



Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

October 2025





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1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of this Report

This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan Submission (Regulation 16) Consultation Version requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations. A SEA is required if the Neighbourhood Plan is deemed to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

This report will also screen to determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). An HRA screening report is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected Habitats (European) Sites as a result of the implementation of a plan or project.

1.2 The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan will set out planning policies for the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area. Once formally adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan carries the same legal weight as Local Development Plans adopted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this case Braintree District Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a Vision, which expresses the community's aspirations for the plan area. This Vision is included within the Plan as follows:

'The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan will preserve the countryside, quality, village feel and thriving engaged community. It recognises that changes will be necessary to respond to environmental and climatic needs.'

A number of economic, social and environmental objectives have been devised for the Neighbourhood Plan. These are:

- Climate and environment
 - Maximise the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
 - Maximise the adoption of renewable technologies.
- Design, heritage and green spaces
 - Incorporate high quality design that reflects the character of Gosfield.
 - Protect existing village historical assets and their setting and open spaces.
- Getting around
 - Ensure the potential for residents to have safe and convenient access to village assets and amenities.

- Business and employment
 - Continue to support local businesses.
- Housing
 - Contribute to addressing the housing needs of Gosfield.

1.3 The Braintree District Council Local Plan

The Braintree District Local Plan was adopted in 2022, with a plan period that extends to 2033. The content of the Local Plan relevant to Gosfield is outlined in the corresponding sub-sections.

1.3.1 Gosfield in the Local Plan and Spatial Strategy

The Local Plan identifies Gosfield as a 'Third Tier' village. Third Tier villages are defined within the Local Plan as those which are the smallest villages in the District and lack most of the facilities required to meet day to day needs. They often have very poor public transport links and travel by private vehicle is usually required. When considering the tests of sustainable development, these will not normally be met by development within a third tier village, however they do have development boundaries.

1.3.2 Development Boundaries

The Local Plan includes Policy LPP1 - Development Boundaries, which sets out that within development boundaries, development will be permitted where it satisfies amenity, design, environmental and highway criteria and where it can take place without material adverse detriment to the existing character and historic interest of the settlement.

Development outside development boundaries will be confined to uses appropriate to the countryside whilst also protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The village of Gosfield has a defined development boundary drawn around the built up area.

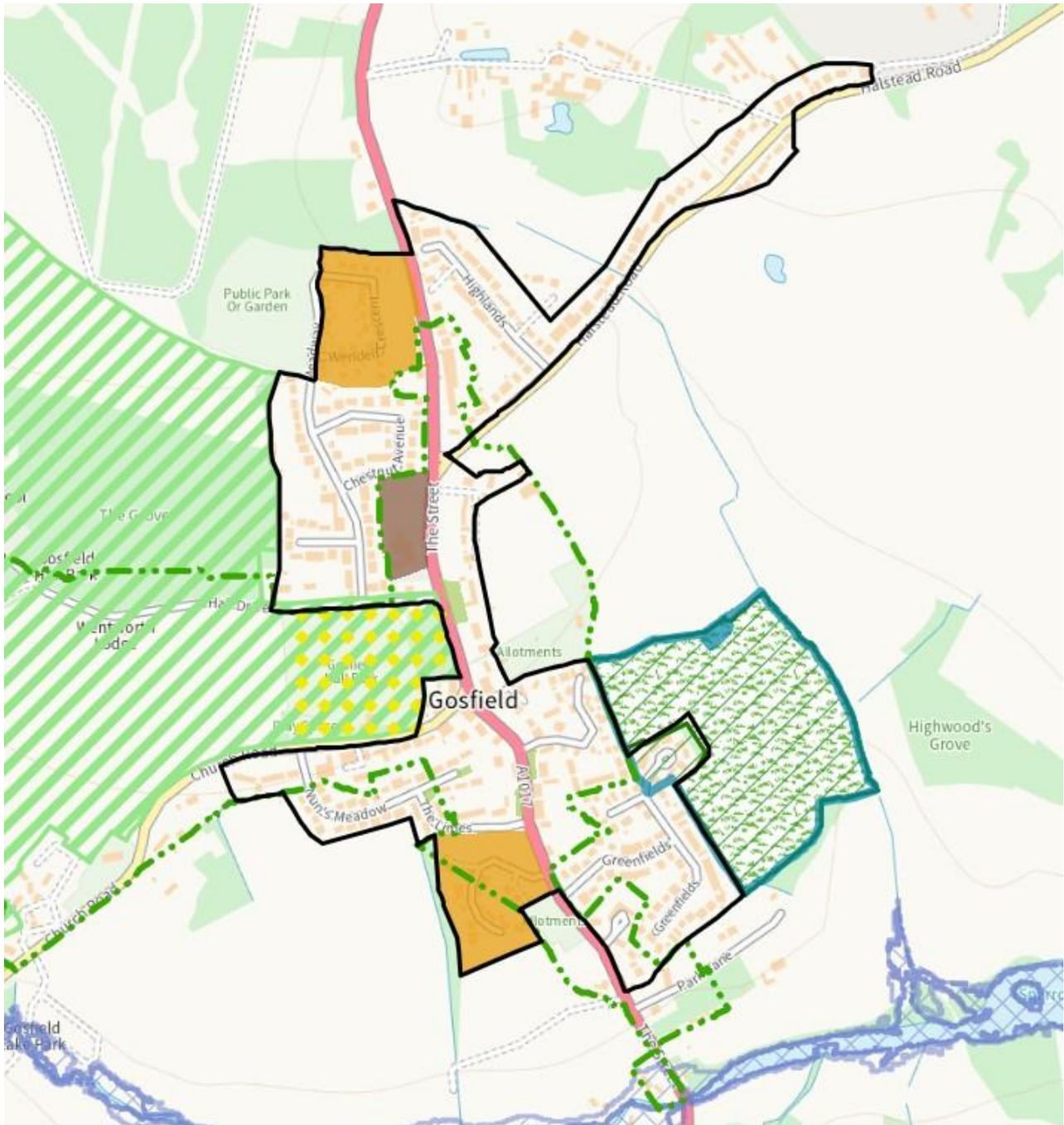
1.3.3 Housing Allocations

Two housing allocations are included within the adopted Local Plan, which amend the previous development boundary. These are:

- GOSF251 - Land South of The Limes, Off The Street (for 17 dwellings); and
- GOSF253 - Land West of Hedingham Road (for 35 dwellings).

These allocations are included within the following figure, which shows Local Plan allocations (in brown) within Gosfield.

Figure 1: Adopted Local Plan allocations within Gosfield



Source: Braintree Local Plan (adopted 2022)

1.3.4 Other relevant Local Plan policies

The Local Plan’s Policy LPP 3 – Employment Policy Areas identifies Gosfield Airfield as appropriate for retention as an employment policy area. This protects the site for the current use classes that operate on it. Changes from B2 or B8 to E (other than E(g) Offices, Research and Development, Light Industrial) will not be permitted.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27th June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment states that,

‘Environmental assessment is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(10) All plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors and which set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment(7), and all plans and programmes which have been determined to require assessment pursuant to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna(8), are likely to have significant effects on the environment, and should as a rule be made subject to systematic environmental assessment. When they determine the use of small areas at local level or are minor modifications to the above plans or programmes, they should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(11) Other plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects may not have significant effects on the environment in all cases and should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have such effects.’

The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan may influence frameworks for future development or become used ancillary to those plans and programmes that do set such a framework, and as such it has been determined that the principle of the Neighbourhood Plan should be screened for the necessary application of the SEA Directive.

The Report from the Commission to The Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions states, on the application and effectiveness of the Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC), that ‘the following Plan & Programme (P&P), and modifications to them, are covered when prepared and/or adopted by an authority and required pursuant to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions:

- P&P prepared for certain sectors, and which set the framework for future development consent in respect of projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA-Directive.
- P&P requiring an assessment under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

- P&P setting the framework for development consent in respect of projects (not limited to those listed in the EIA Directive; see above) and determined by "screening" as being likely to have significant environmental effects.'

This report represents this screening process in regard to the content and influence of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any European Site (also referred to as Habitats sites in the National Planning Policy Framework), in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

The first stage of HRA is the screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site. European sites are also known as Natura 2000 sites.

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to accompany the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

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

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site.

On 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) held a referendum and voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 26 June 2018, The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 received Royal Assent and the UK left the EU. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 made sure that UK laws continue to operate following the UK's exit. Relevant EU Directives have been transposed into UK law and those are unchanged until amended by Parliament. The requirements for HRA under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain in place with minor changes being affected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Parliament is however at liberty to introduce future changes to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) since, after 31 December 2020, the UK is no longer bound by the EU Habitats and Wild Birds Directives.

At the present time the position, under section 6(3) EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (as amended), is that the courts in the UK, with the sole exception of the Supreme Court, will continue to be bound by HRA judgements handed down by the CJEU and by domestic courts prior to 31 December 2020 when interpreting the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This is the case as long as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain unmodified by Parliament.

There is currently a legal requirement for HRA screening of Plans prior to being adopted so any additional plans or projects which might reasonably interact with the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan will be considered before post consultation.

3. SEA Screening

3.1 When is SEA Required?

Planning Practice Guidance – Strategic environmental assessment requirements for Neighbourhood Plans (Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 11-026-20140306) states that,

‘In some limited circumstances, where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft Neighbourhood Plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This process is commonly referred to as a “screening” assessment and the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

If likely significant environmental effects are identified, an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of those Regulations.

One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with European Union obligations (including under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive).

To decide whether a draft Neighbourhood Plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan’s preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies.

Each consultation body will be able to advise on particular topics relevant to its specific area of expertise and responsibility, and the specific information that it holds.

Where it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination should be prepared. A copy of the statement must be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.’

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive set out the circumstances in which a SEA is required. Table 1 sets out the assessment of whether the principle of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA.

Table 1: Exploring whether the Principle of the Plan would warrant SEA

Question 1: Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?

Yes - The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for adoption through legislative procedure.

Question 2: Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provision? (Typical characteristics of "administrative provisions" are that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a Plan to be prepared.)

Yes - The Neighbourhood Plan would be considered as falling within the category of an 'administrative provision'.

Question 3: Is the Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?

Yes to both criteria - The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 4: Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?

The Neighbourhood Plan's likely effect on sites and requirement for an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive is explored in Section 4 of this Report.

Question 5: Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a Plan likely to require assessment under the Habitats Directive?

Yes to one of the criteria - the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan can be considered to determine the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

Question 6: Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in the Annexes of the EIA Directive)?

Yes - the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 7: Is the Plans sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, or is it a financial or budget Plan, or is it co -financed by structural funds or European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) programmes 2000 to 2006/7?

The Neighbourhood Plan does not serve a purpose related to national defence or civil emergency, a financial or budget Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is not co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7.

Question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

Likely significant effects are explored in more detail in Section 3.3 of this Screening Report. The 'conclusions' section of the Report outlines whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA or not due in regard to its effects on the environment.

The following section looks at the criteria for assessing the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and the identified effects of the Neighbourhood Plan in line with the criteria. Crucially, it will determine whether there are any likely significant effects on the environment.

3.2 Criteria for Assessing the Effects of the Neighbourhood Plan

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment, referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below.

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to

- the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects

- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - * special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - * exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - * intensive land-use,
 - * the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

3.3 Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan

The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (at the time of writing) to have significant effects on the environment. The table below will explore the likelihood of effects on the following required themes, as included within Annex I of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC):

- 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.

Table 2: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.</p>	<p>The Plan sets out relevant policies which will be used to determine proposals for development within the Neighbourhood Plan area once adopted.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Plan must demonstrate conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and once brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies only in the Local Plan for that Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>The adopted Braintree Local Plan identifies housing allocations within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any additional land for development purposes.</p> <p>Irrespective of the Neighbourhood Plan policies' compliance with those of the Local Plan, which will be considered between the Parish Council and the Local Planning Authority in finalising the Neighbourhood Plan and through the independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that the degree to which the Neighbourhood Plan sets a framework for development is low. This is primarily due to the Neighbourhood Plan not allocating land for development purposes.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan, when/if 'made', will have weight in all planning decisions within the plan area. The Neighbourhood Plan provides policies for the Plan area, relevant to a local level only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development purposes.</p> <p>In consideration of the above, the degree to which the Neighbourhood Plan influences other plans or programmes is considered low in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan area. This is primarily related to the Plan's position of not allocating land for development purposes.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Plans are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account. The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies related (directly / indirectly) to ensuring environmental considerations will be integrated into any forthcoming development within the Plan area.</p> <p>Irrespective of the adequacy of any such policies, adopted Local Plan policies apply within the Neighbourhood Plan area, which have been subject to thorough assessment within the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>Regulations Assessment. This ensures that environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, will be considered for all development proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan area</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan reflects a small area and the Plan’s policy content seeks to address environmental issues. The policy content of the adopted Local Plan will additionally apply to any proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Local Plan policies have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) within the context of the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan and this Screening Report identify the following potential (direct / indirect) environmental problems or sources of potential problems relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A SSSI is located within the Plan area in its south western corner. This SSSI, Bovingdon Hall Woods, is largely within an unfavourable condition due to forestry and deer grazing. • The majority of the Plan area is therefore within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of this SSSI. South eastern parts of the Plan area are also within the IRZ of another SSSI outside the parish boundary: Belcher’s & Broadfield Woods SSSI. • As a result, consultation with Natural England is required for certain planning applications. • A number of areas on the Priority Habitat Inventory exist throughout the Plan area, including: Reedbeds; Deciduous Woodland; Traditional Orchard; and Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat. • Areas of Ancient Woodland and Ancient Replaced Woodland exist within the Plan area. • There is a designated Local Nature Reserve to the east of the village; Gosfield Sandpits. • There is a single Scheduled Monument within the

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>Plan area: the Well house and donkey wheel at Gosfield Hall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gosfield includes 53 listed buildings and Gosfield Hall Historic Park and Garden. • Of the listed buildings, two Grade I listed (Gosfield Hall and St Catherine’s Church), one is Grade II* listed and the remainder (51) are Grade II. • Additionally, the ‘Ha Ha wall’ is identified as a non-designated heritage asset. • The Bourne Brook, a tributary of the River Colne, runs west to east through the Plan area and south of the built up area of the village to the north. There are areas of land within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 associated with the watercourse. • The Plan area is within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ) (Zone III - Total Catchment). SPZs are defined around large and public potable groundwater abstraction sites. The purpose of SPZs is to provide additional protection to safeguard drinking water quality through constraining the proximity of an activity that may impact upon a drinking water abstraction. • The Plan area is within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water) and southern parts of the Plan area are also within a Drinking Water Protected Area (Surface Water). These are identified where the protected area has been assigned as being "at risk" of failing the drinking water protection objectives of the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England & Wales) Regulations 2017. • The Plan area contains land associated with a Principal Aquifer (superficial drift i.e. sand and gravels). This designation reflects the importance of aquifers in terms of groundwater as a resource (drinking water supply) but also their role in supporting surface water flows and wetland

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>ecosystems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Plan area is also vulnerable for groundwater to be polluted at ground level based on the hydrological, geological, hydrogeological and soil properties of the area. • The non-developed areas of the Plan area, and those also not in non-agricultural use, are predominantly Grade 2 ('very good') and Grade 3 ('good to moderate') soils. Grade 2 soil represents the best and most versatile soil within the wider District context. • The Plan area is located within the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area (NCA). • The NCA is characterised as predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside.
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not in conflict with those relevant planning documents within the wider district and county area related to waste management or water protection.</p>
<p>The probability, duration, frequency and</p>	<p>The following impacts have been identified within this</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
reversibility of the effects on the following factors:	Screening Assessment:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity 	<p>The Plan includes Policy GOS1, which regards wildlife friendly development. The policy outlines that new developments will be required to deliver biodiversity net gain requirements and also specific wildlife features. The policy also sets out the protection of existing features.</p> <p>The Plan area includes a SSSI, and is within the IRZs of n additional SSSI outside of the Plan area. Some planning applications coming forward within the Plan area may require consultation with Natural England should they be of a size or type that meets specific conditions. Nevertheless, the Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes that could potentially conflict with any such requirements.</p> <p>The HRA element of this Screening Report, due to the content of the Plan, outlines that there will be no likely significant effects on the designated features of any Habitats site as none are within scope, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.</p> <p>In consideration of all of the above effects on biodiversity that would require the full application of the SEA Directive (a SEA Environmental Report) can be screened out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population 	<p>It is considered that there would be no significant effects on population resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan. This is due to the small scale of the Plan area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health 	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan includes Policy GOS3: Local Green Spaces, and Policy GOS7: Access for Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding, both of which indirectly support the principle of improving health and wellbeing in the plan area.</p> <p>There are therefore no significant effects resulting from the</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Neighbourhood Plan regarding human health that would warrant a strategic assessment through SEA.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fauna 	<p>There are no direct impacts resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan on fauna that are considered significant at the Plan level. The Plan seeks the protection and enhancement of wildlife features and does not propose any development that could lead to the direct deterioration of habitats.</p> <p>Possible effects on fauna (outside those associated with Habitats sites) cannot be considered strategically significant to the extent that Strategic Environmental Assessment would be warranted. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case 'project level' basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the LPA's adopted Local Plan.</p> <p>Effects on fauna from the content of the Neighbourhood Plan can therefore be screened out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora 	<p>Various areas of priority habitat exist within the plan area. The Plan actively seeks their protection and enhancement. It should be acknowledged that relevant to such matters, Local Plan policies also apply within the Neighborhood Plan area.</p> <p>As a result, no effects are expected to result from the Neighbourhood Plan regarding flora.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil 	<p>The non-developed areas of the Neighbourhood Plan area consist of predominantly Grade 2 and Grade 3 soils. Although no thematic policies are included within the Plan that address soil quality, it should be acknowledged that Local Plan policies apply on the matter and that the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development purposes. There are no identified negative implications surrounding soil quality as a result of the Neighbourhood</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water 	<p>Land within Source Protection Zone III makes up the entirety of the Plan area. Source Protection Zones (SPZs) respond to sources such as wells, boreholes and springs used for public drinking water supply. These zones show the risk of contamination from any activities that might cause pollution in the area.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes and as such no uses are considered to give rise to ground water pollutants (e.g. give rise to hazardous substances such as pesticides, oils, petrol and diesel, solvents, arsenic, mercury or chromium VI; or non-hazardous substances such as ammonia or nitrates).</p> <p>The HRA element of this Screening Report confirms that there are no potential pathways for development within the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area to impact on the Habitats sites as none are within scope of the HRA.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air 	<p>The Plan area contains no areas designated or otherwise identified as having poor air quality. Additionally, the Local Plan does not allocate land for development purposes or include any other commitments that would lead to a deterioration in air quality. There will be significant effects on air quality as a result.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climatic factors 	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan area contains a stretch of the Bourne Brook, a tributary of the River Colne, and there are areas of land within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 associated with the watercourse. No development allocations are proposed within the Plan that may be located within any flood risk areas</p> <p>Policy GOS2: Low Energy and Energy Efficient Design addresses flood risk, requiring the design of multifunctional SuDS-based drainage systems of development proposals, that also where possible incorporate mitigation and</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>resilience measures for any increases in flood risk that may occur due to climate change. Adopted Local Plan policies on flood risk and climatic factors will additionally apply to any off-plan proposals that may come forward within the Plan area.</p> <p>It is therefore considered that SEA would not be required regarding matters of flood risk.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material assets 	<p>The Plan area contains land within a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) for sand and gravel as identified within the County Council’s adopted Minerals Local Plan. Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any land for development proposals or contain any commitments that are considered contrary to preserving the integrity of these deposits.</p> <p>The Plan area does not contain any existing or allocated sites for waste management facilities within the County Council’s adopted Waste Local Plan.</p> <p>Regarding other material assets, the content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not considered to have any significant effects due to the extent / size of the Plan area. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the LPA’s adopted Local Plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural heritage 	<p>The Plan area contains numerous Listed Buildings, a Conservation Area, and a Scheduled Monument. The Plan does not allocate land for development purposes that could have any effects on these listings or their settings. The Plan includes Policy GOS6: Non-Designated Heritage Assets, which sets out the parameters for development proposals affecting such assets.</p> <p>Policy GOS2: Low Energy and Energy Efficient Design includes a criterion (D) which sets out that, ‘the sensitive retrofitting of energy efficiency (including glazing) and</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>renewable energy generation measures that serve historic buildings will be encouraged having regard to the Essex Design Guide, including the retrofitting of listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas, provided it safeguards their historic character and setting.'</p> <p>Irrespective of the adequacy of the Plan's policy in the conservation and enhancement of the Plan area's heritage assets and their settings, policy regarding the protection and enhancement of the historic environment also exists at the LPA level which additionally applies in the Plan area. The effects on heritage are, as a result, considered a development management issue in the context of the Plan and its content. There are not considered to be any elements of the Plan that would give rise to significant effects on the historic environment at the strategic level that would require the full application of the SEA Directive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape 	<p>The parish is within South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area (NCA) and contains many features synonymous with this NCA's landscape character. The Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes.</p> <p>In light of the Plan not allocating land for development purposes and in consideration also of the requirements of development proposals in accordance with the adopted Braintree Local Plan, there are no significant strategic landscape effects identified within this Report that would warrant the requirement for the application of the SEA Directive and the formulation of a SEA Environmental Report.</p>
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects.</p>	<p>The Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes and therefore any negative cumulative effects can be ruled out.</p>
<p>The trans boundary</p>	<p>The adopted Braintree Local Plan can be seen to support the protection and improvement of conditions relevant to</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
nature of the effects.	those sustainability factors listed within the SEA Directive. The Neighbourhood Plan is broadly aligned with the principles of those wider thematic environmental policies. The HRA Screening element of this Report, which explores in-combination effects with other relevant plans and projects, also identifies no in-combination effects regarding Habitats (European) sites.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	It is considered that there is no risk to human health or the environment as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in consideration of the above screening requirements related to sustainability themes. The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to give rise to any accidents that can be considered to have a significant risk to human health or the environment.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local level only. The magnitude and spatial extent of the Plan’s content is therefore not considered significant in a wider District context. No effects are highlighted within this SEA screening at either the local or wider geographic area.
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage • exceeded environmental quality standards • intensive land use 	As highlighted above in the screening of the Neighbourhood Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has not been assessed as having negative effects associated with environmental themes.



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	As highlighted above in the screening of the Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has not been assessed as having any significant effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

4. HRA Screening

4.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

This section forms a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
- Assess the potential for in combination effects from other projects and plans in the area.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

4.2 Court Judgements and their consideration in this Report

4.2.1 CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site.

This HRA Screening Report does not therefore consider mitigation measures within the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2.2 CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

This Court judgement imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage:

1. [...] an 'Appropriate Assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.

2. [...] the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters

relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

3. [...] where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'Appropriate Assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

Within this Stage 1 HRA Screening report, the assessment determines the requirement whether or not a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is needed for the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

4.3 Habitats (European) Sites

Habitats sites is the term used in the revised NPPF (2024) to describe any site which would be included within the definition at Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the purpose of those regulations. These now form part of the UK national network of sites for nature protection. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of UK's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

All Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated for other species, and for Habitats. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also part of the National Network of sites. This is because all SPAs and SACs are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites make up the Habitats sites in England. The following offers a description and explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites.

4.3.1 Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds. Example: Abberton Reservoir SPA is one of the most important reservoirs in the country for overwintering waterfowl. Legislation: The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: Essex Estuaries SAC: The Mid-Essex Coast comprises an extensive complex of estuaries and intertidal sand and silt flats,

including several islands, shingle and shell beaches and extensive areas of saltmarsh. Legislation: The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl habitats. For example, Colne Estuary Ramsar site is important due to the extent and diversity of saltmarsh present. This site, and the four other sites in the Mid-Essex Coast complex, includes a total of 3,237 ha, that represent 70% of the saltmarsh habitat in Essex and 7% of the total saltmarsh in Britain. Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance.

Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed.

4.3.2 Habitats sites to be considered

There is only one Habitats site (SPA/SAC/Ramsar) which lie within 22 km of Gosfield.

Table 3: Habitats sites within 22km to be considered in this assessment

SPA
Abberton Reservoir
SAC
N/A
Ramsar
Abberton Reservoir

Consideration was given to potential impact pathways, Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for component SSSIs. The buffer was set at 22km as this is the recreational Zone of Influence (ZoI) for the Blackwater Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. However, the only Habitats sites listed in Table 3 are for Abberton Reservoir which is not considered by Natural England to currently be impacted by recreational pressure. Its IRZ as confirmed on MAGIC website www.magic.gov.uk is 5km and Gosfield parish lies outside this distance.

Therefore, after consideration of potential impact pathways, on a precautionary principle, it is concluded that none should be assessed for any likely significant effects resulting from the

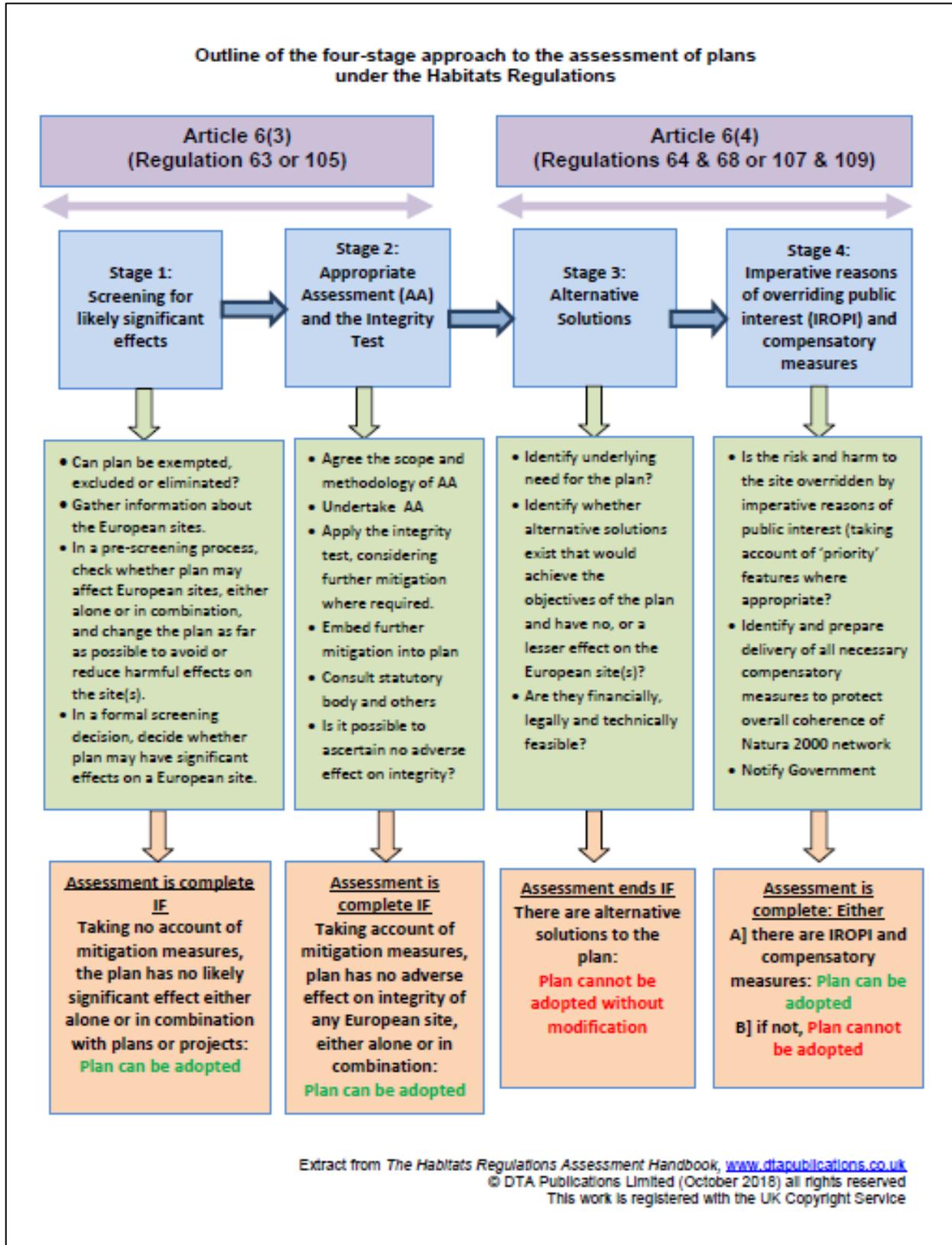
Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

No mitigation is considered necessary would need to be secured at application stage in line with policies in the adopted Braintree Local Plan as well any project level HRA Appropriate Assessment as the competent authority for planning decisions.

4.4 Method and Approach

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, which includes the need to undertake a HRA screening report; this is necessary to ensure the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a Habitats (European) site or a Habitats (European) offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This document relates only to Stage 1 of the HRA process as set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 2: Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations (taken from the DTA handbook).



4.4.1 Stage 1: HRA Screening

The screening stage identifies if any significant effects are likely because any policies or projects will have an impact on a Habitats site. Table 4 identifies the different categories assigned to each policy in the plan: Category A identifies those policies or projects that are considered to have No Negative Effect. Category B identifies those policies or projects that will have No Likely Significant Effect. Category C identifies those policies or projects that might have Likely Significant Effect upon a Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Section 4.5 considers each policy or projects and the results of the screening exercise recorded.

Each of the policies in the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan has been screened to identify whether they would have any effect on a Habitats site and allocated to a category as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Screening categorisation

<p>Category A: No negative effect</p> <p>Policies or projects that will not be likely to have any negative effect on a Habitats site.</p>
<p>Category B: No Likely Significant Effect</p> <p>Policies or projects that could have an effect but would not be likely to have a <i>significant</i> negative effect on a Habitats site alone or in combination. This conclusion could only be reached if the effects, even in combination and taking the precautionary principle into account, are considered trivial.</p>
<p>Category C: Likely Significant Effect</p> <p>Policies or projects which are predicted to have a likely significant effect on a Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and require revision or further assessment (Appropriate Assessment).</p>

4.4.2 Potential impacts of Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan on Habitats Sites

There are a wide range of potential impacts on Habitats sites that could arise from development plans. These can be summarised as -

- Land take by development;
- Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites may be relevant where development could result in effects on qualifying interest species within the Habitats site, for example through the loss of feeding

grounds for an identified species.

- Increased disturbance, for example from recreational use resulting from new housing development and / or improved access due to transport infrastructure projects;
- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of development and increased demands for waste water treatment, and changes in groundwater regimes due to increased impermeable areas;
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to increased traffic, waste management facilities etc. Pollution discharges from developments such as industrial developments, quarries and waste management facilities.

Each policy will be assessed against the criteria in the table below.

Table 5: Assessment of potential impacts on Habitats sites

Nature of potential impact	How the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
Land take by development	The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area is outside the boundaries of any Habitats site as there are none within scope of this HRA.	No likely significant effects are expected, as there is no development allocated on designated land. It is therefore, considered that impacts from land take by development can be screened out when considered from the Plan alone. As there will be no land take by development this impact pathway is screened out .
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area does not contain any land providing functional use by designated features of any Habitats site.	There is no risk of impacts on protected species outside of any Habitats site. It is therefore considered that this impact pathway will not result in likely significant effects upon any Habitats site from the Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, impacts on protected species outside the Habitats site from the Neighbourhood Plan alone

Nature of potential impact	How the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		on the Habitats sites can be this impact pathway is screened out .
Recreational pressure and disturbance	The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area lies further than 22km from the Blackwater Estuary as evidenced within the adopted Essex Coast RAMS so outside the Zone of Influence.	There is no risk of impacts from predicted recreational pressure on any Habitats site. It is therefore considered that this impact pathway should be screened out for further assessment as without mitigation, Likely Significant Effects from the Neighbourhood Plan resulting from recreational impacts on Habitats sites can be ruled out.
Water quantity and quality	There is no potential pathway for development within the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area to impact on any Habitats sites.	No likely significant effects are expected given the distance and no impact pathway, so changes in water quantity or quality have been screened out .
Changes in pollution levels	It is considered that there is no pathway for development to result in pollution impacts.	No likely significant effects are expected given the distance, so changes in air pollution have been screened out .

4.5 Results from HRA Screening of Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Each of the policies in the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan was screened in turn to identify whether they would have any impact on a Habitats site and the result of this exercise is recorded in the table below.

Table 6: Assessment of potential impacts from the Plan policies

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
<p>POLICY GOS1: WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>A. All development proposals should deliver a minimum of 10% net biodiversity gain in addition to protecting and enhancing existing habitats and species. Proposals to create or enhance existing green wildlife corridors are strongly encouraged.</p> <p>B. In particular, the incorporation of design features into new development that encourages local wildlife to thrive, is strongly encouraged.</p> <p>C. Development should be designed to retain trees, shrubs and hedgerows of arboricultural, habitat and amenity value on-site and to conserve and enhance connectivity to the wider multifunctional green infrastructure networks. Where this is accompanied by new planting, this should consist of native species of trees, shrubs and grasses acting as stepping stones for wildlife.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>
<p>POLICY GOS2: LOW ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN</p>	<p>A. Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, should demonstrate how the design of buildings and site layouts</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	<p>improves water efficiency and minimises consumption of energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources in order to provide resilience to the effects of climate change.</p> <p>B. The design and standard of any new development should aim to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction including measures which minimise waste reduction, re-use and recycle minerals, and use sustainable materials, including in relation to their procurement and be optimised for energy efficiency, targeting zero carbon emissions.</p> <p>C. All developments should demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. New development will be supported where it is designed and built to be Net Zero Carbon (in operation) having regard to Policy NZ1 set out in the Greater Essex Planning Policy Position for Net Zero Carbon Development . The following measures should be incorporated into development:</p> <p>a) Wherever possible, new buildings should be orientated to maximise the opportunities</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	<p>for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements;</p> <p>b) Proposals involving both new and existing buildings should demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, green walls, etc;</p> <p>c) The use of low embodied carbon materials, assessed through a Whole Life Cycle Carbon Assessment, should be prioritised. With regard to reducing upfront embodied carbon emissions from new development, reference should be made to the findings and recommended targets set out in the Essex Embodied Carbon Policy Study 2024 (or any successor document);</p> <p>d) New residential development should seek to meet a target standard of 100 litres per person per day (l/p/d);</p> <p>e) Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	<p>part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions; and</p> <p>f) All development should minimise surface water runoff to prevent off-site flooding through the design of a multifunctional SuDS-based drainage system, and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in flood risk that may occur due to climate change.</p> <p>D. The sensitive retrofitting of energy efficiency (including glazing) and renewable energy generation measures that serve historic buildings will be encouraged having regard to the Essex Design Guide, including the retrofitting of listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas, provided it safeguards their historic character and setting.</p>		
<p>POLICY GOS3: LOCAL GREEN SPACES</p>	<p>A. The area adjacent to Wendell Crescent shown on the Policies Map and in Figure 4.1 is designated as a Local Green Space:</p> <p>B. Development proposals</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	<p>within the defined Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances.</p>		
<p>POLICY GOS4: VERGES</p>	<p>A. Existing green verges along the highway should be retained and should only be removed if it is clearly demonstrated to be part of necessary highway improvements, including for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling routes. Any such improvements should incorporate opportunities for planting around the existing verges wherever practicable.</p> <p>B. The design of highways and verges to maximise biodiversity value will be supported.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>
<p>POLICY GOS5: DESIGN AND CHARACTER</p>	<p>A. Development should demonstrate high quality, safe design and layout which respects the local character of Gosfield. This includes the development of public buildings.</p> <p>B. In delivering high quality design, development proposals must demonstrate the appropriate use of design, layout, materials and features. The following principles should be considered as part of design proposals:</p> <p>a. Development should integrate with and enhance the form of its existing</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	<p>surroundings. In particular, the open aspect of the frontages to residential properties should be retained.</p> <p>b. Openness is a fundamental part of the character of Gosfield. Where appropriate a range of densities, house types and plot layouts along with public green spaces should be used to maintain this.</p> <p>c. Building heights and rooflines should provide diversity of frontage, scale and form, with building heights that reflect the prevailing height of surrounding buildings unless it can be demonstrated that a taller building could complement or enhance the local character.</p> <p>d. All connections should seek to be multifunctional in nature providing safe and convenient connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists within the development and to the surrounding countryside and key destinations.</p> <p>e. Parking to support residential uses should be provided within the development and should maximise use of permeable surfaces to ensure adequate drainage. Where on-street parking provision is to be made, this should have regard to the EPOA parking standards and</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
	<p>should demonstrate, through the parking and/or road layout how this minimises the impact on the safety of pedestrians and other road users.</p>		
<p>POLICY GOS6: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS</p>	<p>In considering proposals which involve the loss or alteration of a non-designated heritage asset, consideration will be given to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. whether the asset is structurally unsound and beyond feasible and viable repair (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect); or 2. the extent to which measures to sustain the existing use, or find an alternative use/user, have been investigated. 3. where a development proposal would result in the loss of, or harm to a non-designated heritage asset including its setting, a balanced judgement will be made as to the acceptability of the proposal having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. 	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>
<p>POLICY GOS7: ACCESS FOR WALKING, CYCLING AND</p>	<p>A. Access to the countryside will be promoted through the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the existing</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on a Habitats site?	Recommendations
HORSE RIDING	<p>Public Rights of Way (PROW) network, as defined on the ‘Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way’, provision of bridleways and the safety of users of rural roads and lanes. Any proposals impacting upon a PROW should have regard to ECC Development Management Policy DM11 (Public Rights of Way) to ensure the safety of users of rural roads and lanes.</p> <p>Any development which leads to the loss or degradation of any PROW should not be permitted in other than very special circumstances. Proposals to divert PROWs or cycleways should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community. Where possible, development should enhance PROWs by improving signage, existing routes and connectivity through the creation of new routes. In all cases it should seek to ensure that routes are suitable for those with disabilities.</p>		

4.5.1 Recommendations

There are no recommendations for the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan as they have all been assigned to Category A.

There will therefore be no need for any residential development subsequently coming forward under this Plan to be subject to a project level HRA. As such there is no requirement for this Plan to progress to Appropriate Assessment.



Given that the distance from the Plan area to the any Habitats site is further than 22km, there are no predicted effects from the Plan alone and no residual effects to consider in combination with other plans and projects.

There is therefore no need to identify any relevant plans or projects likely to result in a significant effect on Habitats sites in combination with the Plan. In the context of this HRA, there are no relevant plans or projects to be considered in combination with Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan can be considered to determine the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

Planning Practice Guidance on SEA of Neighbourhood Plans indicates that a strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where a Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for development; the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; or the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

The Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes and seeks to strengthen the protection and enhancement of assets at the local level and in a local context.

In consideration of the findings of this Screening Report, the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan can be **screened out** for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

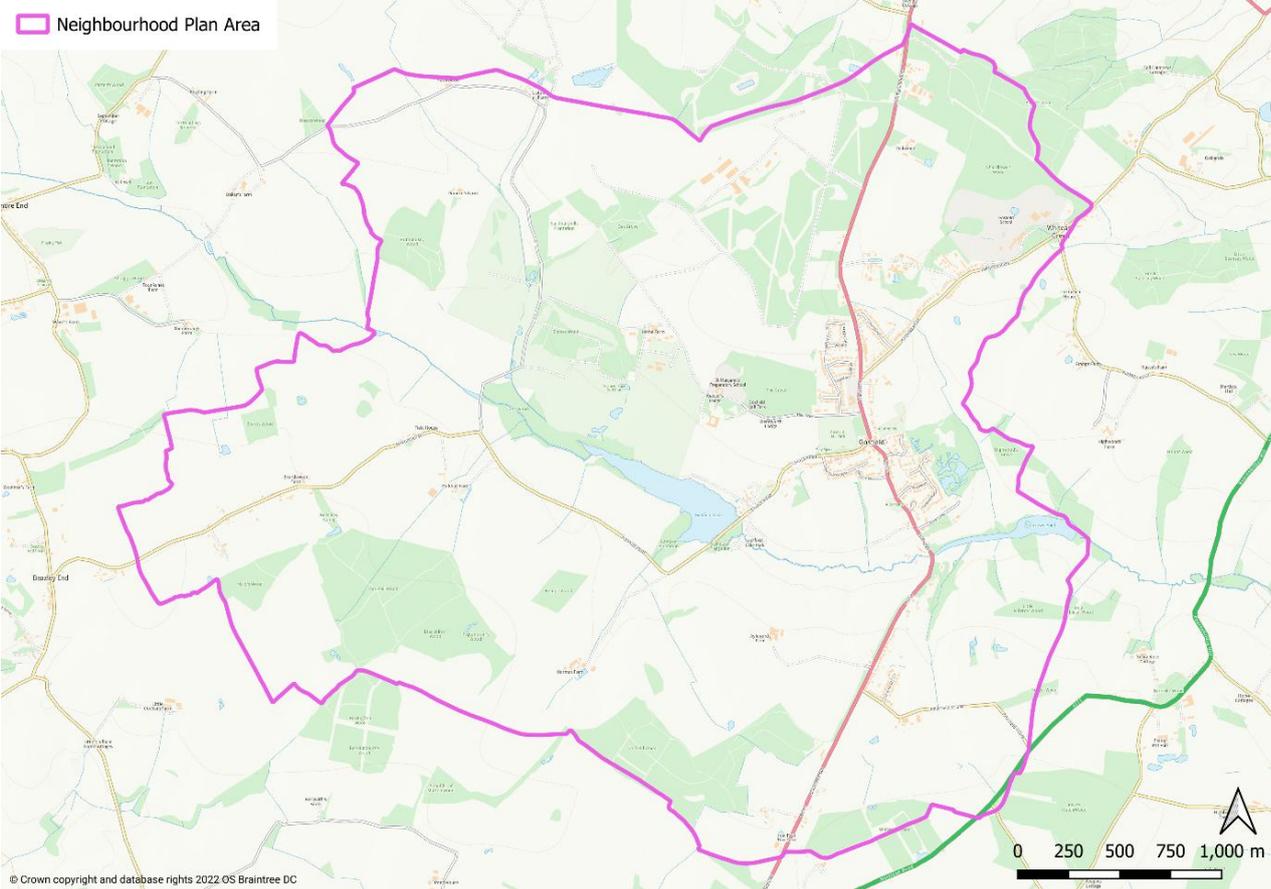
Subject to Natural England's review, this HRA Screening Report, indicates that, without mitigation embedded, the Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have Likely Significant Effect on the designated features of any Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) is therefore **screened out**.

6. References

- Braintree District Council Local Plan 2013-2033 (2022)
- Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version 2024
- Land Use Consultants (August 2019) HRA report for Braintree District Local Plan Section 2
- Land Use Consultants (May 2017) HRA Report for North Essex Authorities Shared Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans Pre-submission (Regulation 19)
- Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website:
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6581547796791296#content>
- Place Services (2018) Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Available at: **Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) – Braintree District Council**
- Place Services (2020) Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**.
- Tydlesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, (April 2022) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited (Accessed under licence October 2025)

Appendix 1

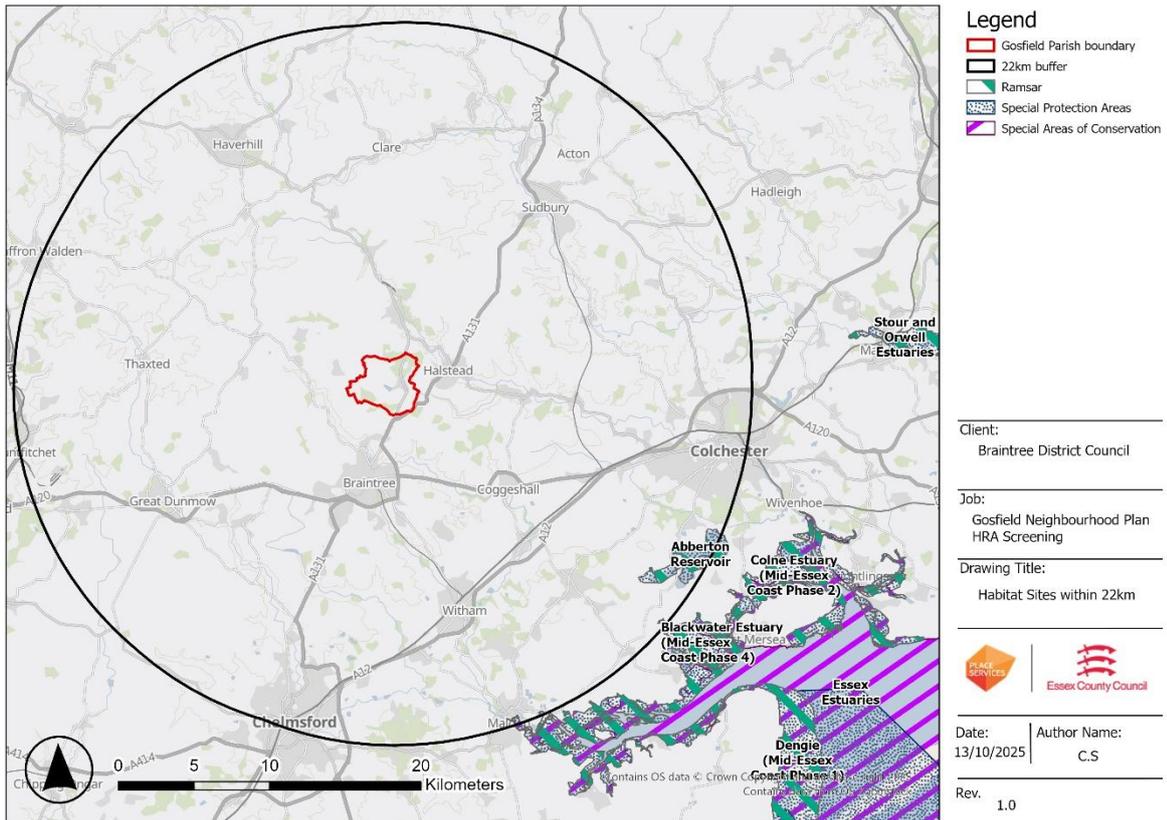
The Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area



Source: Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan (2024)

Appendix 2

Gosfield Neighbourhood Plan area & Locations of Habitats sites within 22 km



Source: Place Services (2025)



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