently in agricultural use – is underlain by Grade 2 (i.e. very good quality) agricultural land. As such, development in this location would lead to the loss of BMV land.
- 5.46 In terms of water resources, growth through either option will result in increased water usage in the village, as well as the production of additional wastewater.

⁷ Oxfordshire County Council (2017): [Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#)

This could put pressure on the existing wastewater treatment plant which serves the village. However, given water and wastewater is strongly tied to national policy and legislation, if either site were to be developed the developer would be required to consider these factors at the design stage.

- 5.47 The neighbourhood area falls within the Cherwell Operational Catchment; two waterbodies within this catchment intersect with Bloxham. **Option 1** is not in proximity to either of these waterbodies. However, the northern boundary of **Option 2** is approximately 25m from the Bloxham Brook (Source to Sor Brook), which has a moderate ecological status. Hence, development in this location could adversely impact the ecological status of this waterbody as a result of diffuse pollution if surface water runoff is not appropriately managed.
- 5.48 Overall, **Option 2** is considered likely to lead to **significant negative effects** with regard to land, soil, and water resources given it will lead to the permanent loss of BMV land and is more likely to adversely impact the ecological status of the Bloxham Brook. Meanwhile, **no significant effects** are anticipated under **Option 1** as it is relatively unconstrained in comparison to Option 2. Whilst development under this option will lead to the loss of greenfield land, it is recognised that brownfield sites are limited in the neighbourhood area, and in this respect the loss of greenfield land is largely unavoidable.

Landscape

- 5.49 **Option 1** is a large greenfield site which is adjacent to and connected to the existing built-up area. It wraps around the Bloxham Church of England Primary School and extends behind the properties on Courtington Lane as far as the school playing field. The land slopes upwards away from the settlement towards a ridge line and therefore development in this location has the potential to impact views to/from the village to the north. Development of this site would ultimately extend the settlement into the open countryside to the northwest, and due to its size (8.4ha) and position relative to the existing built-up area, it has the potential to significantly change the size and character of the village.
- 5.50 **Option 2** is also a very large greenfield site which is adjacent to and connected to the existing built-up area. It comprises five parcels of land; one fronts Milton Road, three are to the north of existing residential development along Milton Road, and one is located to the south of Milton Road, adjacent to recent development. Notably, the site is located adjacent to the historic core of the village, and therefore development in this location has the potential to adversely impact villagescape character. In terms of topography, the site is relatively flat. Nevertheless, development of the site would ultimately extend the settlement into the open countryside to the east, and due to its size (17.6ha), it has the potential to significantly change the size and character of the village.
- 5.51 Overall, both options have the potential to lead to **significant negative effects** by significantly changing the size and character of the village. Whilst Option 1 is more prominent in the landscape due to the topography in this location, and therefore more likely to impact landscape character in this part of the village, Option 2 is more likely to impact villagescape character due to its proximity to the historic core of the village. In light of this, and reflecting its larger size, **Option 2** is ranked slightly less favourably than **Option 1**. However, it is recognised that the impacts of development on landscape / villagescape

character are largely dependent on the detailed design and layout of development, including landscaping, which is unknown at this stage.

Transportation

- 5.52 Growth through either option will ultimately lead to a net increase in trips to/from Banbury via private vehicle. This is because Bloxham has limited services and facilities, and therefore residents will likely rely on Banbury to access wider services and facilities, employment opportunities, and educational facilities, as well as the railway network. Despite this, it is noted that both options are within walking distance (<800m) of the nearest bus stop, and therefore some residents will likely opt to travel to/from Banbury via public transport.
- 5.53 According to data from the 2021 census, well over a third (38.9%) of the working population in the neighbourhood area work mainly from home, which is higher than the national average (31.5%). Of those who do not mainly work from home, almost half (47.5%) drive a car or van to work. In this respect, growth through either of the options is likely to result in trips by private vehicle, which will likely worsen existing traffic and congestion on local roads.
- 5.54 In terms of access, vehicular access to **Option 1** is provided from Tadmarton Road at the western end of the site. Whilst there is no footpath connecting the site with the current extent of the footpath on Tadmarton Road, this will likely be delivered as part of the development. A Public Right of Way (PRoW) – public footpath 136/6/20 – runs along the eastern boundary of the site, which will also likely be connected to the site if it were to be developed.
- 5.55 **Option 2** does not currently have vehicular access, but it would likely be created from Milton Road. Two PRoWs cross the site: public footpaths 136/3/20 and 136/4/10 which provide access to St Mary's Church to the northwest, Milton to the east, and Bloxham Mill Business Centre to the south. These public footpaths should be retained if this site were to be developed.
- 5.56 Overall, **no significant effects** are anticipated under either of the options. Whilst growth will ultimately lead to an increase in trips by private vehicle, the village is served by an hourly bus service (to Banbury and Chipping Norton) and the level of growth proposed through both options is relatively low. In addition, both options either have existing access or deliverable access, and will likely be well-connected to the local active travel network. Both options also have the potential to deliver improvements to this network. **Option 1** is ranked slightly more favourably than **Option 2** as it proposes the deliver a slightly lower level of growth, with fewer associated trips via private vehicle.

6. Preferred approach for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.1 The group have provided the following reasoning as to why the preferred sites were chosen for allocation through the Bloxham NP:

“Selection was driven by the need to deliver as many community benefits as possible that could be justified from the allocated site, and a judgement about the scale of housing growth that could be planned for.

In both cases, the Parsh Council has had to be very mindful that it must win the support of a majority of the local electorate at the referendum for the project to be successful. As a result it has judged that planning for the future expansion of the primary school to support the growth in the village population is the most important benefit to secure. Hence, Painters Farm has been selected.

The Council acknowledges that the SEA has not identified a significant difference between the potential environment effects of developing that site versus developing Site 5 on the eastern side of the village. However, the potential for adverse heritage and land/soil/water resource effects on the latter does also weigh in favour of Site 1.”

Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

7. Introduction (to Part 2)

Overview

7.1 The aim of this part of the Environmental Report is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current Regulation 14 ‘pre-submission’ version of the Bloxham NP. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version of the Bloxham NP under the eight SEA topic headings; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

Bloxham NP policies

7.2 The 15 policies within the Bloxham NP are outlined in **Table 7.1** below.

Table 7.1 Bloxham NP policies

Policy reference	Policy name
BL1	Spatial Plan for Bloxham
BL2	Land East of Tadmarton Road (‘Painters Farm’)
BL3	Connectivity
BL4	Parking
BL5	Housing Mix
BL6	Adapting Homes to meet Demographic Change
BL7	Residential Amenity
BL8	Local Infrastructure
BL9	General Design Guidance
BL10	Design in the Conservation Area
BL11	Key Streetscenes & Views
BL12	Employment Land
BL13	Village Centre
BL14	Broadband & Mobile Communications
BL15	Local Green Spaces & Other Amenity Spaces

Methodology

- 7.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.2**) as a methodological framework.
- 7.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g., in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 7.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Bloxham NP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

8. Assessment of the plan

Introduction

- 8.1 The assessment is presented below under eight topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework (see **Section 3**). A final section (**Chapter 9**) then presents overall conclusions.

Plan contents, aims, and objectives

- 8.2 The Bloxham Settlement Boundary is established through Policy BL1 (Spatial Plan for Bloxham) of the draft Bloxham NP. The policy, which supports proposals for development within the settlement boundary, makes provision during the plan period (2024-2037) for three major housing schemes. Two of these have already received consent: 'Land North of Ells Lane' and 'Land South of Hartshill Close'. The third is allocated through Policy BL2 (Land East of Tadmerton Road ('Painters Farm')) of the draft Bloxham NP. Combined, these sites will deliver approximately **285 homes** during the plan period, which significantly exceeds the 75 homes indicative housing figure established in CDC's LPR. Policy BL1 also outlines that additional homes may be delivered through windfall schemes on suitable sites within the settlement boundary.
- 8.3 Policy BL2 allocates 'Land East of Tadmerton Road ('Painters Farm') for a residential-led, mixed development scheme comprising land for residential, educational, and community uses, a burial ground, and public open space. This is in line with **Option 2** (Site 1) established and assessed through Part 1 of this report. Policy BL2 outlines that proposals will be supported provided they meet the criteria set out within the policy, including a requirement for the residential scheme to deliver approximately **125 homes**.
- 8.4 Other policies which focus on delivering benefits to the local community include BL5 (Housing Mix), BL6 (Adapting Homes to meet Demographic Change), BL7 (Residential Amenity), BL8 (Local Infrastructure), and BL15 (Local Green Spaces & Other Amenity Spaces). Policies BL12 (Employment Land), BL13 (Village Centre), and BL14 (Broadband & Mobile Communications) – which support employment opportunities locally – are also relevant in this respect.
- 8.5 The conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and elements that contribute to landscape and villagescape character are the focus of policies BL10 (Design in the Conservation Area) and BL11 (Key Streetscenes & Views). However, Policy BL9 (General Design Guidance) – which sets out how the appearance, landscaping, layout, scale, and design of development can positively impact the local environment – are also particularly relevant to landscape and the historic environment, as well as several other SEA topics.
- 8.6 Finally, policies BL3 (Connectivity) and BL4 (Parking) address issues related to transport infrastructure; the former is also relevant to air quality and climate change as it largely focuses on promoting low-carbon connectivity.

Air quality

- 8.7 The nearest AQMA to the neighbourhood area is 'Cherwell District Council Air Quality Management Area (No. 1)', which is located in the centre of Banbury.

The addition of approximately 125 homes to the neighbourhood area during the plan period (or 285 homes when considering the two sites which have received consent) will ultimately lead to a net increase in trips to/from Banbury via private vehicle. This is reflective of Bloxham's limited services and facilities. Due to this, residents will likely rely on Banbury to access wider services and facilities, employment opportunities (both within Banbury and those further afield accessed via the train stations in Banbury), and educational facilities. However, as the site allocation is within walking distance (<800m) of the nearest bus stop, some residents will likely opt to travel to/from Banbury via public transport.

- 8.8 Of relevance to the above, Policy BL3 (Connectivity) requires all new development to promote and improve low-carbon connectivity via new or existing networks of pedestrian paths and cycle routes. This has the potential to improve connectivity to the existing shared footpath / cycleway connecting Bloxham to Banbury, which does not currently extend to the centre of Bloxham. In doing so, the policy will promote the use of active travel for local trips, which will have positive implications for air quality. Nevertheless, it is recognised that given the distance between Bloxham and Banbury, many residents will likely still rely on the local bus service or the private vehicle for trips to/from Banbury.
- 8.9 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** with regard to air quality. Whilst growth through the Plan is likely to lead to a net increase in trips to/from Banbury via private car, the level of growth proposed is unlikely to lead to significant changes in air quality associated with the AQMA in Banbury, nor air quality locally in Bloxham. This takes into consideration the existing bus service between Bloxham and Banbury, as well as the provisions made through the policy framework to improve active travel infrastructure in the neighbourhood area.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 8.10 The site allocated through Policy BL2 is relatively unconstrained from a biodiversity and geodiversity standpoint; it is not located in proximity to any internationally or nationally designated sites. Whilst it is only approximately 370m north of The Slade LNR, there is existing development between the site and the LNR. As such, impacts on the LNR as a result of development in this location will likely be limited to increased recreational disturbance. In addition, Policy BL15 designates The Slade LNR as a Local Green Space (LGS) and therefore supports its long-term conservation as a site of biodiversity value.
- 8.11 The policy framework of the draft Bloxham NP sets out, under Policy BL9 (General Design Guidance), that development proposals must take opportunities to protect, and wherever possible enhance, biodiversity and habitats. The policy also sets out that proposals must deliver smart, energy efficient lighting of public areas that accords with the recommendations of the Institute of Lighting Engineers on reduction of obtrusive light so as to convey a rural feel and avoid light pollution wherever possible. This will have positive implications for biodiversity, particularly nocturnal species.
- 8.12 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** with regard to biodiversity and geodiversity. This is because the site allocated through Policy BL2 is not in proximity to any internationally or nationally designated sites. Whilst the site is in proximity to The Slade LNR,

impacts on this locally designated site as a result of development in this location will likely be limited to increased recreational disturbance. In addition, Policy BL15 designates this LNR as an LGS which helps mitigate this risk. To further mitigate potential risks to local biodiversity, the policy framework seeks to protect, and wherever possible enhance, biodiversity and habitats.

Climate change and flood risk

- 8.13 It is assumed that development through the draft Bloxham NP will lead to an increase in overall GHG emissions within the neighbourhood area due to an increase in the local population during the plan period. This is partially due to an uptake in private vehicle usage as the village has limited services and facilities; whilst there is an hourly bus service to/from Banbury, some residents will inevitably opt to drive instead. However, given the relatively low level of growth proposed through the Plan, and considering the global nature of climate change, this is not considered likely to be significant.
- 8.14 In relation to the above, Policy BL3 (Connectivity) requires all new development to promote and improve low-carbon connectivity via new or existing networks of pedestrian paths and cycle routes. This has the potential to improve connectivity to the existing shared footpath / cycleway connecting Bloxham to Banbury, which does not currently extend to the centre of Bloxham. In doing so, the policy will promote the use of active travel for local trips, which will reduce transport-induced GHG emissions. Nevertheless, it is recognised that given the distance between Bloxham and Banbury, many residents will still rely on the local bus service or the private vehicle for trips to/from Banbury.
- 8.15 With regard to flood risk, the site allocated through Policy BL2 is at low risk of fluvial flooding. In terms of surface water flood risk, there are some isolated areas within the site at medium-high risk of flooding. In addition, the section of Tadmorton Road which will provide vehicular / cycle access to the site is at medium-high risk of flooding. In response to this, Policy BL2 sets out that proposals will be supported provided the sustainable drainage strategy manages surface and ground water and is integrated with green infrastructure. In this respect, the policy framework sufficiently addresses flood risk in this location by setting out requirements for mitigation measures.
- 8.16 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** with regard to climate change and flood risk. Whilst growth through the Plan is likely to lead to an increase in overall GHG emissions, given the relatively low level of growth proposed through the Plan, and considering the global nature of climate change, this is not considered likely to be significant. In addition, the policy framework seeks to improve active travel infrastructure in the neighbourhood area, which will limit GHG emissions to some degree. Whilst the site allocated through Policy BL2 includes isolated areas at medium-high risk of surface water flooding, the Plan suitably addresses this risk.

Community wellbeing

- 8.17 Policy BL2 sets out that proposals for the site allocation will be supported provided that they deliver approximately 125 homes, including a proportion of bungalows suited to older person households. Hence, by exceeding the indicative housing need (75 homes) of the neighbourhood area, and meeting the specific needs of the community, the draft Bloxham NP performs well.

Notably, the site is within walking distance (<800m) of the village centre (including shops) and the nearest open space, cycle route, bus stop, and primary school (the site is adjacent to the Bloxham Church of England Primary School). It is also within walking distance (<1.6km) of the nearest secondary school. In this respect, the site allocation is in an accessible location.

- 8.18 Policy BL2 requires proposals to safeguard land for the expansion of the adjoining primary school and its car parking; make land available for a burial ground with ground conditions that are suited to that purpose; and convert the existing barn on the western edge of the site to make it available for a community use (Class F1(e) and/or F2(b)). This is in addition to the creation of a public open space with a new viewing platform and picnic area at Hobb Hill. In this respect, the site allocation delivers three of the community benefits prioritised by the Parish Council (see paragraph 5.11 in **Chapter 5**).
- 8.19 Housing mix is established through Policy BL5, which sets out that proposals for major residential development schemes should comprise 30% 1–2-bedroom homes, 60% 3-bedroom homes, and 10% 4+ bedroom homes. The policy also states that First Homes as an affordable route to home ownership should be delivered at a minimum discount of 40% below full market value. In this respect, the policy framework supports the delivery of a diverse housing mix which addresses the specific needs of the local community.
- 8.20 Adding to the above, Policy BL6 (Adapting Homes to meet Demographic Change) sets out that where practical, bungalows should comprise at least 20% of the total number of new dwellings delivered by proposals. They should be designed specifically to meet the needs of households with older people and those with disabilities, including providing a layout and landscape scheme that confers a sense of space and privacy. This suitably addresses the needs of the aging population of Bloxham, and the Plan performs well in this respect.
- 8.21 Capacity at local schools is considered under Policy BL8 (Local Infrastructure), which sets out that proposals for major housing development must demonstrate there is sufficient capacity at the Bloxham Church of England Primary School. This is to ensure the needs of the assessed number of primary school age children living in the completed scheme are met. This is important given the site allocated through Policy BL2 is adjacent to the Bloxham Church of England Primary School.
- 8.22 Policy BL3 (Connectivity) performs well by requiring all new development to promote and improve low-carbon connectivity via new or existing networks of pedestrian paths and cycle routes. This is to ensure that new residents, including those of school age and the mobility impaired, have safe pedestrian, cycle or wheelchair / mobility scooter access to village services. The policy also protects public rights of way and seeks to ensure that routes through green landscaped or open space areas are kept free from nearby vehicular traffic where possible.
- 8.23 Local Green Spaces (LGSs) are identified and designated through Policy BL15. Specifically, Jubilee Park, the Recreation Ground, and The Slade LNR are designated as LGSs. The policy highlights that new development will not be permitted on land designated as LGS, except in very special circumstances. The policy sets out that development on other open spaces and sports and recreational land, including those areas designated for amenity use through

planning permissions, will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in a suitable location. This will benefit the mental and physical health of residents by ensuring they continue to have access to publicly accessible LGSs.

- 8.24 Policy BL12 outlines that development proposals that will result in the loss of land or buildings with an established Class E use will only be supported where a) there is no realistic prospect of the land or buildings serving another Class E, F1 or F2 use within five years; and b) there are alternative locations elsewhere within the settlement boundary that would be suitable in principle for a Class E use. The policy also supports proposals for new live-work development within the settlement boundary, as well as proposals to develop a new Class E(g) business use of less than 150m² gross internal area, providing they meet the criteria set out within the policy. This will support the local economy.
- 8.25 In terms of retail provision, Policy BL13 (Village Centre) supports new retail units, or the expansion of existing retail units, in the village centre and on Church Street, provided that it meets the requirements of the policy. This will contribute to accessibility by reducing the need for residents to make trips to/from Banbury to access services and facilities not available in the village.
- 8.26 With regard to working from home, Policy BL14 (Broadband & Mobile Communications) supports the delivery of fibre to the premises (FTTP) and proposals for new or improved mobile phone infrastructure. This will further reduce the need for residents to make to/from Banbury and further afield by improving the viability of working from home for residents in the village.
- 8.27 More broadly, Policy BL7 (Residential Amenity) focuses on ensuring that development proposals do not harm the residential amenity of neighbouring properties by way of their noise and light effects.
- 8.28 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to **significant positive effects** with regard to community wellbeing. This is because it meets the indicative housing need of the neighbourhood area, including affordable housing and specialist housing; delivers growth in an accessible location; provides new community infrastructure; supports improvements to active travel infrastructure; protects open green spaces; and supports the local economy.

Historic environment

- 8.29 The southeastern corner of the site allocated through Policy BL2 is approximately 150m from a cluster of listed buildings (predominantly grade II) in the centre of the village, covered by the Bloxham Conservation Area. However, there is existing development between the site and the conservation area, as well as Courtington Lane, which provides a large level of screening between the site allocation and the historic core of the village. Nevertheless, it is recognised that development of such a large site, in a relatively prominently position within the settlement, will ultimately impact the overall historic character of the village.
- 8.30 In response to the above, Policy BL9 (General Design Guidance) sets out that the appearance, landscaping, layout, scale, and design of development proposals must be in keeping with local distinctiveness and characteristics of the historic form of the village. It must also take account of the scale of any harm or loss that it might impose upon any non-designated historic assets.

- 8.31 In addition, and with a focus on design in the conservation area, Policy BL10 outlines that the appearance, landscaping, layout, scale, and design of development proposals in the Bloxham Conservation Area and its setting must conserve and enhance the heritage significance of the conservation area. This is as defined in the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal. In this respect, the policy framework appropriately mitigates the potential impact of new development on designated and non-designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area.
- 8.32 More broadly, Policy BL13 (Village Centre) supports new retail units, or the expansion of existing retail units, in the village centre and on Church Street, provided that they accord with national and local policies to protect heritage assets and their setting, and with the relevant design guidance. In addition, Policy BL14 (Broadband & Mobile Communications) – which supports proposals for new or improved mobile phone infrastructure – sets out that proposals must not adversely affect the surrounding built or natural environment, including the setting of heritage assets.
- 8.33 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** on the historic environment. The spatial strategy directs development to a part of the village that is less sensitive from a heritage standpoint, whilst the policy framework appropriately mitigates the potential impact of new development on designated and non-designated heritage assets. This conclusion also reflects that development will likely come forward with or without the Bloxham NP.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 8.34 The site allocated through Policy BL2 comprises a large area of greenfield. However, it is recognised that there is a limited availability of brownfield land in the neighbourhood area. Hence, the loss of greenfield land is largely unavoidable if the Bloxham NP is to meet its indicative housing need figure.
- 8.35 The neighbourhood area does not overlap with any mineral safeguarding areas or consultation areas. In this respect, the spatial strategy is unlikely to result in the sterilisation of mineral resources in this location.
- 8.36 With regard to soil resources, specifically ALC, the site allocation is underlain by grade 4 (i.e. poor) agricultural land. Hence, development in this location will not result in the loss of BMV land. Notably, the southeastern edge of the village is underlain by grade 2 (very good) agricultural land. In this respect, the spatial strategy performs well by directing growth away from this area of BMV land.
- 8.37 In terms of water resources, the spatial strategy will ultimately result in increased water usage in the village, as well as the production of additional wastewater. This could put pressure on the existing wastewater treatment plant which serves the village. However, given water and wastewater is strongly tied to national policy and legislation, the developer of the site allocation would be required to consider these factors at the design stage. In addition, Policy BL8 (Local Infrastructure) requires development proposals to demonstrate that there is adequate wastewater and water supply capacity to serve new development, and that existing capacity problems will not be worsened.
- 8.38 The site allocation – alongside the entire neighbourhood area – falls within the catchment of the Bloxham Brook (Source to Sor Brook), which flows through

the centre of the village. Development in this location will inevitably lead to an increase in surface water runoff, resulting from an increase in hard surfaces, which could increase diffuse pollution. In response to this, Policy BL2 sets out that proposals will be supported provided the sustainable drainage strategy manages surface and ground water and is integrated with green infrastructure.

- 8.39 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** on land, soil, and water resources. Whilst it is recognised that the spatial strategy will lead to the loss of greenfield land, this is largely unavoidable given the limited availability of brownfield land in the neighbourhood area. This conclusion also reflects that development will likely come forward with or without the Bloxham NP. In addition, the spatial strategy avoids areas underlain by BMV land, and the policy framework appropriately addresses water resources.

Landscape

- 8.40 The site allocated through Policy BL2 comprises a large area of greenfield land adjacent to and connected to the existing built-up area. In terms of topography, the land slopes upwards away from the settlement towards a ridge line and therefore development in this location has the potential to impact views to/from the village to the north. Development of this site would ultimately extend the settlement into the open countryside to the northwest, and due to its size (8.4ha) and position relative to the existing built-up area, it has the potential to significantly change the size and character of the village.
- 8.41 Policy BL2 seeks to address the aforementioned landscape constraints. To begin with, it sets out that proposals will be supported provided a public open space is created as part of a landscape mitigation scheme, with a new viewing platform and picnic area at Hobb Hill. In addition, the policy requires the site layout to be formed of development parcels that retain and bolster as much of the existing site hedgerows and trees as possible. The policy also requires the green infrastructure scheme to include the provision of a new woodland belt to connect existing assets on Hobb Hill with those on the remainder of the site.
- 8.42 Notably, Policy COM13 (Settlement Gaps) of the emerging LPR identifies a strategic gap between Banbury and Bloxham, and the site allocated through Policy BL2 of the draft Bloxham NP falls within this gap. However, Policy COM13 outlines that development proposals will only be considered favourably where they are proposed through a Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order. In addition, development in this location is not considered likely to compromise the physical and visual separation between these settlements, nor would it lead to the loss of environmental or historical assets that contribute towards local identity.
- 8.43 Villagescape character is considered through Policy BL9 (General Design Guidance), which sets out that the appearance, landscaping, layout, scale, and design of development proposals must relate in scale, massing, and layout to neighbouring properties. In addition, it must be consistent and compatible with the existing and prevailing density; reflect the locally distinctive character of the locality in which the new development is proposed; and not exceed 30 dwellings per hectare.

- 8.44 In addition to the above, Policy BL9 sets out that development proposals must make a positive contribution to the character of Bloxham and its rural feel and use materials in keeping with the distinctive character of the local brick or ironstone. In addition, it must make good use of trees, garden space, hedgerows, and green space to soften the street scene; and preserve existing areas of open space and take every available opportunity to create new open space to help retain rural character.
- 8.45 With regard to light pollution, Policy BL9 sets out that development proposals must deliver smart, energy efficient lighting of public areas that accords with the recommendations of the Institute of Lighting Engineers on reduction of obtrusive light so as to convey a rural feel and avoid light pollution wherever possible. This will positively affect landscape and villagescape character.
- 8.46 With a focus on key streetscenes and views, Policy BL11 outlines that development proposals located within or adjoining a designated key streetscene or key view, as identified in the draft Bloxham NP, must ensure that key features of the view can continue to be enjoyed, and that any development has an acceptable impact in relation to the visual qualities of those views.
- 8.47 More broadly, Policy BL14 (Broadband & Mobile Communications) – which supports proposals for new or improved mobile phone infrastructure – sets out that proposals must not adversely affect the surrounding built or natural environment, including key views.
- 8.48 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** with regard to landscape. It is recognised that development of the site allocation has the potential to significantly change the size and character of the village. However, the policy framework sufficiently addresses the potential impacts of development on landscape / villagescape character. This conclusion also reflects that development will likely come forward with or without the Bloxham NP. By delivering growth through the NP, developers are more likely to deliver landscape mitigation measures in line with policy provisions.

Transportation

- 8.49 The addition of approximately 125 homes to the neighbourhood area during the plan period (or 285 homes when taking into account the two sites which have received consent) will ultimately lead to a net increase in trips to/from Banbury via private car. This reflects Bloxham's limited services and facilities, and therefore residents will likely rely on Banbury to access wider services and facilities, employment opportunities (both within Banbury and those further afield accessed via the train stations in Banbury), and educational facilities. However, as the site allocation is within walking distance (<800m) of the nearest bus stop, some residents will likely opt to travel to/from Banbury via public transport.
- 8.50 In relation to the above, and with a focus on active transport, Policy BL3 (Connectivity) requires all new development to promote and improve low-carbon connectivity via new or existing networks of pedestrian paths and cycle routes. This is to ensure that new residents, including those of school age and the mobility impaired, have safe pedestrian, cycle or wheelchair / mobility scooter access to village services. The policy also protects PRoWs and seeks

to ensure that routes through green landscaped or open space areas are kept free from nearby vehicular traffic where possible.

- 8.51 In terms of access, Policy BL2 sets out that proposals for the site allocation will be supported provided that the site is accessed by vehicles and pedestrians from Tadmarton Road and by pedestrians via public footpaths onto Courtington Lane. This will ensure that residents can conveniently access the village centre, including the services and facilities available here.
- 8.52 Policy BL4 (Parking) sets out that residential development proposals resulting in a net-additional number of dwellings must make provision within each plot for a minimum of one parking space (for dwellings of 1-2 bedrooms) or two parking spaces (for dwellings of 3+ bedrooms). The policy also makes provision for visitor parking; sets out requirements for garages; and protects existing off-street parking capacity from proposals to alter / extend dwellings. This will likely minimise on-street parking, which can contribute to traffic and congestion.
- 8.53 More broadly, Policy BL13 (Village Centre) supports new retail units, or the expansion of existing retail units, in the village centre and on Church Street, provided that the impact of any additional traffic generated has been satisfactorily mitigated and will not adversely affect the highway network and pedestrian safety. The policy performs well in this respect.
- 8.54 Overall, the draft Bloxham NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** with regard to transportation. Whilst it is recognised that growth through the Plan will ultimately lead to a net increase in trips to/from Banbury via private car, the site allocation is within walking distance of the nearest bus stop (as well as the services and facilities in the village) and the policy framework supports improvements to active travel infrastructure.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 9.1 **Significant positive effects** are predicted under the community wellbeing SEA topic. This is because the draft Bloxham NP meets the indicative housing need of the neighbourhood area, including affordable housing and specialist housing; delivers growth in an accessible location; provides new community infrastructure; supports improvements to active travel infrastructure; protects open green spaces; and supports the local economy.
- 9.2 Broadly **neutral effects** are anticipated under the remaining SEA topics. With regard to air quality, climate change mitigation, and transportation, this reflects walkability; the low level of growth proposed; and the provisions made within the policy framework to improve active travel infrastructure. With regard to biodiversity and geodiversity, the site allocation is relatively unconstrained and the policy framework seeks to protect / enhance biodiversity and habitats. With regard to flood risk, the Plan suitably addresses surface water flood risk. With regard to the historic environment, the spatial strategy directs development to one of the least sensitive parts of the village, whilst the policy framework mitigates the potential impact of development on heritage assets. With regard to land, soil, and water resources, the spatial strategy avoids areas underlain by BMV land, and the policy framework appropriately addresses water resources. With regards to landscape, the policy framework addresses the potential impacts of development on landscape / villagescape character.

Recommendations

- 9.3 No specific recommendations are made at this stage.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

10. Next steps

Overview

10.1 This part of the report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

Plan finalisation

10.2 This Environmental Report accompanies the Bloxham NP for Regulation 14 consultation.

10.3 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Bloxham NP Steering Group, and the Bloxham NP and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Bloxham NP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, CDC, for subsequent Independent Examination.

10.4 Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Bloxham NP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

10.5 Assuming that the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Bloxham NP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by CDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Bloxham NP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the Bloxham NP will become part of the Development Plan for CDC, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

10.6 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Bloxham NP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

10.7 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Bloxham NP will be undertaken by CDC as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the Bloxham NP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by CDC.

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1**, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report. However, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table AA.1** below links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table AA.2** explains this interpretation. Finally, **Table AA.3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have / will be met.

Table AA.1 Questions answered by this Environmental Report in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ⁸
What is the scope of the SEA?	What is the plan seeking to achieve? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
	What is the sustainability 'context'? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The relevant environmental protection objectives established at international or national level. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
	What is the sustainability 'baseline'? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
	What are the key issues and objectives? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of

⁸ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

Environmental Report question

In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include...⁸

	how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The likely significant effects associated with the Regulation 14 version of the plan. • The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Regulation 14 version of the plan.
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next steps for the plan making /SEA process.

Table AA.2 Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with regulatory requirements

Schedule 2	Interpretation of Schedule 2		
The report must include...	The report must include...		
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>	i.e. answer – <i>What's the scope of the SA?</i>
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>	
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>	
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'		
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>	
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance		
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal		
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]	
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.		
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]	
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan		
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]	

Table AA.3 ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements have been, are and will be met

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the SA Report	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Chapter 2 (‘What is the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’). More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix B of this Environmental Report.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been considered during its preparation.	The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA’). Also, Appendix B presents key messages from the context review. With regards to explaining “how...considerations have been taken into account”, Chapter 7 explains the Steering Group’s ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e., explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives appraisal.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets,	Chapter 6 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area).

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects).	Chapters 9 presents an appraisal of the plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan. Also, specific recommendations are made in Chapter 10.
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Chapters 4 and 5 deal with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options. Also, Chapter 7 explains the Parish Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in-light of alternatives assessment).
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10.	Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.

The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations

authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)

At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the 'submission' version of the Bentley Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 16 consultation.

The SA must be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.

The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions

Assessment findings presented within this Environmental Report, and

Regulatory requirement

expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be considered during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.

Discussion of how requirement is met

consultation responses received, have been fed back to the Steering Group and have informed plan finalisation.

Appendix B Scoping information

Overview

This appendix provides a summary of the information that was presented in the Scoping Report. The Scoping Report, which can be accessed on the Bloxham NP website, provides the information in full, alongside a number of figures.

Air quality

Key statistics

- Whilst there are no AQMAs within the neighbourhood area, the Cherwell District Council Air Quality Management Area (no. 1) is located approximately 4.4 km northeast of the area.

Commentary

CDC monitor (and are primarily concerned with) nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), linked to tailpipe emissions and road traffic volume. The most recent Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), published in 2024, indicates that there were no exceedances of the air quality objectives in Bloxham for NO₂, with neither of the two Non-Automatic Monitoring Sites in the area registering data over the annual mean objective.

AQMAs 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 AQMAs within the neighbourhood area, but the closest is the Cherwell District Council Air Quality Management Area (no. 1) which is located 4.4 km northeast of the neighbourhood area. The AQMA incorporates Hennef Way, between the junctions with Ermont Way and Concorde Avenue, and was declared for NO₂ exceedances. It has not yet been compliant with air quality objectives. The AQMA exceeded the annual mean objective by 57.5 µg/m³ in the current year.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Key statistics

- There are no Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), or National Nature Reserves (NNRs) within or in proximity to the neighbourhood area.
- The neighbourhood area does not overlap with any SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) associated with the types of development likely to come forward during the plan period.
- The Slade Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located in the centre of the neighbourhood area, to the southwest of Bloxham village.
- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the neighbourhood area include deciduous woodland, good quality semi-improved grassland, traditional orchard, and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.

Commentary

There are no internationally designated sites for biodiversity (Ramsar sites, SPAs or SACs) within or in proximity to the neighbourhood area, nor are there any nationally designated sites for biodiversity (SSSIs or NNRs).

The Slade LNR is a 2.23ha wetland site within the neighbourhood area. The land was acquired by Bloxham Parish Council in 2015; prior to this the site was owned by Oxfordshire County Council since 1969. For the majority of the time since 1969, The Slade has been managed as a nature reserve and used as an educational resource. The site is considered to be a microcosm of the local countryside, with over 170 different higher plant species recorded, and a haven for common birds and butterflies.

BAP Priority Habitat coverage in the neighbourhood area is relatively low. Deciduous woodland is scattered throughout the neighbourhood area, with notable patches to the west and southwest of Bloxham village. Good quality semi-improved grassland appears in small pockets, particularly along the eastern and southern edges of the neighbourhood area's boundary. A small area of traditional orchard is located near Milton, indicating remnants of historic land use. These habitats are interspersed with agricultural and developed land, emphasising the need for their protection amidst expanding development.

In terms of the National Habitat Network, the majority of the neighbourhood area does not overlap with any of the network. However, there is a small area of Network Expansion Zone in the north-western corner of the neighbourhood area – this is land with potential to expand, link or join networks across the landscape. This is adjacent to an even smaller area of Network Enhancement Zone 1, which is slightly more centrally located but still on the northern border of the neighbourhood area. This is land considered to be most suitable for creating new habitats to connect existing patches of primary and associated habitats, effectively 'joining up' the ecological network by expanding and improving connections between them. There is another small area of Network Enhancement Zone 1 in the south-eastern corner of the neighbourhood area.

Climate change and flood risk

Key statistics

- The largest contributor to carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the Cherwell district area is transportation, totalling 541 kilotons of CO₂ equivalent (ktCO₂e) in 2022 – accounting for 42.5% of the total emissions in the area.
- Overall CO₂ emissions have reduced from 1,831.1 ktCO₂e in 2005 to 1,162.9 ktCO₂e in 2021.
- The land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector has continuously worked to slightly offset CO₂ emissions in the Cherwell district.
- Cherwell emits more CO₂ emissions per capita (in tons) when compared to Oxfordshire, the South East of England, and England.

Commentary

CDC declared a climate emergency in 2019. Since then, the Council has been working to ensure its operations and activities will be carbon net zero by 2030. The

Council has also been working to help the whole district become net zero – achieved through the Climate Action Framework and Climate Change Action Plans.

With regards to fluvial flood risk, the northern boundary of the neighbourhood area is within Flood Zones 2 and 3, as is a small area in the centre of the neighbourhood area which runs through the village of Bloxham. Fluvial flood risk along the neighbourhood area's northern boundary is associated with the Sor Brook, which flows through the north of the neighbourhood area in a west to east direction. The central flood risk is associated with Bloxham Brook, which runs through the neighbourhood area.

Most of the areas at risk of surface water flooding are the same as those at risk of fluvial flooding; this is likely linked to the drainage into the rivers surrounding the area, such as the Sor Brook. However, there is a higher level of surface water flood risk associated with the land to the west of the Bloxham settlement.

Community wellbeing

Key statistics

- The largest age group within the neighbourhood area is 40-49 years, at 14.3%. The second largest age group is 50-59 years (13.8%), and the third is 30-39 years (13.7%). There is also a higher proportion of 60–69-year-olds in the area, as well as 70–79-year-olds, in comparison to Cherwell as a whole. This indicates a higher-than-average proportion of elderly population.
- Overall, Bloxham residents experience a greater level of 'Very Good' health in comparison to the national average. Whilst it experiences lower levels of 'Good' and 'Fair' health, the neighbourhood area also experiences less 'Bad' and 'Very Bad' health in comparison to Cherwell, and regional and national figures. As such, the health of residents is considered to be relatively good in the neighbourhood area.
- The majority of the houses in Bloxham are owned, either outright or with a mortgage, loan or through shared ownership, with private rent, living rent free, and socially renting accounting overall for only 23.4%.

Commentary

The existing Bloxham NP outlines several named community facilities designed to enhance the quality of life for residents. These include Jubilee Park, which offers sports fields and playgrounds for recreational activities. The Ex-Servicemen's Hall provides a venue for social gatherings and events, while Bloxham Surgery ensures access to healthcare services, as well as Bloxham Dental Practice, offering both NHS and private dental services. Additionally, The Red Lion pub acts as a social hub for residents.

Bloxham Primary School and Warriner School (11-18 secondary school) serve the educational needs of the community.

The IMD is an overall relative measure of deprivation and is the combination of several different domains: income; employment; education, skills and training; health deprivation and disability; crime; barriers to housing and services; and living environment. Lower super output areas (LSOAs)² 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. Deprivation levels are typically examined at the LSOA level.

In this respect, the neighbourhood area is within two LSOAs – Cherwell 008D, which covers the village of Bloxham, and Cherwell 009A, which covers the surrounding area, and extends outside of the neighbourhood area. According to the most recent deprivation data from 2019, the neighbourhood area generally experiences low levels of deprivation – Cherwell 008D is amongst the 10% least deprived neighbourhoods in England, and Cherwell 009A is amongst the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods.

Historic environment

Key statistics

- There are 133 listed buildings within the neighbourhood area: One Grade I, One Grade II*, and 131 Grade II. The Grade I structure is the Church of St Mary (HE Number: 1284130) and the Grade II* structure is the Rectory Farmhouse (HE Number: 1046194).
- The Bloxham Conservation Area covers part of the village, in the centre of the neighbourhood area.
- None of the nationally designated heritage assets within the neighbourhood area are on the Heritage at Risk Register 2024.

Commentary

There is one conservation area in the neighbourhood area: the Bloxham Conservation Area. The Bloxham Conservation Area Appraisal (May 2007) highlights the village's historic environment assets, emphasising its architectural and archaeological significance. The area showcases a well-preserved vernacular-built environment, primarily constructed from local ironstone, with numerous listed buildings from the 16th and 17th centuries. St. Mary's Church exemplifies the village's medieval and later architectural heritage, while remnants of Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and Victorian influences contribute to its layered historical character. The appraisal aims to protect and manage these assets, ensuring that future development enhances rather than detracts from Bloxham's historic integrity.

St Mary's Church – a Grade I listed building first listed in 1955 – is located within Bloxham village. This parish church features architectural elements from the 12th to the 20th centuries, including a 14th-century nave, north and south aisles, and a west tower with a spire. Significant restorations were carried out in 1864 and 1956. The church is noted for its Gothic Revival windows, intricate tracery, and lively sculptures. It also houses notable monuments, including those dedicated to the Thornycroft family and 19th-century members of the Holloway family. The church was under royal patronage until 1541 and is considered one of the finest in the country.

Land, soil, and water resources

Key statistics

- The neighbourhood area is within the Thames River Basin District, and within the Cherwell Operational Catchment.

- The neighbourhood area falls within two Drinking Water Safeguard Zones (Surface Water): the Lower Thames (SWSGZ4016) and the Sor Brook (SWSGZ4010).

Commentary

In the absence of post-1988 data for the remainder of the neighbourhood area, Natural England (2019) indicative data is relied upon. Approximately half of the undeveloped land in the neighbourhood area is considered to be Grade 2 'Good' land. Given that Bloxham is surrounded by farmland, it is likely that the areas of provisional Grade 2 ALC are in agricultural use and are productive agricultural fields. However, large parts of the area are 'Grade 4' Poor land, which indicates that this land is not considered productive with regard to agriculture. This is notable to the west of Bloxham village, as well as to the north and northeastern boundary, where the Sor Brook runs. There are also smaller areas of Grade 3 'Moderate' land.

The neighbourhood area is located within the Cherwell Operational Catchment. There are two waterbodies that run through the neighbourhood area: the Bloxham Brook (Source to Sor Brook) and the Sor Brook (Broughton to Cherwell). Both waterbodies have a moderate ecological quality according to the latest condition assessments from 2019, and a failed chemical test. However, it is noted that all waterbodies in England failed the 2019 chemical test due to a change in assessment methodology.

The majority of the neighbourhood area is within a drinking water protected area for surface water resources. This covers the whole neighbourhood area, bar the southwestern corner of the neighbourhood area.

Water is supplied to the neighbourhood area by Thames Water, who are also responsible for sewerage services in this area. Their Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) identifies how they expect to balance the demand for water with available supplies over an 80-year plan period. The WRMP indicates that there is adequate supply over this period without a need to develop new sources of water.

Landscape

Key statistics

- The neighbourhood area is not within a National Park or National Landscape and does not contain any areas of Green Belt land.
- There are a number of tree preservation orders (TPOs) within the neighbourhood area; most are concentrated in Bloxham village.
- The neighbourhood area sits almost entirely within the Cotswolds National Character Area (NCA), and partially within the Northamptonshire Uplands NCA in the northeast.

Commentary

The neighbourhood area overlaps with two NCAs – 107: Cotswolds, which covers the majority of the neighbourhood area, and 95: Northamptonshire Uplands. The Cotswolds NCA is defined by its underlying geology and is characterised by prominent natural and built features, evidence of industry and historical occupation, agriculture and large areas of woodland. The Northamptonshire Uplands NCA is

described as an area of gently rolling, limestone hills and valleys capped by ironstone-bearing sandstone and clay Lias, with many long, low ridgelines that contribute to wide, long-distance views.

The entire neighbourhood area overlaps with several Cherwell landscape types. The neighbourhood area primarily sits within the Upstanding Village Farmlands landscape type, which is characterised by a hilly landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows and nucleated villages, characteristically built from the local ironstone. The other three landscape character types that the neighbourhood area overlaps are described below:

- **River Meadowlands:** A linear riverine landscape with a flat, well-defined alluvial floodplain. It has pastoral character with meadows, wet and semi-improved pasture.
- **Pasture Hills:** A landscape dominated by remote hills that are mainly pastureland enclosed by prominent hedges with small copses and patches of gorse scrub.
- **Rolling Village Pastures:** The landscape type is characterised by a distinctive landform of small, rounded hills and narrow valleys. Unspoilt ironstone villages, with a strong vernacular character, form part of the tranquil countryside.

Transportation

Key statistics

- A greater proportion of people aged 16 years and over in employment in Bloxham work mainly from home compared to the national averages.
- Of those in the neighbourhood area that do not work mainly from home, the most prevalent method of travel to the workplace is driving a car or van.
- The most common distance travelled to work is less than 10km in Bloxham, after those who are working mainly from home.

Commentary

There are no train stations within the neighbourhood area. However, Bloxham's nearest mainline station is Banbury, which is located approximately 3.2km from the neighbourhood area to the northeast. Run by a number of operators (Cross Country, Chiltern Railways, Great Western Railway), Banbury Station has good rail connections, with direct trains to London in around 50 minutes, as well as Oxford, Manchester, Birmingham, York, and Bournemouth, as well as a number of smaller stations.

Bloxham is served by two main bus services. The 488 runs daily once an hour, from Banbury through to Chipping Norton. The 499 serves the same route and runs once at the start of the day in the morning, and once at the end, either side of the 488 buses. Other buses include the MRT1 and MRT2, which are school buses, run from Banbury, through to Warriner School.

In terms of the strategic road network, there is one main road in the neighbourhood area. This is the A361, which runs from Taunton through to Banbury. It runs north to south through Bloxham village. This is the main traffic route in the neighbourhood area.

According to the digital map available on the Oxfordshire County Council website, there is a somewhat extensive Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network (comprised of footpaths, bridleways and byways) that allow for opportunities to engage in safe, active transportation and linking the neighbourhood area with surrounding villages, such as Adderbury, and Milcombe.

