

# Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan

## Scoping Report

Prepared for: Hungerford Town Council

December 2023

## Quality information

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## Revision History

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Revision date</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
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V3	21.12.2023	Final for consultation	RC	Senior Environmental Planner

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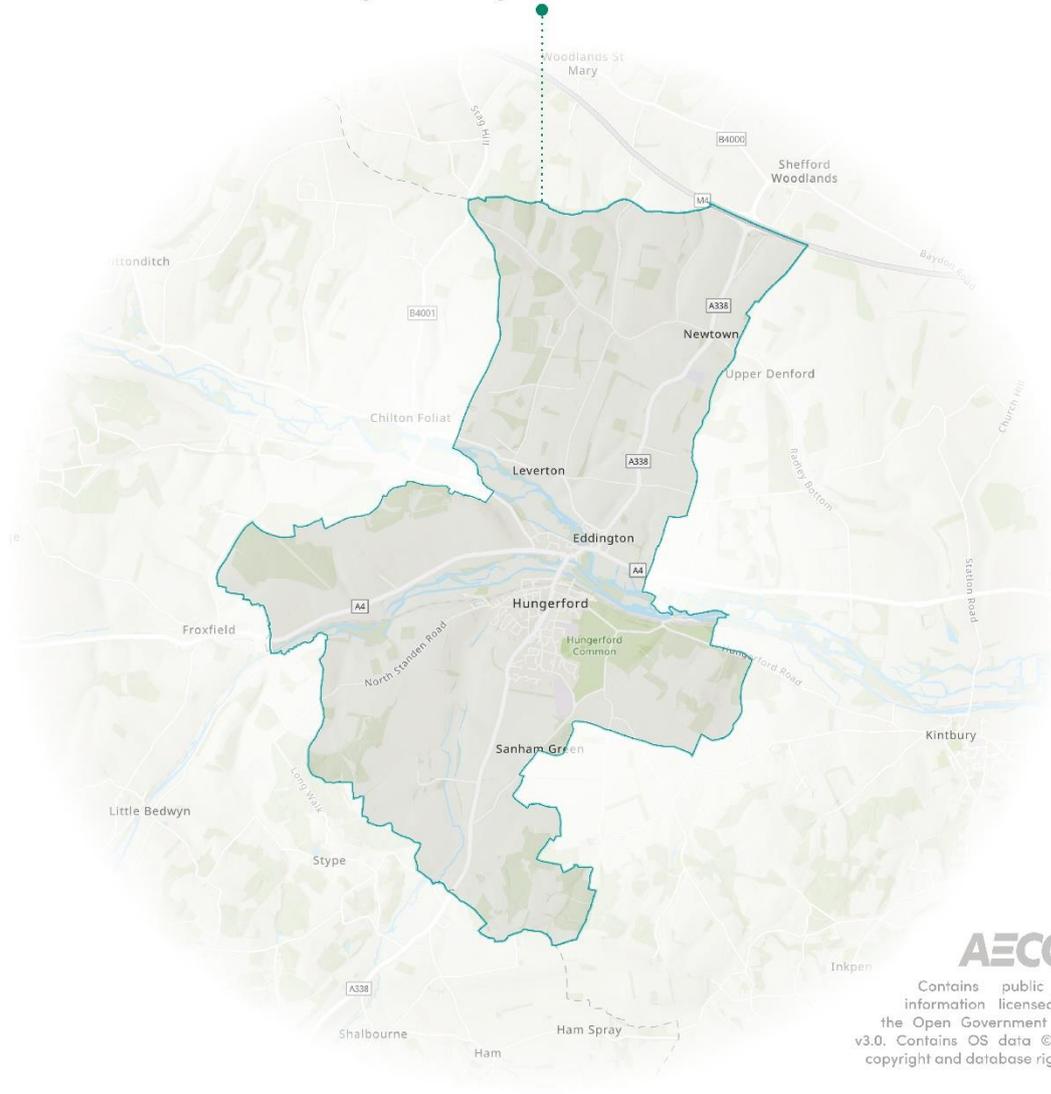
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### Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan Area



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West Berkshire



Great Britain



# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan (HNP).
- 1.2 The HNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of West Berkshire Council.
- 1.3 The neighbourhood area (see above), designated in April 2018, covers the parish of Hungerford in West Berkshire. Hungerford is located in the southwest corner of West Berkshire and is located directly west of Newbury and southeast of Swindon. The neighbourhood plan area is a predominantly rural landscape with the majority of the population living within the town of Hungerford, with the village of Eddington to the north.

## SEA explained

- 1.4 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, SEA seeks to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.5 SEA is undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).
- 1.6 The HNP has been screened for SEA by West Berkshire Council (October 2022), stating:  
  
*“SEA is required if the proposals in an emerging Plan are likely to result in significant effects on the environment. Given Hungerford’s location within the North Wessex Downs AONB and the presence of historic and nature conservations designations (eg. Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, Local Wildlife Sites, Special Areas of Conservation, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and because the NDP will include residential allocation(s), there is the potential for the NDP to have significant effects. Our initial view is that SEA will be required.”*
- 1.7 In light of the above, SEA is required to assess the potential for significant environmental effects.
- 1.8 The next stage of SEA (this report) seeks to establish a suggested scope for the assessment. A key procedural requirement of the SEA Regulations is to present this scope for the SEA, so that the designated authorities (Historic England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency) can provide timely comment.

## SEA scoping explained

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

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

1.10 The selected environmental themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive<sup>1</sup>. These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects.

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

1. Exploring the policy context for the neighbourhood plan and SEA to summarise the key messages arising. Overarching plans and the strategic policy context are presented in the first chapter (as part of the context for the plan), whilst localised plans and strategies are explored under each environmental theme.
2. Establishing the baseline for the SEA (i.e., the current and future situation in the area) to help identify key sensitive receptors. Following a series of maps, key statistics, and cited evidence sources, a narrative summarises the baseline for each environmental theme. The future baseline (in the absence of the plan) is explored in the first chapter (as part of the context for the plan).
3. Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA. Key issues are explored for each environmental theme; and
4. Considering this information, developing a SEA framework comprising SEA objectives and assessment questions, which can then be used as a guiding framework for the subsequent assessment. Objectives are explored for each environmental theme scoped in as part of the assessment, and then brought together as a whole (the SEA framework) in the final chapter.
5. Options and proposals within the emerging neighbourhood plan will be assessed consistently using this framework.

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<sup>1</sup> The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on 'the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'.

## 2. Context

2.1 This section presents the strategic planning policy context provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the local development framework of West Berkshire Council. It also identifies plans and strategies of distinct relevance to the interests of statutory consultees, and other broad national strategies of relevance. Finally, a narrative is provided which considers the future baseline.

### Strategic policy context

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</a>	2023
<a href="#">Planning practice guidance</a>	2021
<a href="#">West Berkshire Local Plan 2006-2026</a>	2012
<a href="#">West Berkshire Local Plan Review</a>	Emerging

2.2 The NPPF provides an overarching framework for development in England. It sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is supported by planning practice guidance, which is a suite of policy papers covering a broad range of topics, including SEA. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the NPPF.

2.3 The strategic policy context is also set by the adopted West Berkshire Local Plan 2006-2026, adopted in 2012. This consists of a number of development plan document (DPD), including the Core Strategy DPD and the Housing Site Allocations DPD. It also includes the saved policies<sup>2</sup> of West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006. The Core Strategy DPD defines Hungerford as a ‘Rural Service Centre’ and West Berkshire Council have set a housing requirement of 55 dwellings. There is a potential for up to 150 homes to be built, with the aim being to either deliver or exceed the 55 necessary, as allocated by West Berkshire Council.

2.4 West Berkshire are in the process of producing a new Local Plan, known as the West Berkshire Local Plan Review. The Local Plan Review will replace the current adopted Local Plan and will cover the period 2022 – 2039. Although the programme is delayed and it is expected to cover the period 2024-2041. The Local Plan Review was submitted in March 2023 to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination.

### Historic England

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">Historic England Advice Note 11 (Second Edition): Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment</a>	2022
<a href="#">Historic England: Heritage and Climate Change</a>	2022

<sup>2</sup> Saved policies by directive of the Secretary of State on 25 September 2007.

<a href="#">National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</a>	2021
<a href="#">National Model Design Code</a>	2021
<a href="#">The National Design Guide</a>	2019
<a href="#">Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal Designation and Management</a>	2019
<a href="#">A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</a>	2018
<a href="#">Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: The Setting of Heritage Assets</a>	2017
<a href="#">Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)</a>	2016

2.5 Historic England champions England’s heritage. The key high-level principles for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are as follows:

- The historic environment is a shared resource.
- Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.
- Understanding the significance of places is vital.
- Significant places should be managed to sustain their values.
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent; and
- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential<sup>3</sup>.

2.6 The significance of places is the key element which underpins the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Significance is a collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, be it a building, an archaeological site, or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape.

## Natural England and the Environment Agency

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide</a>	2023
<a href="#">UK Climate Change Risk Assessment</a>	2022
<a href="#">Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener</a>	2021
<a href="#">Environment Act</a>	2021
<a href="#">National Model Design Code</a>	2021
<a href="#">Changes to the Habitats Regulations 2017</a>	2021
<a href="#">The National Design Guide</a>	2019

<sup>3</sup> Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance

<a href="#">A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</a>	2018
<a href="#">Space for people: Targeting action for woodland access</a>	2017
<a href="#">Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance</a>	2009
<a href="#">The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations</a>	2017
<a href="#">Flood and Water Management Act 2010</a>	2010
<a href="#">Climate Change Act 2008</a>	2008

2.7 The interests of Natural England and the Environment Agency span a range of SEA themes, including landscape, biodiversity, land, soil, and water resources (including waste), community wellbeing, and climate change and flood risk. Key documents which link to these interests are outlined above.

## Other national strategies

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">UK Climate Change Risk Assessment</a>	2022
<a href="#">Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain</a>	2021
<a href="#">National Infrastructure Assessment</a>	2021
<a href="#">Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener</a>	2021
<a href="#">Waste Management Plan for England</a>	2021
<a href="#">Blueprint for a resilient economy</a>	2020
<a href="#">National Infrastructure Strategy</a>	2020
<a href="#">Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On</a>	2020
<a href="#">The UK Sixth Carbon Budget</a>	2020
<a href="#">The Clean Air Strategy</a>	2019
<a href="#">Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy</a>	2019
<a href="#">Planning Practice Guidance</a>	2019
<a href="#">Healthy High Streets</a>	2018
<a href="#">The National Adaptation Programme and the Third Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting</a>	2018
<a href="#">The Clean Growth Strategy</a>	2017
<a href="#">UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations</a>	2017

## Future baseline

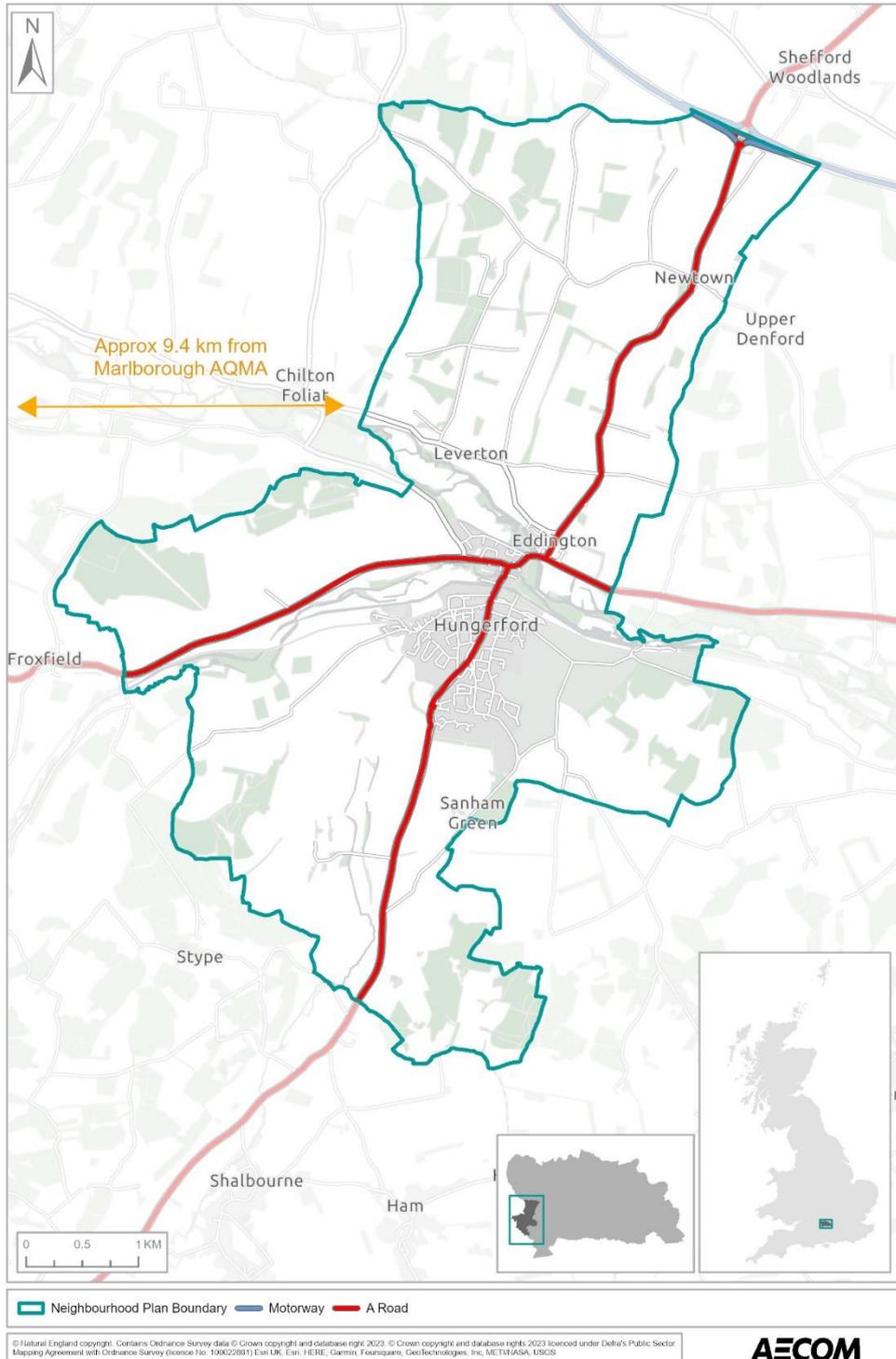
- 2.8 In the context of SEA, there is a need to consider the future baseline. The future baseline is the expected continuation and / or evolution of aspects of the baseline, based on what we know today. The future baseline is inevitably uncertain and predicted.
- 2.9 In the future, development (housing, employment, and wider infrastructure) will continue to come forward without a neighbourhood plan. This will either be allocated through the Local Plan, or speculatively through the planning system. In this respect a 'business as usual' approach means that development in line with Local Plan policies and the NPPF is likely to continue as a natural evolution of the baseline.
- 2.10 In accepting a 'business as usual' approach, we also accept that increases in absolute carbon emissions are likely to continue (in the absence of strategic, including global, action). A focus is therefore paid to per capita emissions, whereby planning can influence root behaviours and support lifestyle changes which have a recognisable and measurable localised impact.
- 2.11 It is assumed that development would be delivered alongside suitable, and widely accepted, mitigation in line with Local Plan and national policies. This would include sustainable drainage systems, efficiency standards, sequential and exception testing etc. More recently, it is recognised that a biodiversity net gain standard (10%) is being embedded in development standards nationally.
- 2.12 Furthermore, it is recognised that assets are afforded a level of protection, according to their significance, through the planning system (with internationally and nationally designated features afforded greater weight in planning decisions). It is assumed that existing national and local planning and policy protections will remain in the future as a key consideration for the development management process.
- 2.13 These assumptions will be considered throughout the assessment process, whilst recognising that uncertainty remains, and a precautionary principle will still be required.

### 3. Air quality

3.1 This section seeks to summarise any air pollution issues, in particular; exceedances in air pollution objectives / declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and air quality issues associated with the main road network.

#### Maps

**Figure 3.1: Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in proximity to the neighbourhood area**



## Key statistics

- There are no AQMAs within the Hungerford neighbourhood area or within close proximity of the neighbourhood area.
- The neighbourhood area is 9.4km from the nearest AQMA, Marlborough AQMA designated by Wiltshire Council.

## Key evidence sources

3.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [DEFRA UK AIR – Air Information Resource – AQMAs interactive map](#)
  - [AQMAs Declared by West Berkshire Council](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Council & West Berkshire Council – Air quality](#)
  - [Air Quality Annual Status Report 2023](#)

## Policy context

**Table 3.1: Additional plans and policies relating to air quality**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030</a>	2021
<a href="#">West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan 2006-2026</a>	2012
<a href="#">Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire 2011-2026</a>	2011
<a href="#">West Berkshire Environment Strategy 2020-2030</a>	2020

## Commentary

- 3.3 There are no AQMAs within the neighbourhood area, nor are there any in proximity. However, there are some AQMAs in place in surrounding areas. These include the Marlborough AQMA 10.6km west of the neighbourhood area, designated by Wiltshire Council in 2011 for exceedances in the air quality objective for NO<sub>2</sub> mirroring the Marlborough Town Council border. There are two other AQMAs of note and these are the Newbury AQMA designated in 2009 and West Berkshire Thatcham AQMA designated in 2011, 11.5km and 16km to the east of the neighbourhood area respectively. These were both designated by West Berkshire Council for exceedances of NO<sub>2</sub> air quality levels.
- 3.4 West Berkshire Council monitors one air pollutant – nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), linked to road network and vehicle usage. The latest Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), published in 2023, indicates there were no exceedances of the air quality objectives for this pollutant in the neighbourhood area.

## Key issues

- 3.5 The HNP is intending to allocate housing sites and these are likely to generate more trips by private car than would likely be the case in the absence of the Plan. This has potential to generate increased particulates and nitrogen dioxide.

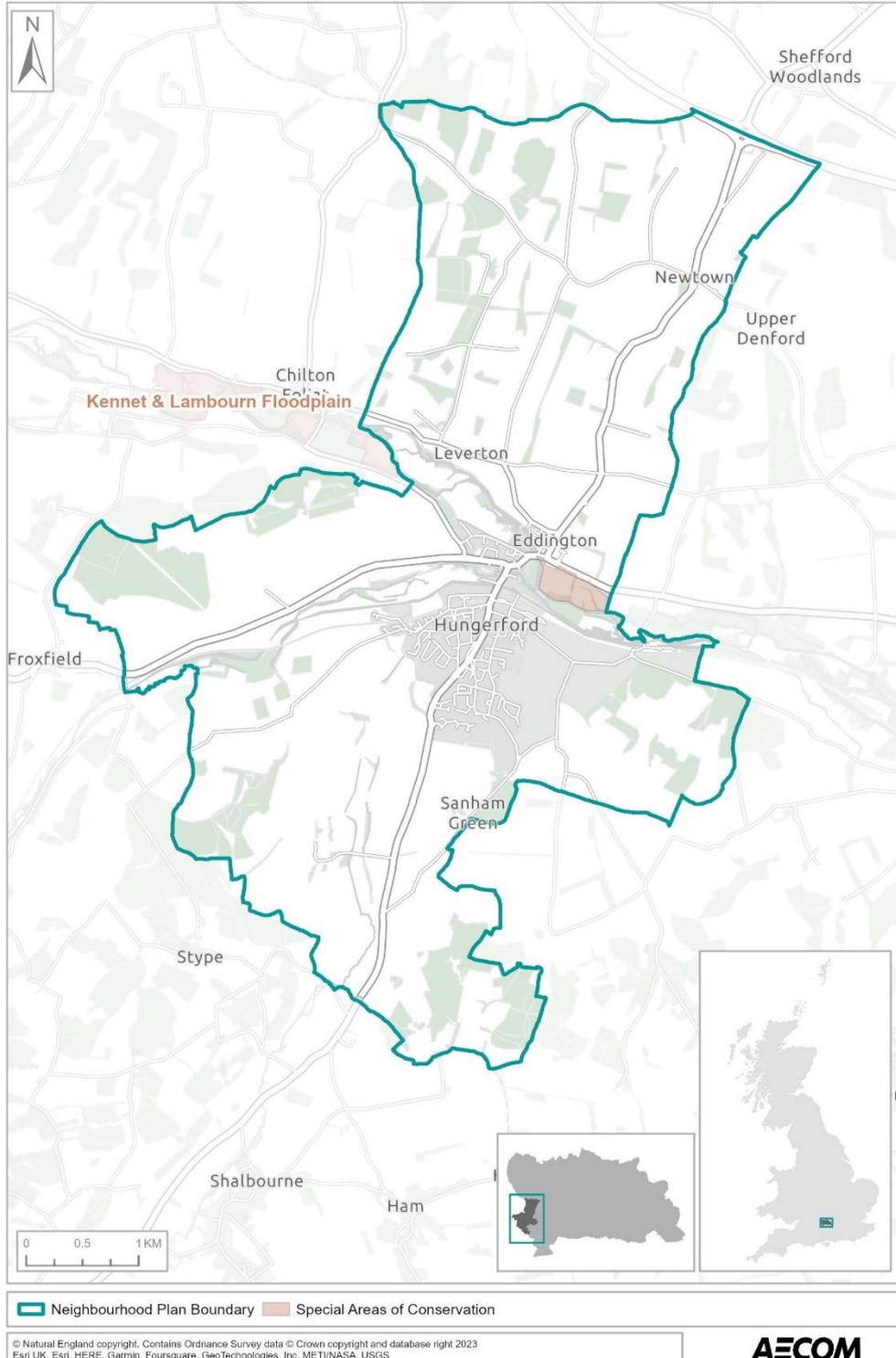
- 3.6 There are no AQMAs within or in proximity to the Hungerford neighbourhood area. The closest AQMA is the Marlborough AQMA, located approximately 9.4km west in Wiltshire.
- 3.7 Given the distance of the neighbourhood area from AQMAs, existing air pollution is at a low baseline and that the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to deliver a significant level of development, the potential for the HNP to lead to significant negative effects in relation to air quality is negligible. In combination with the fact that no air quality exceedances have been recorded within the neighbourhood plan area, this theme is **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA. This means that the plan will not be assessed for its performance against air quality objectives (given that no significant issues or opportunities are expected to arise through the HNP).
- 3.8 Nevertheless, positive planning could be beneficial for air quality through opportunities to improve accessibility, particularly in terms of active travel and encouraging more local journeys and sustainable connections. Therefore, opportunities which address issues such as accessibility and sustainable communities whilst also enhancing air quality are encouraged.

# 4. Biodiversity and geodiversity

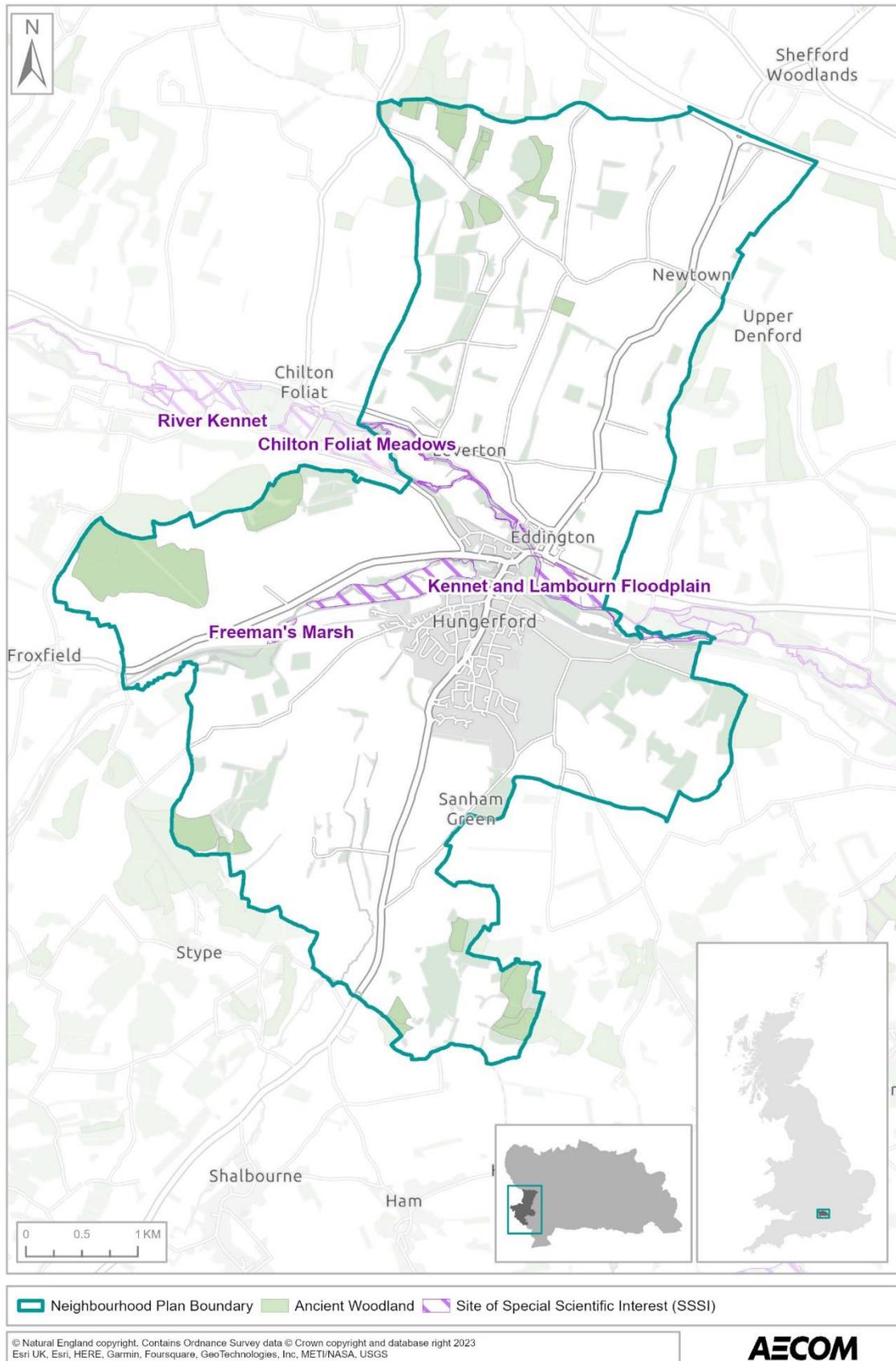
4.1 This section seeks to summarise nature conservation designations, habitats and species within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

## Maps

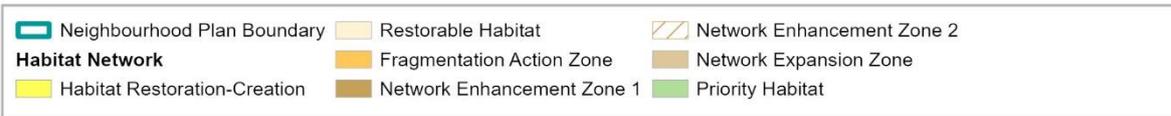
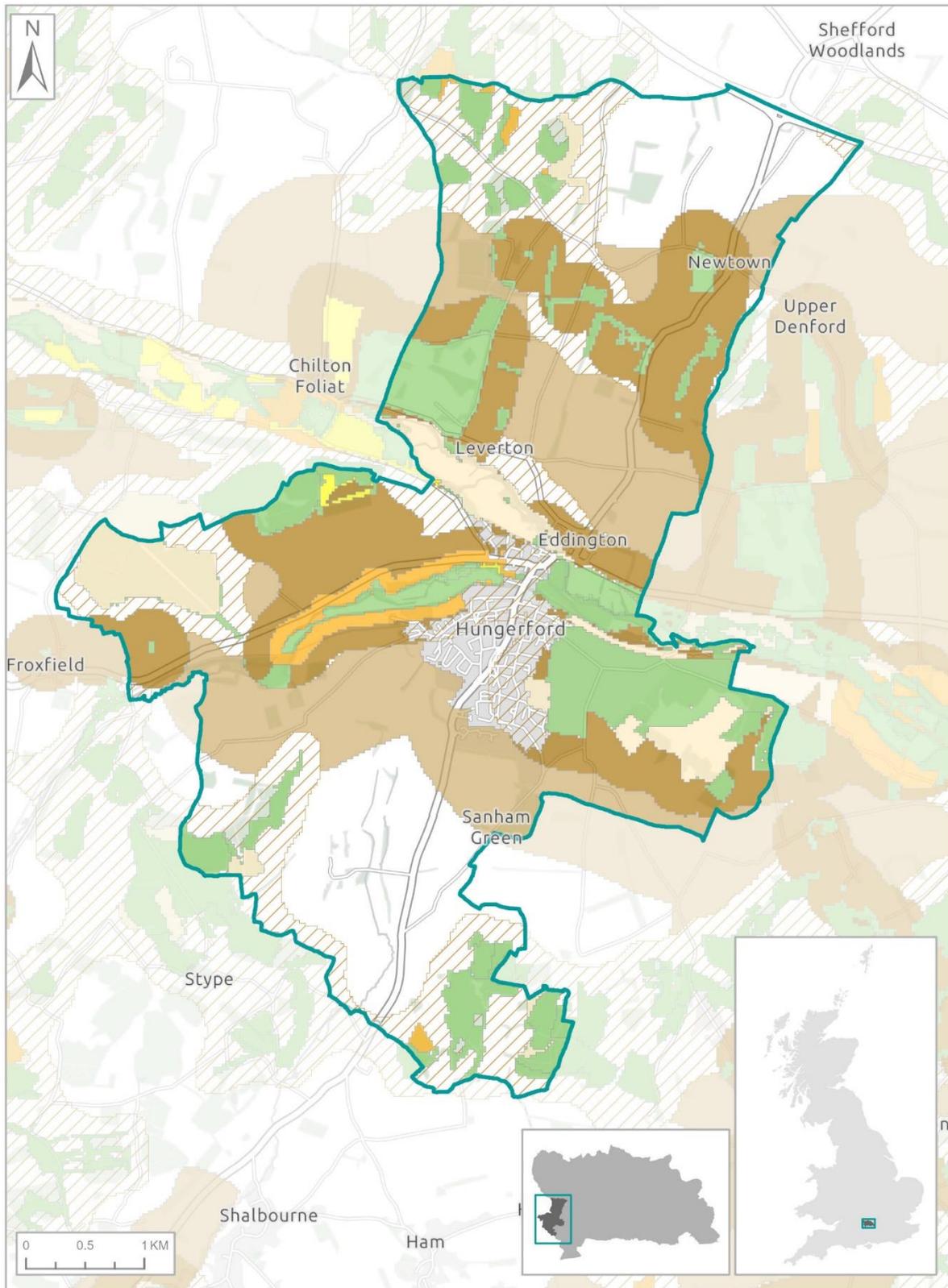
**Figure 4.1: Internationally designated sites for biodiversity in the neighbourhood area**



**Figure 4.2: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and ancient woodland in the neighbourhood area**



**Figure 4.3: Priority habitat within the neighbourhood area**



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## Key statistics

- The Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC is within the neighbourhood area and Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC is in proximity to the neighbourhood area (3.4km).
- There are 2 SSSIs within the neighbourhood area. These are Freeman's Marsh SSSI, which is 100% unfavourable-recovering, and Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SSSI which is 66.67% favourable and 33.33% unfavourable-no change.
- There are small areas of ancient woodland in the neighbourhood area, in proximity to the borders of the area.

## Key evidence sources

4.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [West Berkshire Online Map](#)
- [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre \(TVERC\)](#)
  - [Local Wildlife Sites in West Berkshire 2023](#)
- [Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(JNCC\)](#)
  - [Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC](#)
  - [Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC](#)
- [Natural England](#)
  - [National Habitat Network Maps](#)
  - [Protected sites and species](#)
  - [Wildlife and habitat conservation](#)
  - [SSSI Citation – Freeman's Marsh](#)
  - [SSSI Citation – Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain](#)
  - [SSSI Citation – Chilton Foliat Meadows](#)
  - [SSSI Citation – Catmore and Winterly Copses](#)

## Policy context

**Table 4.1: Additional plans and policies relating to biodiversity and geodiversity**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#"><u>West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan 2006-2026</u></a>	2012
<a href="#"><u>West Berkshire Biodiversity and Geodiversity Core Policy</u></a>	2012
<a href="#"><u>West Berkshire Green Infrastructure Core Policy</u></a>	2012
<a href="#"><u>West Berkshire Environment Report 2020-2030</u></a>	2020
<a href="#"><u>River Lambourn SAC Conservation Objectives</u></a>	2014
<a href="#"><u>Kennet and Lambourn SAC Conservation Objectives</u></a>	2014
<a href="#"><u>Hackpen Hill SAC Conservation Objectives</u></a>	2014

## Commentary

- 4.3 There is one internationally designated site for biodiversity in the neighbourhood area, the **Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC** (112.24 hectares). The floodplain is a unique site for one of the most extensive known populations of *Vertigo moulinsiana* in the UK. The SAC is made up of 59% bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens, 40% humid grassland and mesophile grassland and 1% inland water bodies. The area faces high level pressure from modification of cultivation practices inside the area and high level pressure both inside and outside the area from pollution to groundwater and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions. There are also high levels of positive impacts inside the area from annual and perennial non-timber crops, modification of cultivation practices, grazing and forest and plantation management and use.
- 4.4 The **Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC** (57.29 hectares) is located 3.4 km to the east of the neighbourhood area. The area is of significance as the largest fragments of alder-ash woodland on the Kennet floodplain, lie on alluvium overlain by a shallow layer of moderately calcareous peat. The wettest areas are dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa* over tall herbs, sedges and reeds, but dryer patches include a base-rich woodland flora with much dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and also herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*. The SAC is made up of 100% broad-leaved deciduous woodland. The area faces high level pressure from interspecific floral relations within the area, as well as from human induced changes in hydraulic conditions both inside and outside of the area. However, there are high level positive impacts inside the area from modification of cultivation practices, as well as forest and plantation management and use.
- 4.5 There are two nationally designated SSSIs within the neighbourhood. Firstly, is **Freeman's Marsh SSSI** (27.7 hectares) which is an area of unimproved meadows, marsh and reedbed situated just west of Hungerford. There is a great diversity of habitats including willow carr, scrub, woodland and open water which supports rich plant and animal communities and is an important site for breeding, wintering and passage birds. Freeman's Marsh is in a 100% favourable condition. The **Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SSSI** (22.9

hectares) has extensive areas of the nationally rare and declining Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* favoured habitat which is long-established fen or swamp, usually dominated by pond sedges *Carex acutiformis* and *C. riparia*, and reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, often with scattered tussock sedge *Carex paniculata* and common reed *Phragmites australis*. This type of vegetation occurs alongside permanently wet ditches, in wet hollows, alongside streams and runnels and, in places, along the margins of the Kennet and Lambourn rivers. Eddington Marsh, which is within the neighbourhood area, is one of the largest surviving examples of agriculturally unimproved pasture in the Kennet Valley supporting species-rich grassland. This grassland type is particularly rare and is confined to calcareous river valleys in southern England.

- 4.6 There are two SSSIs within a 2km buffer of the neighbourhood area. These are the **Chilton Foliat Meadows SSSI** and the **Catmore and Winterly Copses SSSI**. Chilton Foliat Meadows (24.46 hectares) is approximately 0.9km from the neighbourhood area. It comprises an extensive system of wet neutral meadows, watercourses, tall fen vegetation and scrub. The site supports a diverse flora and a variety of birds, the meadows being one of the most important areas in the county for breeding waders. Chilton Foliat Meadows is in a 100% unfavourable – no change condition. The Catmore and Winterly Copses SSSI (24.46 hectares) is approximately 1.6km from the neighbourhood area and is a site of old coppice-with-standards woodland, situated mainly on clayey Reading Beds soils, and supporting a rich flora. The wood consists predominantly of hazel coppice under a canopy of oak standards. Depending on local variations in soil and drainage, some areas also contain overgrown coppiced ash and birch and, more locally, alder, maple, aspen, cherry, willow and crab apple. Catmore and Winterly Copses SSSI is in a 100% favourable condition.
- 4.7 There is some ancient woodland in the neighbourhood area, which can be found primarily along the borders of the area.
- 4.8 There are 8 Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) in the area according to the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). These are located around the borders of the Hungerford neighbourhood area, some of which cross the border into surrounding areas.
- 4.9 Land defined as Priority Habitat can be found across all of the neighbourhood area, except for in the south of the area. There are three primary areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, with one just northwest of the settlement of Hungerford and the other two to the south. There is a medium sized area of lowland calcareous grassland to the north of the neighbourhood area. There are lowland meadows running through the centre of the neighbourhood area, as well as some lowland fens, and reedbeds in the centre. There are areas of deciduous woodland across the entire neighbourhood area but concentrated more heavily in the north. There are a few areas of traditional orchard within the neighbourhood area. There is large areas of woodpasture and parkland in the east of the neighbourhood area as well as the northwest. Much of the north and the centre of the neighbourhood area is Network Enhancement Zone 1 and 2.

## Key issues

- 4.10 The NP should seek to protect the SSSIs and SACs within and surrounding the neighbourhood area, utilising opportunities for biodiversity net-gain to recover these designations.
- 4.11 There are areas within the Hungerford neighbourhood area that present an opportunity to enhance biodiversity value and connectivity. The HNP should take advantage of these opportunities where possible to secure biodiversity net-gain in line with national policy.
- 4.12 The HNP presents an opportunity to improve biodiversity and geological quality in the neighbourhood area by encouraging development to incorporate biodiversity net-gain techniques and features. Furthermore, the HNP could encourage the creation and / or recovery of habitats in identified Network Enhancement Zones and Network Expansion Zones, which will bring biodiversity benefits to the neighbourhood area and within its setting.

## SEA objective

- 4.13 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

### SEA theme

### SEA objective

Biodiversity and  
geodiversity

Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

- 4.14 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

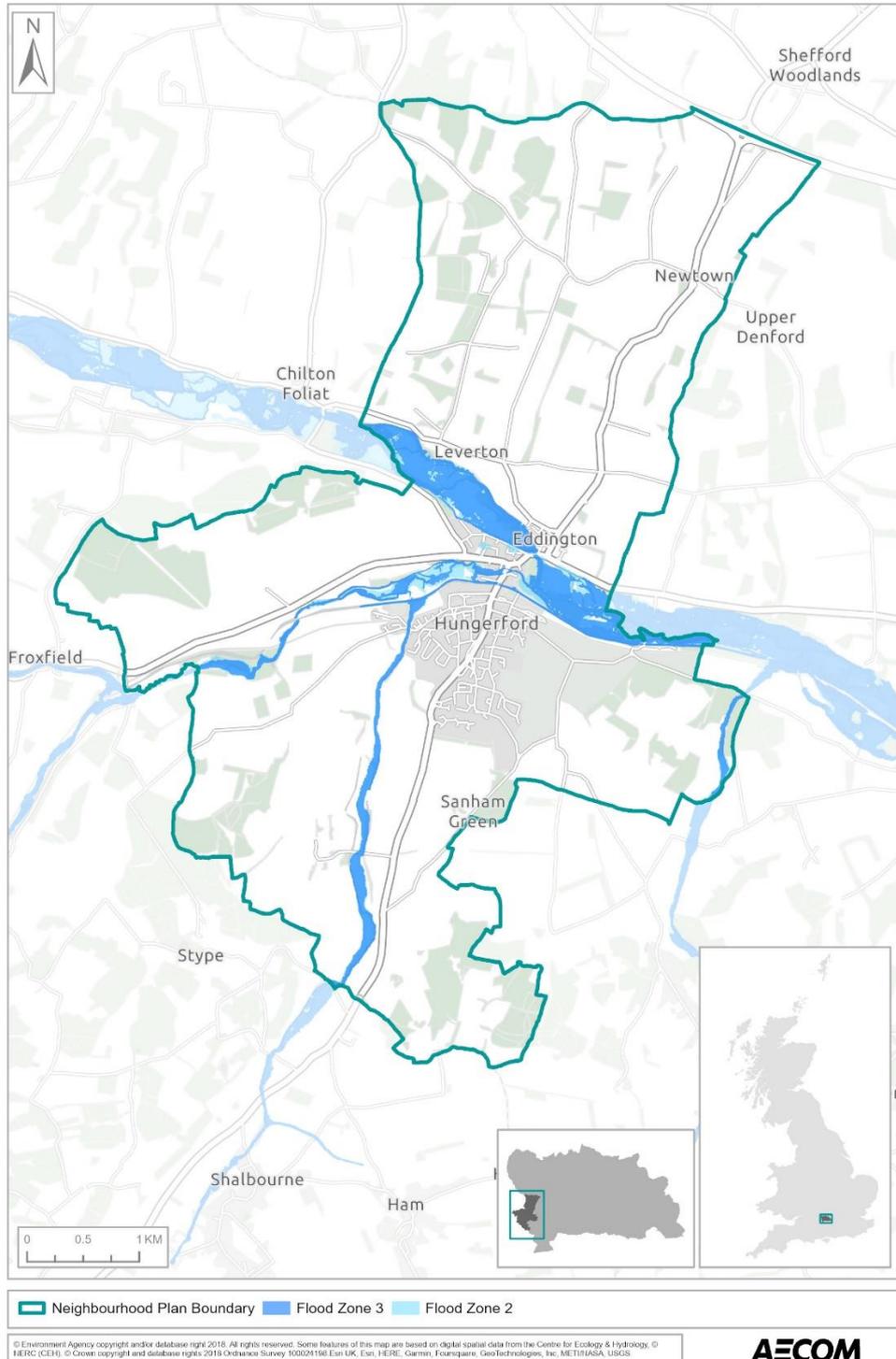
- Protect and enhance nationally and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites?
- Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species, including ancient woodland?
- Achieve biodiversity 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?
- Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?

# 5. Climate change and flood risk

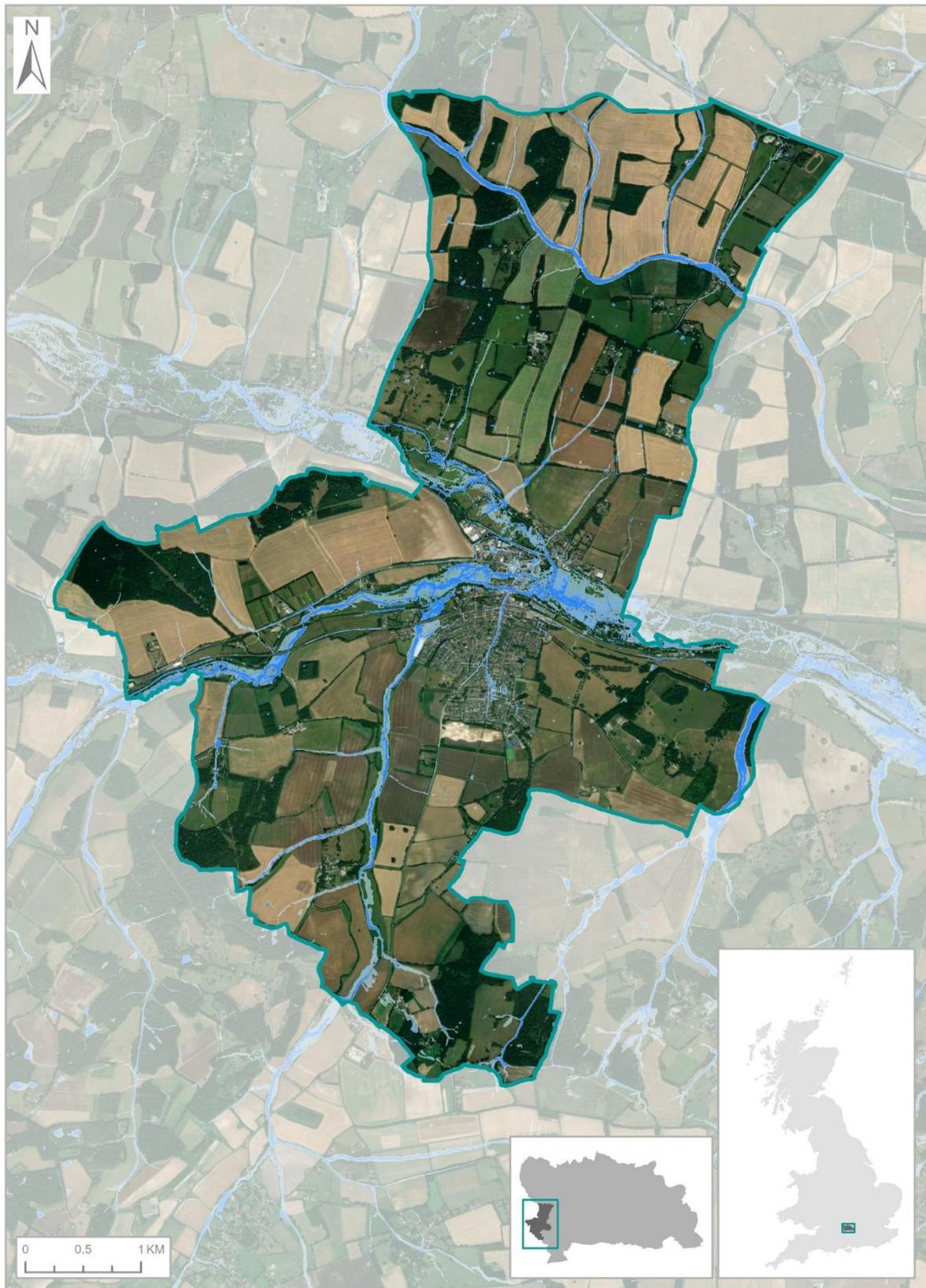
5.1 This section seeks to summarise existing and future flood risk and the wider impacts of climate change, activities in the district which contribute to climate change, and measures to mitigate the effects of climate change and increase resilience.

## Maps

Figure 5.1: Fluvial flood risk in the neighbourhood area



**Figure 5.2: Surface water flood risk in the neighbourhood area**

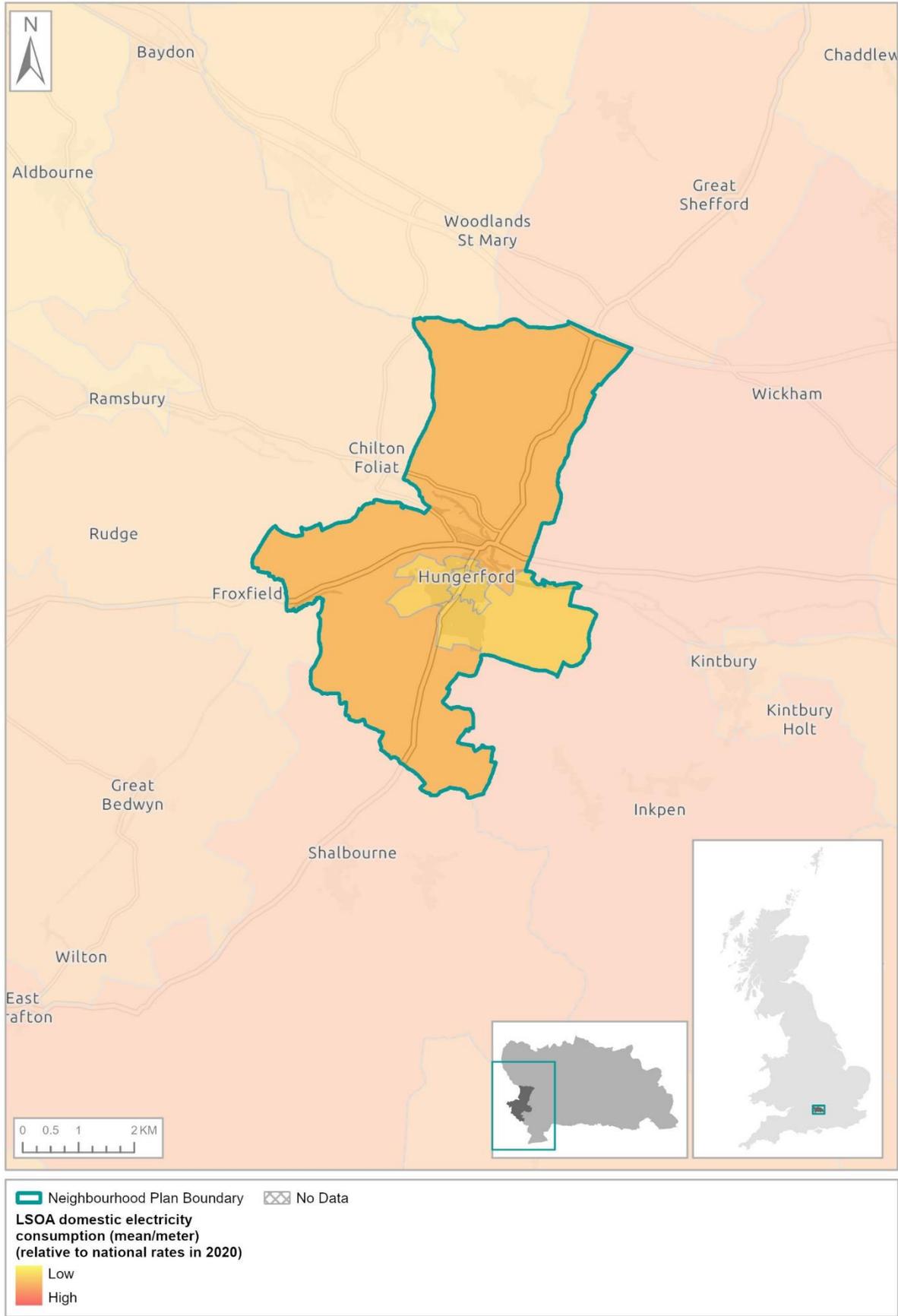


Neighbourhood Plan Boundary    RoFSW (basic) 1 in 100 Years  
RoFSW (basic) 1 in 30 Years    RoFSW (basic) 1 in 1000 Years

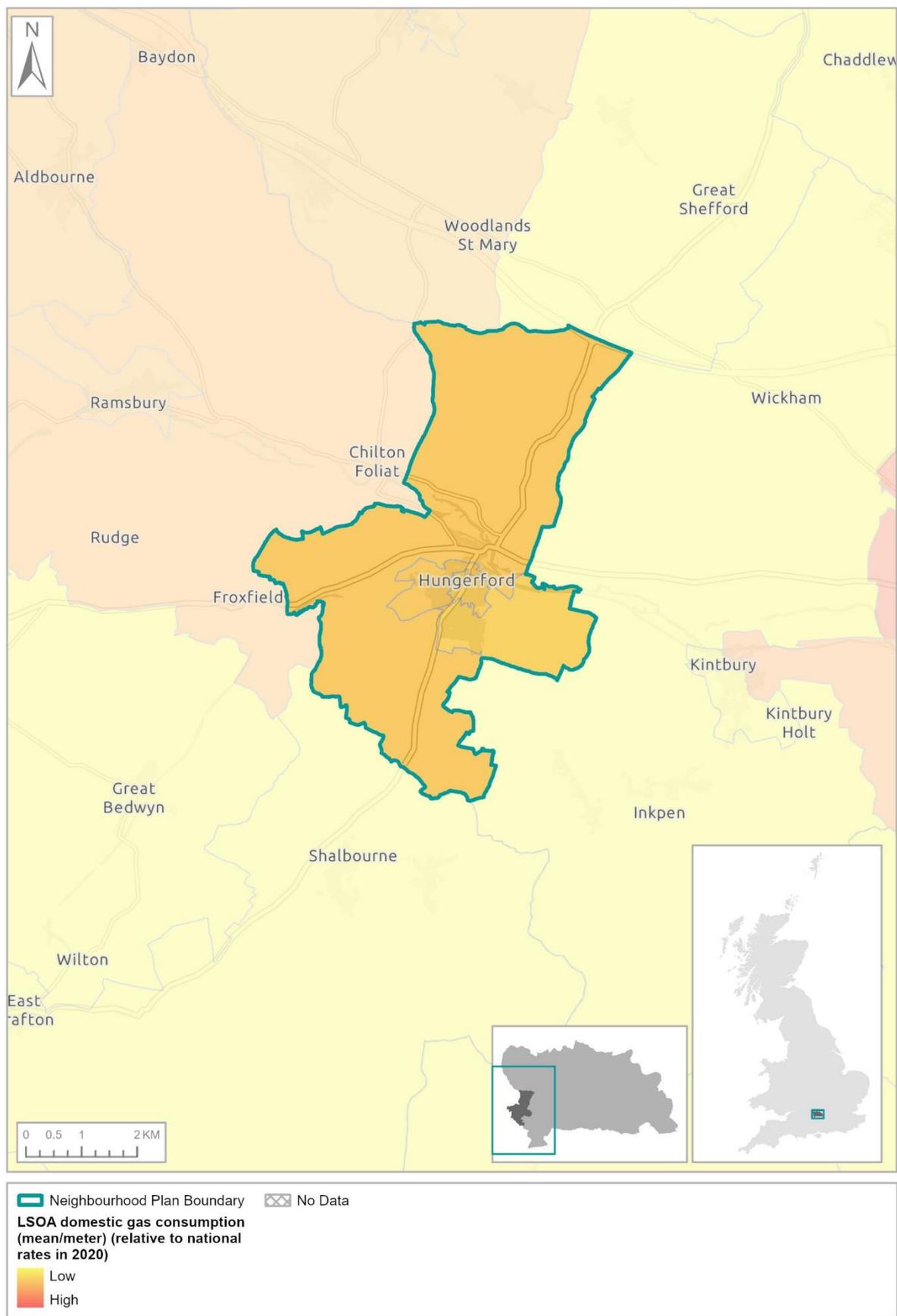
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**Figure 5.3: Domestic electricity consumption (2020) in the neighbourhood area**



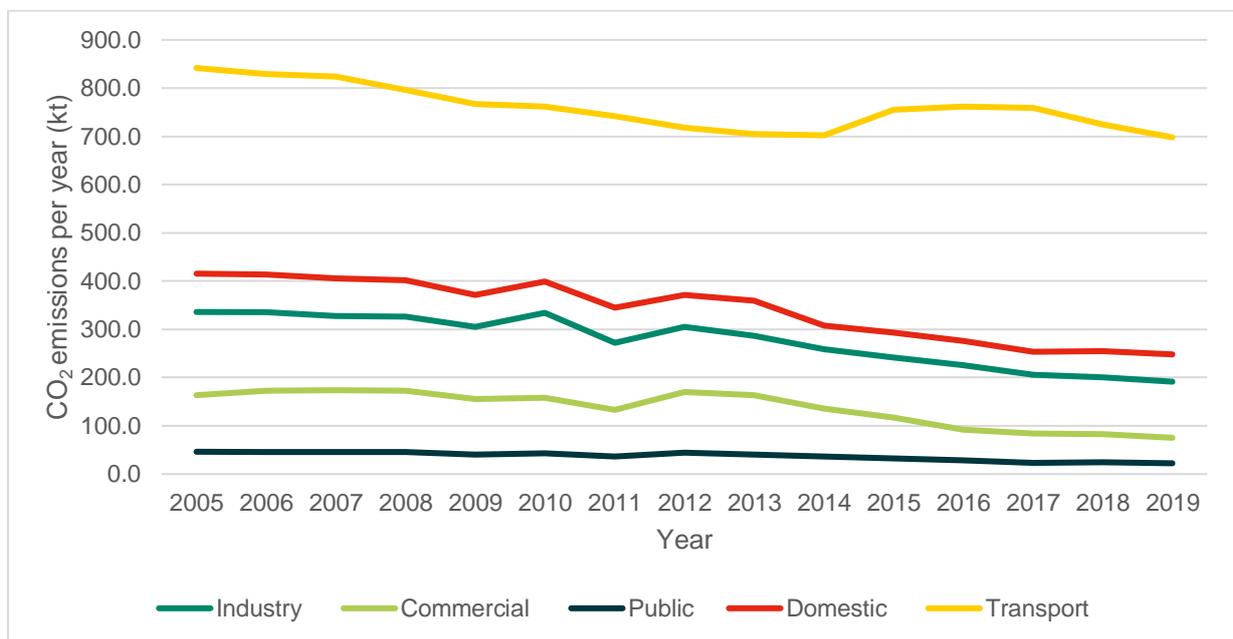
**Figure 5.4: Domestic gas consumption (2020) in the neighbourhood area**



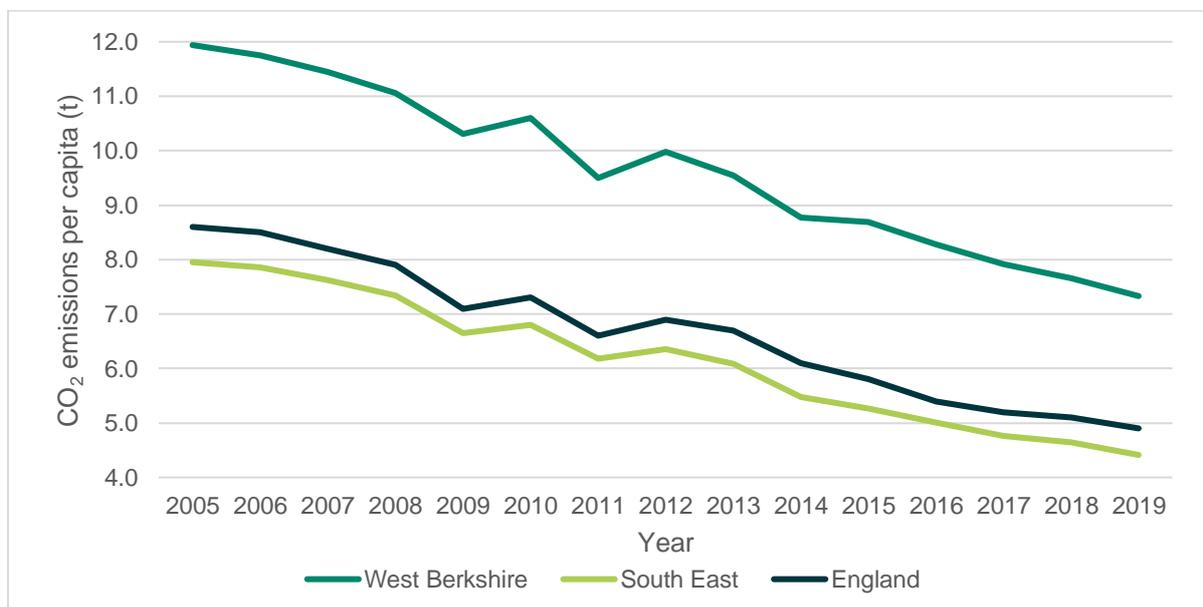
## Key statistics

- The biggest contributor to carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions in West Berkshire over the past 14 years has been the transport sector. However, it is noted this sector has experienced an overall decrease in emissions between 2005 and 2019.
- West Berkshire produces more than 1.5 times CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita compared to the regional and national averages.
- Total emissions in West Berkshire have decreased from 1749 kilotons (kt) CO<sub>2</sub> in 2005 to 1161.5 kt CO<sub>2</sub> in 2019 – a 1,644.3 kt CO<sub>2</sub> reduction over 14 years.

**Figure 5.5: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in kilotons per year for each sector in West Berkshire**



**Figure 5.6: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita (in tons) for West Berkshire, the South East, and England**



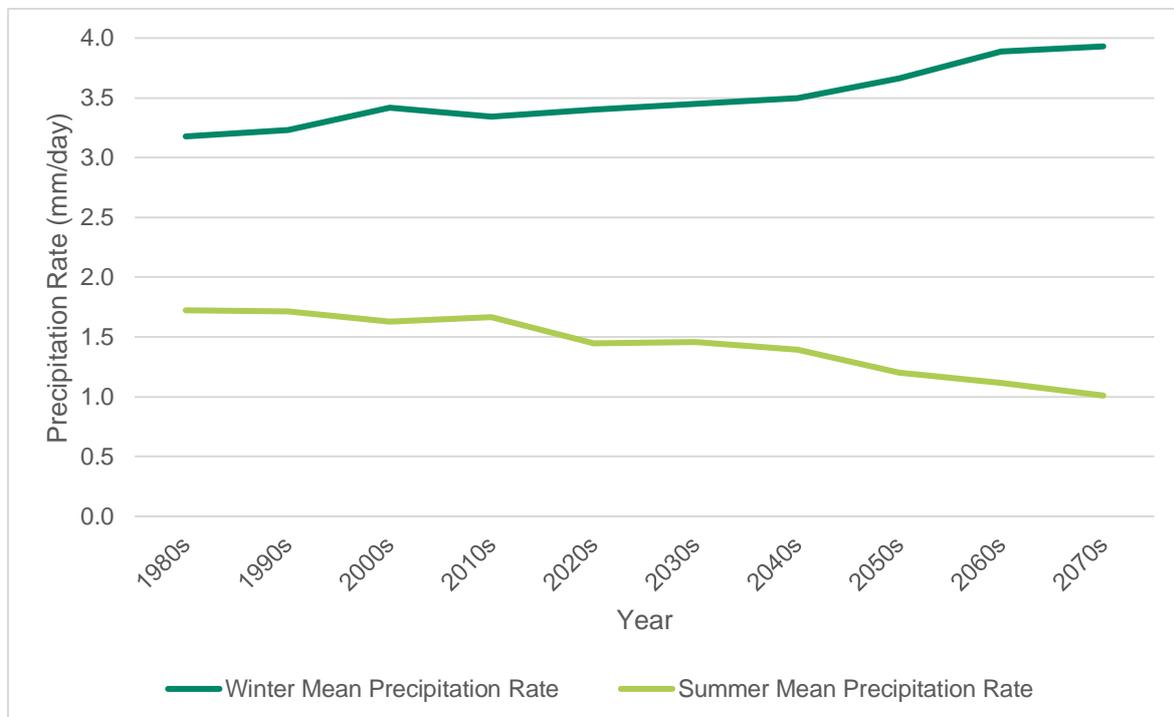
5.2 **Table 5.1** below indicates that under a ‘business as usual’ (i.e., ‘do nothing’) scenario:

- There could be a 3.12°C increase in mean average winter air temperatures between 1981 and 2080, and an increase of 4.4°C in summer air temperatures over the same period.
- By the 2061-2080 period there could be a 0.72 mm / day increase in winter precipitation compared to the 1981-2000 baseline, and a 0.66 mm / day decrease in summer precipitation.
- Winter mean relative humidity could decrease by 0.66%, and summer humidity by 9.19% between 1981 and 2080.

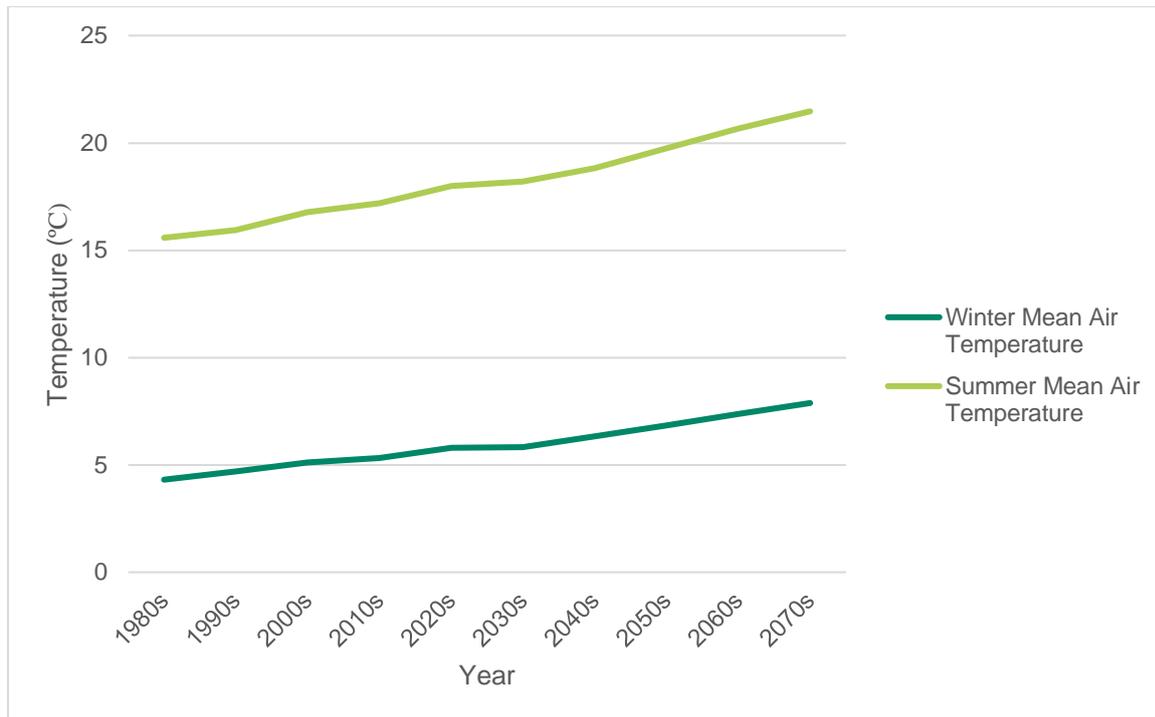
**Table 5.1: Average changes in climate variables during winter and summer periods for the South East region under the ‘business as usual’ climate model**

Period	Mean Average Air Temperature (°C)		Mean Precipitation Rate (mm/day)		Mean Relative Humidity (%)	
	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer
1981-2000	4.54	15.81	3.22	1.71	87.48	74.27
2021-2040	5.81	18.12	3.42	1.46	87.16	69.95
2061-2080	7.66	21.15	3.94	1.05	86.82	65.08

**Figure 5.7 The change in mean precipitation rate (mm / day) for winter and summer months in the South East region (1980s - 2070s)**



**Figure 5.8 The change in mean air temperature (°C) for winter and summer seasons in the South East region (1980s - 2070s)**



## Key evidence sources

5.3 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [Check the long-term flood risk for an area in England](#)
- [West Berkshire Council Website](#)
  - [West Berkshire Online Map](#)
- [Environment Agency’s Flood risk information for planning in England](#)
- [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP\)](#)
- [UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019](#)

## Policy context

**Table 5.2: Additional plans and policies relating to climate change and flood risk**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">West Berkshire Environment Strategy 2020-2030</a>	2020
<a href="#">West Berkshire Environment Strategy Delivery Plan 2020-2030</a>	2023
<a href="#">West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2022-2027</a>	2021

## Commentary

- 5.4 Alongside the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplains which is just north of Hungerford and runs through the centre of the neighbourhood area, there is a large area of Flood Zone 2 and 3. The area adjacent to the River Dun is also Flood Zone 2 and 3 area, the River Dun also impacts upon surface water flood risk along its course, due to water drainage into the river – with areas directly adjacent to the watercourse at a higher risk. Additionally, due to the drainage pattern of the neighbourhood area, which flows primarily directly into the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain, there are some small areas within the neighbourhood area that are at medium level risk of surface water flooding.
- 5.5 Domestic electricity consumption in the neighbourhood area is broadly in line with the national average (see **Figure 5.3** above), as is domestic gas consumption (see **Figure 5.4** above).
- 5.6 In line with the UK Government's target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, a climate emergency was declared by West Berkshire Council in July of 2019. The Environment Strategy identifies the need to reduce carbon emissions and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and sets out actions and opportunities that should be engaged with.

## Key issues

- 5.7 Large sections of the neighbourhood area, specifically those adjacent to water bodies are at high risk of flooding, falling into Flood Zone 3. However, these are largely concentrated to the areas adjacent to rivers, as well as the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplains, which runs through the centre of the neighbourhood area. New development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to exacerbate flood risk if it is built within and in proximity to areas at higher risk of fluvial and surface water flooding. Development should be focused away from these areas where possible.
- 5.8 It is likely CO<sub>2</sub> emissions originating from the neighbourhood area will increase as the population grows. It will be important for new development to adopt best building practices to limit the increase in emissions, such as using sustainable materials and incorporating renewable energy infrastructure.
- 5.9 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with the transport sector remain higher than other sectors in West Berkshire. This highlights the importance of accessible development and the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure. The HNP can seek to address this locally, particularly by strengthening active travel routes and opportunities to increase self-containment.

## SEA objective

5.10 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
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.

5.11 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

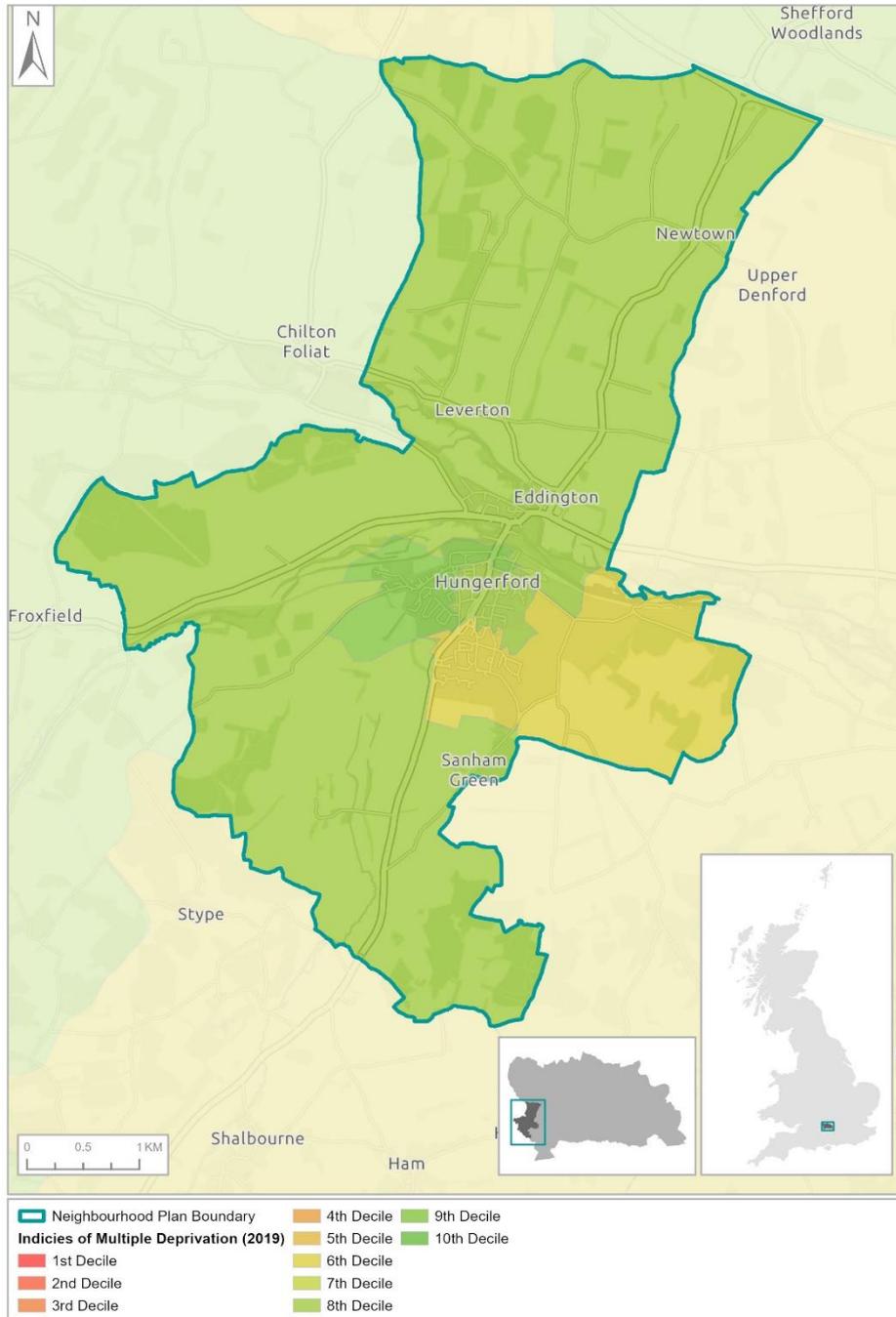
- Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?
- Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure?
- Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?
- 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?
- Avoid development in areas at risk of fluvial flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change?
- Sustainably manage water run-off, and reduce runoff where possible?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

# 6. Community wellbeing

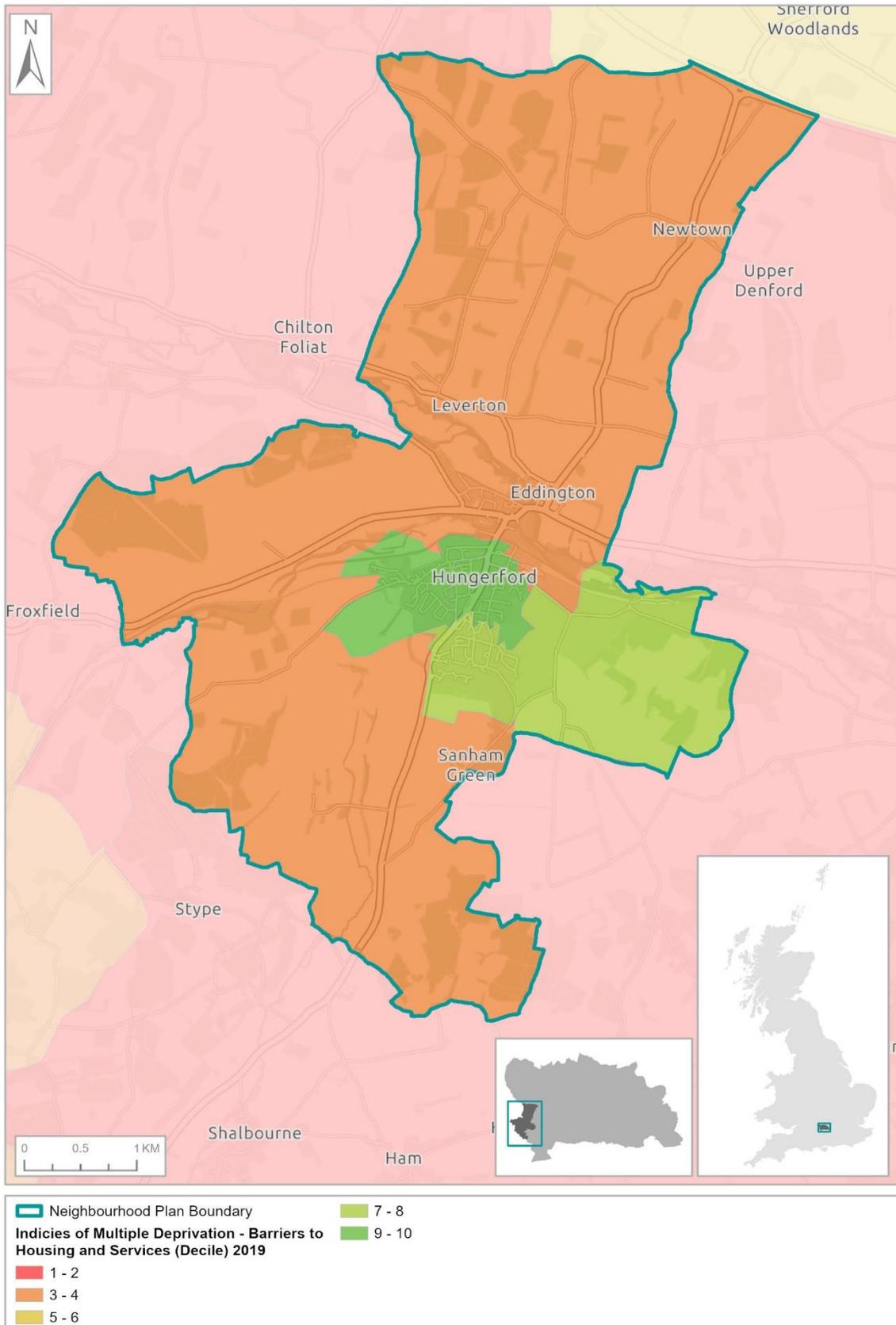
6.1 This section seeks to summarise population and age structures, deprivation issues, housing mix and affordability, community assets and infrastructure, and influences on health and wellbeing in the neighbourhood area.

## Maps

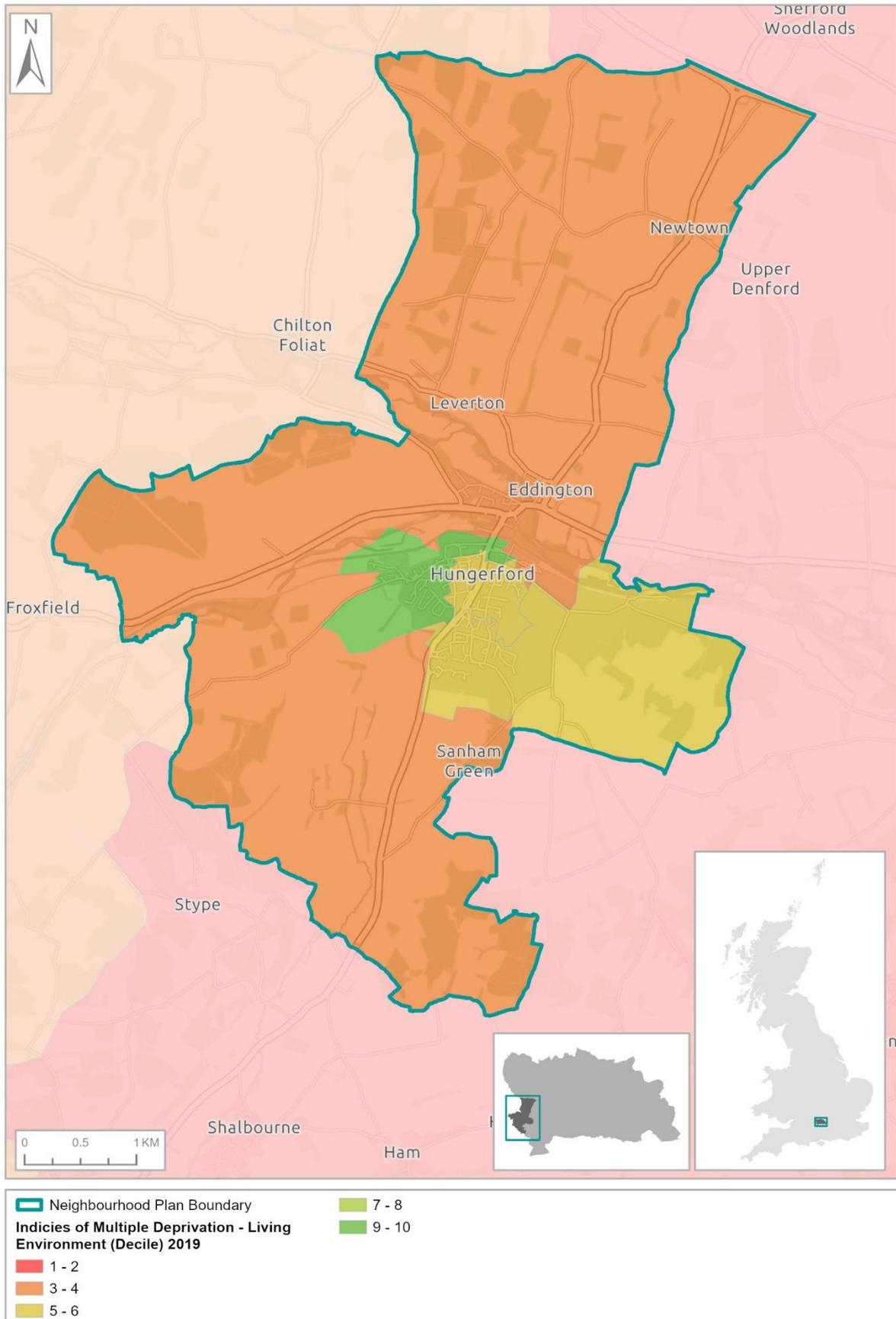
**Figure 6.1: Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019) for the neighbourhood area**



**Figure 6.2: Barriers to housing and services deprivation domain (IMD, 2019) for the neighbourhood area**



**Figure 6.3: Living environment deprivation domain (IMD, 2019) for the neighbourhood area**

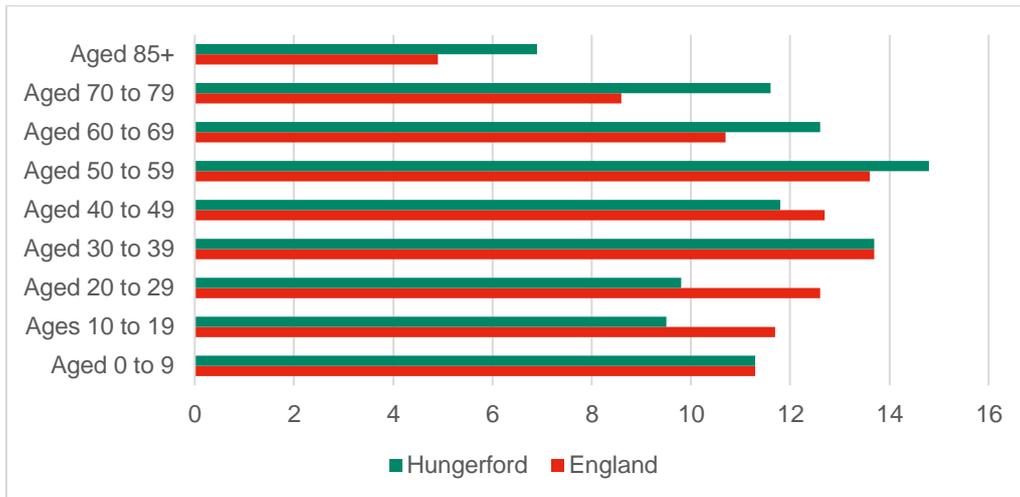


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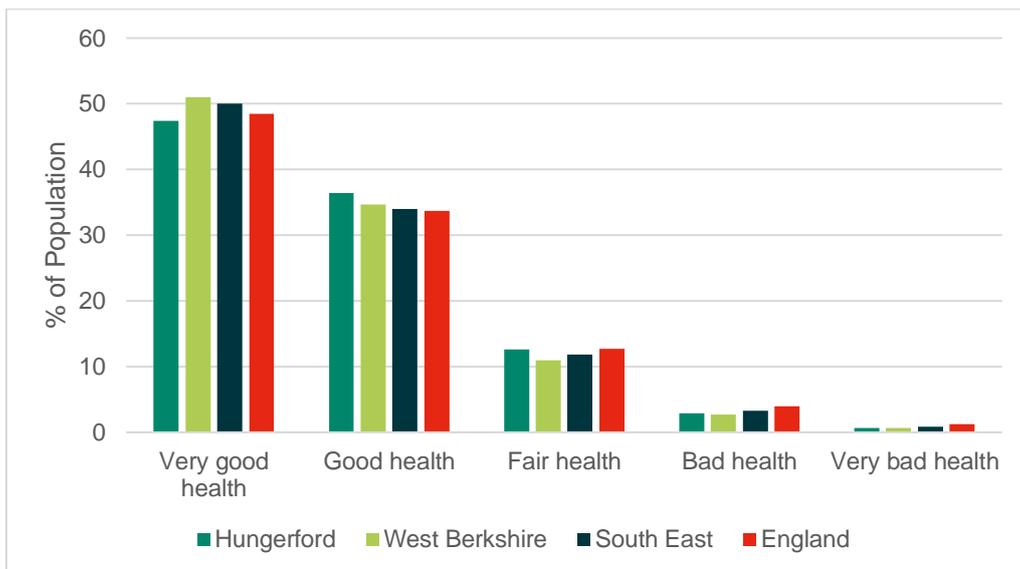


## Key statistics

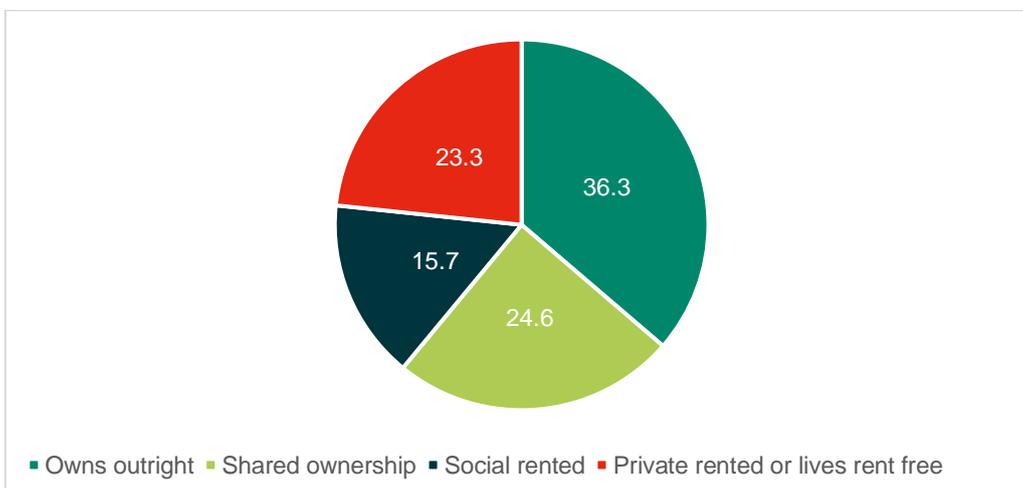
**Figure 6.4: Population age structure in the neighbourhood area (Census, 2021)**



**Figure 6.5: Health of residents in the neighbourhood area in comparison to the district, regional and national averages (Census, 2021)**



**Figure 6.6: Housing tenure in the neighbourhood area (Census 2021)**



## Key evidence sources

- [Indices of Deprivation: 2019 and 2015](#)
- [West Berkshire Online Map](#)
- [Office for National Statistics - NOMIS](#)
  - [Topic Summary - TS007A: Age by five-year age bands](#)
  - [Topic Summary - TS037: General health](#)
  - [Topic Summary - TS054: Tenure](#)

## Policy context

**Table 6.1: Additional plans and policies relating to climate change and flood risk**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030</a>	2021
<a href="#">West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan 2006-2026</a>	2012

## Commentary

- 6.2 According to the West Berkshire Online Map, there are two schools in the area, a primary school and the secondary school - John O’Gaunt School. There is also one GP surgery in the area, the Hungerford Surgery.
- 6.3 Hungerford has a number of community facilities, which include multiple churches (St Lawrence’s Church, Hungerford United Reformed Church, Hungerford Methodist Church and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church). There are a number of sports facilities (Hungerford Town Football Club, Hungerford Leisure Centre, Hungerford Rugby Football Club, Hungerford Cricket Club, and Hungerford Skate Park), as well as various convenience stores and pubs, such as The Bear and John O’Gaunt Inn. There is also Hungerford Library and a post office in the area.
- 6.4 However, due to its rural nature, it is likely that residents in the neighbourhood area will travel further afield (for example to Swindon to the northeast, or Newbury to the southwest) for a greater range of services and facilities. These include, but are not exclusive to, more secondary schools (especially as John O’ Gaunt does not have a sixth form), medical facilities such as further GPs and hospitals, supermarkets and a wider range of pubs and restaurants.
- 6.5 The neighbourhood area covers approximately 2754 hectares and is comprised of four Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs): West Berkshire 010A, covering the centre of Hungerford, 010B covering the eastern part, 010C covering the majority of the area to the north, west and south and 010D, the more western central part of the neighbourhood area.
- 6.6 Broadly speaking, the West Berkshire neighbourhood area does not experience a high level of deprivation, as the neighbourhood area is in the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). LSOA 010A is ranked 25,727 (30% least deprived) out of the

32,844 LSOAs in England with regard to the overall IMD, where 1 is the most deprived. 010B is ranked 16,667 (50% least deprived), 010C is ranked 25,606 (30% least deprived) and 010D is ranked 29,397 (20% least deprived).

- 6.7 LSOA West Berkshire 010B ranks more highly deprived than the other three LSOAs (010A, 010C and 010D) for income deprivation as well as health deprivation and disability. Notably, 010B is also amongst the 30% most deprived for education, skills and training and ranks in the 40% most deprived for income deprivation affecting older people index. 010C is amongst the 30% most deprived for barriers to housing and services and living environment deprivation, see **Figure 6.2** and **Figure 6.3**.

## Key issues

- 6.8 The neighbourhood area experiences higher levels of deprivation with regards to the barriers to housing and services deprivation domain. The HNP presents an opportunity to reduce this type of deprivation by encouraging housing development in more accessible locations and supporting increased affordable housing.
- 6.9 New housing development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase pressure on existing community infrastructure if this is not improved alongside development. This could lead to negative impacts in the longer term, for example if the capacity of health facilities is not increased to cater for the growing population.

## SEA Objective

6.10 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
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.

6.11 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

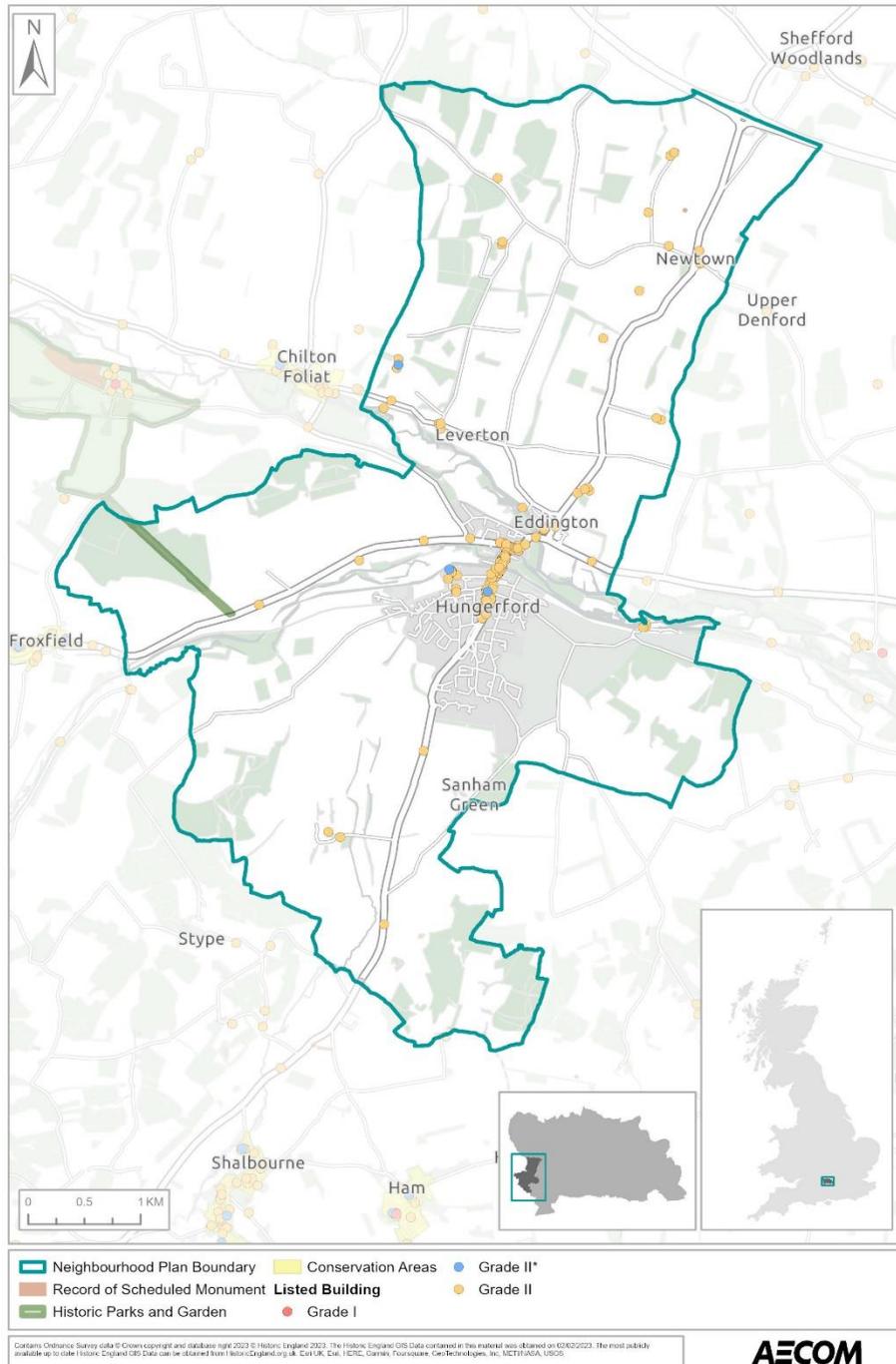
- Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing?
- Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?
- Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?
- Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population?
- 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?

# 7. Historic environment

7.1 This section seeks to summarise designated and non-designated heritage assets (including archaeology) and their settings, within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area.

## Maps

**Figure 7.1: Designated historic environment features in the neighbourhood area**



## Key statistics

- 7.2 There are 138 listed buildings within the neighbourhood area: three Grade II\* listed buildings and 135 Grade II listed buildings.
- 7.3 There is one scheduled monument, [Bowl barrow on Barrow Hill, Hungerford Newtown](#), which includes a large bowl barrow situated in a small copse towards the south end of a small spur, situated in the north of the neighbourhood area.
- 7.4 According to the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register (2023), there is no heritage at risk in the neighbourhood area.
- 7.5 The West Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) returns 563 results for the neighbourhood area.

## Key evidence sources

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Heritage Gateway](#)
- [West Berkshire Online Map](#)
- [West Berkshire – Conservation Areas](#)
- [Kennet Valley West - HECA](#)
- [Wooded Downs Plateau HECA](#)
- [Valleys South West HECA](#)
- [West Berkshire Historic Environment Record](#)
- [Historic England](#)
  - [Heritage at Risk Register – South East](#)
  - [Search the List - Advanced Search](#)

## Policy context

**Table 7.1: Additional plans and policies relating to historic environment**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">West Berkshire Historic Environment Action Plan</a>	2011
<a href="#">West Berkshire Local Plan 2006-2026</a>	2012
<a href="#">West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD)</a>	2012
<a href="#">West Berkshire Local Plan Review</a>	Emerging

## Commentary

- 7.6 The Hungerford neighbourhood area is greatly influenced by the history of the area. As noted in the West Berkshire Historic Environment Action Plan, historical evidence dates back as early as AD410-AD800. Hungerford emerged as a new town in the later medieval period and experienced an urban development boom in the later part of the Saxon era.
- 7.7 There are two conservation areas in the neighbourhood area. These are Hungerford Conservation Area and Eddington Conservation Area. There are no Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) or management plans in place for these areas, so it is unclear as to why these areas have been designated. The areas can be seen on the [West Berkshire Online Map](#).
- 7.8 West Berkshire was divided into twenty Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs) which were then divided into a further ninety-one Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZs), all of which have their own linked reports describing their key characteristics. The Hungerford neighbourhood area falls into three HECAs, the majority into the **Kennet Valley West HECA**, part of the north of the neighbourhood area into the **Wooded Downs Plateau HECA**, and part of the south of the neighbourhood area into the **Valleys South West HECA**.
- The **Kennet Valley West HECA** is a mixed area of both nucleated valley floor settlements, surrounded by open fields with riverside meadow grazing, and of smaller settlements and scattered farms, early enclosures and woodland. The agricultural landscape has been subject to considerable modification. The majority of historic enclosures have been reorganised into modern fields more suited to mechanised agriculture. Tree-cover has seen significant change with clearance of ancient woodlands and new woods and plantations created on previously unwooded areas. Although only a few ancient woods were cleared for agriculture, others have been cleared of native tree cover and replanted with other species.
  - The **Wooded Downs Plateau HECA** is a largely early enclosed landscape with substantial areas of woodland and a dispersed settlement pattern. The main route through the area was Ermin Street, the Roman road from Silchester to Cirencester, which ran along the crest of the watershed. The western portion of the area has been heavily modified by the construction of Membury Airfield during WWII. This took an angular chunk out of the landscape, truncating surrounding fields, and included the insertion of shielding plantations of fast growing conifers around parts of the base's perimeter. Although now disused, the airfield still has a presence in the landscape.
  - The **Valleys South West HECA** is composed of a series of valleys of Kennet tributaries and the watershed plateaux between them. The area has a markedly different geology to the surrounding chalk HECAs and chalk deposits outcrop only at its edges. The majority of the area is composed of Reading Beds and overlain by London Clays. Agricultural changes have led to reorganisation of fieldscapes to create fields more suited to modern, mechanised farming. Although about half of the historic fields have been modified, large chunks of early enclosures have been left largely unaltered.

7.9 The Hungerford neighbourhood area falls into various HECZs. **Table 7.2** below shows the HECZs, their features and the conservation issues of the area, according to the Historic Environment Action Plan.

**Table 7.2: HECZs in the neighbourhood area, their features and conservation issues/management actions**

HECZ name	Features	Conservation issues and management practices
Wooded Downs – Not Roman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sparsely occupied rural zone.</li> <li>• Mix of arable fields and large woods.</li> <li>• Some areas of parkland and studs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve the historic character of the zone, considering the impact of modern agricultural practices on the irregular pattern of fields, woods, and roads.</li> <li>• Manage woodlands, conserve ancient woodlands, and replace plantations with more mixed tree coverage.</li> <li>• Address the threat of intensive modern agriculture to buried archaeological sites.</li> <li>• Develop historic farms and farm buildings with consideration for their preservation.</li> <li>• Assess the nature and condition of the historic building stock, and identify and record dispersed WWII features.</li> </ul>
Kennet Valley North-West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural zone, comprised of recent and historic fields.</li> <li>• Areas of ancient and other old woodlands, parklands and settlements.</li> <li>• Largely intact historic character.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the threat of intensive modern agriculture to buried archaeological sites.</li> <li>• Implement better management practices for ancient woodlands to ensure their survival.</li> <li>• Caution against visually and archaeologically erosive impacts of recent tree plantations, encouraging efforts to soften their impact.</li> <li>• Recognize and record designed parklands, often threatened by modern development pressure, especially beyond Benham Valence.</li> <li>• Enhance details on the historic building stock to develop policies that appropriately conserve this resource.</li> <li>• Conservation Area Appraisal and management plan are necessary for Benham Valence Park.</li> </ul>
Eddington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed zone, historic settlement, recent housing and small commercial developments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a detailed assessment of built form and character for informed future development proposals.</li> <li>• Prioritise the overdue Conservation Area appraisal and management plan.</li> <li>• Enhance archaeological records, seeking further clarification on the nature and extent of deposits.</li> </ul>

Kennet Valley Floor West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed zone of parkland, recent and historic fields.</li> <li>• Small areas of ancient and other old woodlands.</li> <li>• Parklands experienced differing levels of change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the threat to buried archaeological sites from intensive modern agriculture.</li> <li>• Improve the management of ancient woodlands to ensure their survival.</li> <li>• Ensure new tree planting avoids visually and archaeologically erosive impacts.</li> <li>• Recognize and document designed parklands, threatened by modern development pressure.</li> <li>• Enhance details on the historic building stock to establish appropriate conservation policies.</li> </ul>
Hungerford Suburban Area - North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent industrial estates and housing developments.</li> <li>• Some water meadow.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A.</li> </ul>
Hungerford Historic Core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic market town.</li> <li>• Many historic buildings.</li> <li>• No significant effect from development on historic character.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address continual development pressure in the town center, prioritising the protection of burgage plots' definition and character.</li> <li>• Ensure that development in the zone aligns with the small market town character based on medieval street/property patterns.</li> <li>• Urgently update the overdue Conservation Area appraisal and management plan.</li> <li>• Conduct a comprehensive archaeological or historic character study of the town, building upon the 1978 Astill survey.</li> </ul>
Kennet Valley South-West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural zone comprising recent and historic fields.</li> <li>• Kennet and Avon canal and railway run through the area.</li> <li>• Open fields, enclosed into irregular and regularly-shaped fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the threat of intensive modern agriculture to buried archaeological sites.</li> <li>• Improve the management of ancient woodland to ensure its survival.</li> <li>• Ensure new tree planting avoids visually and archaeologically erosive impacts, encouraging opportunities to soften the effects.</li> <li>• Enhance details on the historic building stock to develop appropriate conservation policies.</li> </ul>

<p>Hungerford Common – Freeman’s Marsh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common grazing land and meadow.</li> <li>• Kennet and Avon Canal cut through this zone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve the only surviving common meadow in the district with careful management.</li> <li>• Prioritize the management of earthwork features as a key objective.</li> </ul>
<p>Hungerford Suburban Area - South</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent housing developments and associated civic amenities.</li> <li>• Large open areas of recreation and playing fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address development pressure in the area.</li> <li>• Enhance archaeological records, seeking further clarification on the nature and extent of deposits.</li> </ul>
<p>Hungerford Common – Port Down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common grazing land.</li> <li>• Avenue of ornamental trees.</li> <li>• Pillboxes in the area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage one of the most significant areas of Common land in the district with care.</li> <li>• Prioritize the management of earthwork features as a key objective.</li> <li>• Focus on the conservation and interpretation of WWII pillboxes as a key priority.</li> </ul>
<p>Kennet Valley South-Western Parklands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Western part of the Kennet floodplain.</li> <li>• Rural area.</li> <li>• Large areas used as pastureland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address threat to buried archaeological sites from intensive modern agriculture.</li> <li>• Assess potential impacts of gravel extraction from the valley floor.</li> <li>• Enhance details on historic building stock for conservation policies.</li> <li>• Urgently conduct a Conservation Area appraisal and management plan.</li> <li>• Manage development pressure and consider impacts on the Kennet and Avon canal, registered battlefield site, and WWII features.</li> </ul>
<p>West of Inkpen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of fields, woodlands and some farms.</li> <li>• Increased tree cover in the area.</li> <li>• More regular farmland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize the understanding and communication of the well-preserved historic landscape.</li> <li>• Address the threat to buried archaeological sites from intensive modern agriculture.</li> <li>• Enhance details on historic building stock for conservation policies.</li> <li>• Manage development pressure in the area.</li> <li>• Prioritize woodland management, conserve ancient woodlands, and replace plantations with more mixed tree coverage.</li> </ul>

## Key issues

- 7.10 The neighbourhood area includes numerous heritage assets, all of which present a constraint to future development due to the need to avoid impacts to the heritage assets and their setting. The HNP can help overcome this by ensuring any development that comes forward during the plan period is sensitive to the historic setting of the neighbourhood area in terms of design and layout.
- 7.11 The lack of CAAs and management plans for the conservation areas present a gap in the evidence base, Hungerford Council should seek to work with West Berkshire to develop the evidence base in this respect.
- 7.12 The neighbourhood area has a unique heritage that is represented by its former land uses. Especially taking into regard the advice from the Historic Environment Action Plan, encouraging opportunities to preserve this heritage through the HNP should be taken where appropriate, which will allow for the historic environment to continue to contribute to Hungerford's unique character.

## SEA objective

- 7.13 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

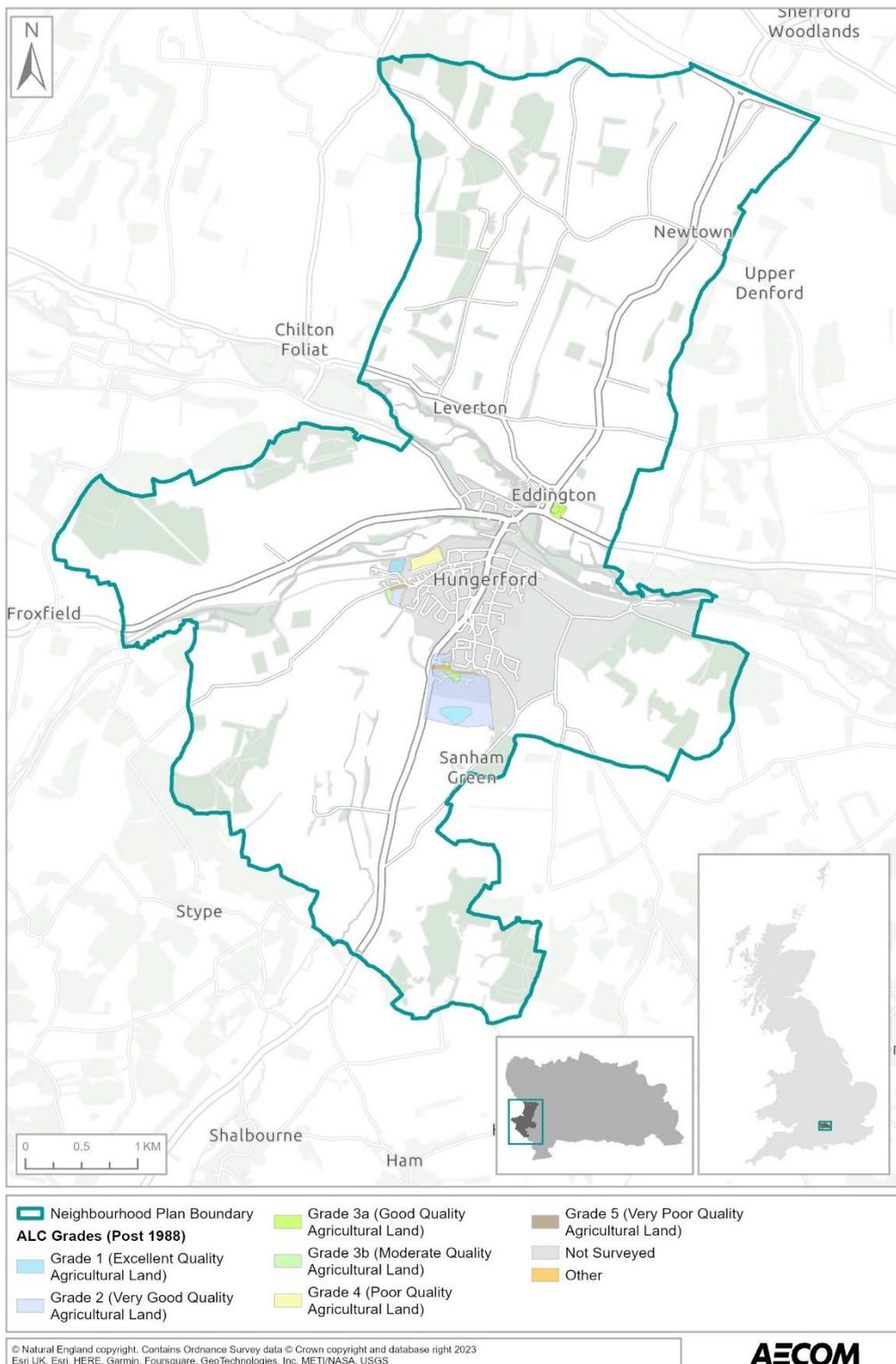
- 7.14 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings?
- Conserve and enhance nationally designated heritage assets?
- Protect the integrity of the Conservation Areas and their setting?
- Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the 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?

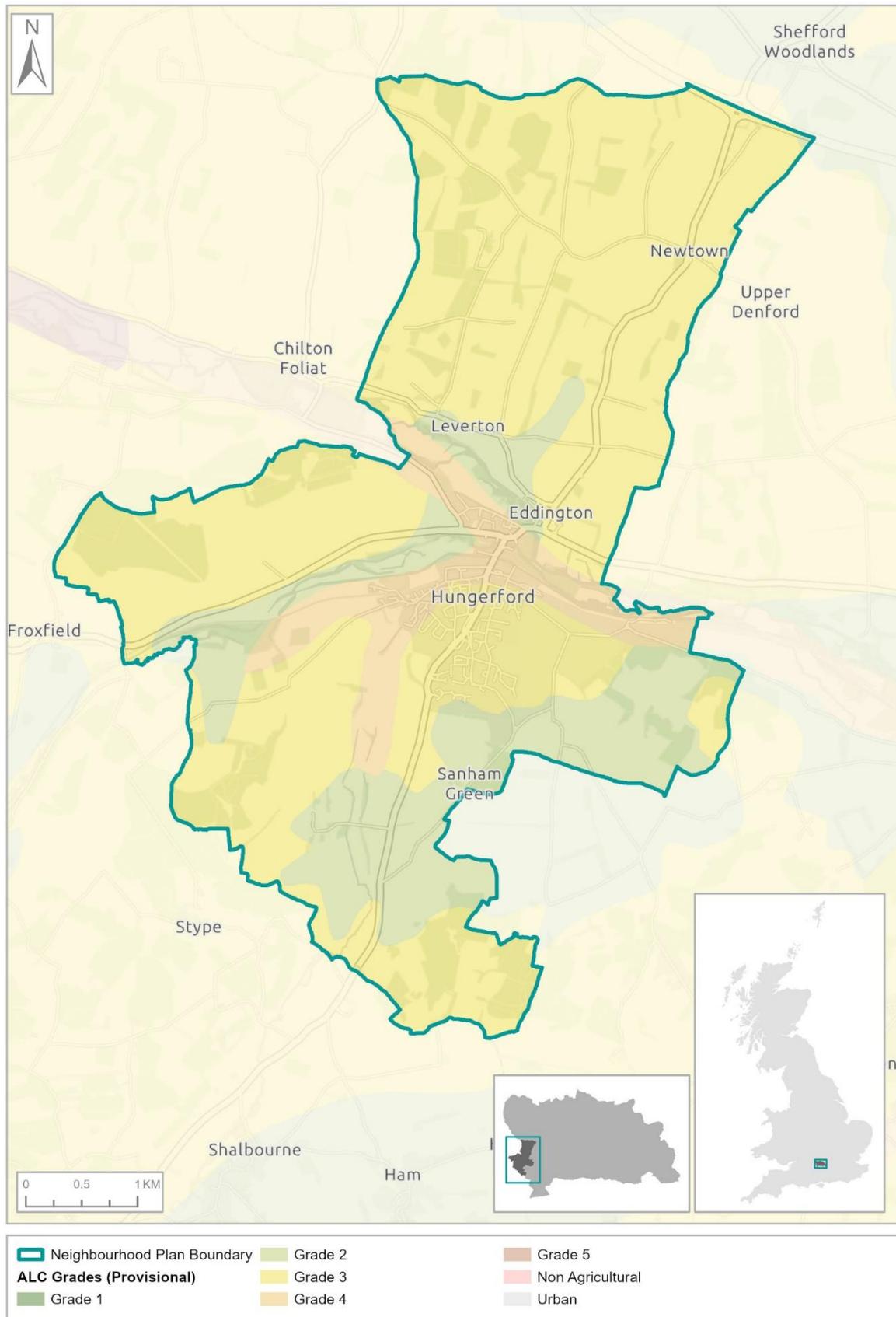
# 8. Land, soil and water resources

## Maps

Figure 8.2: Agricultural land classification (Post 1988) in the neighbourhood area



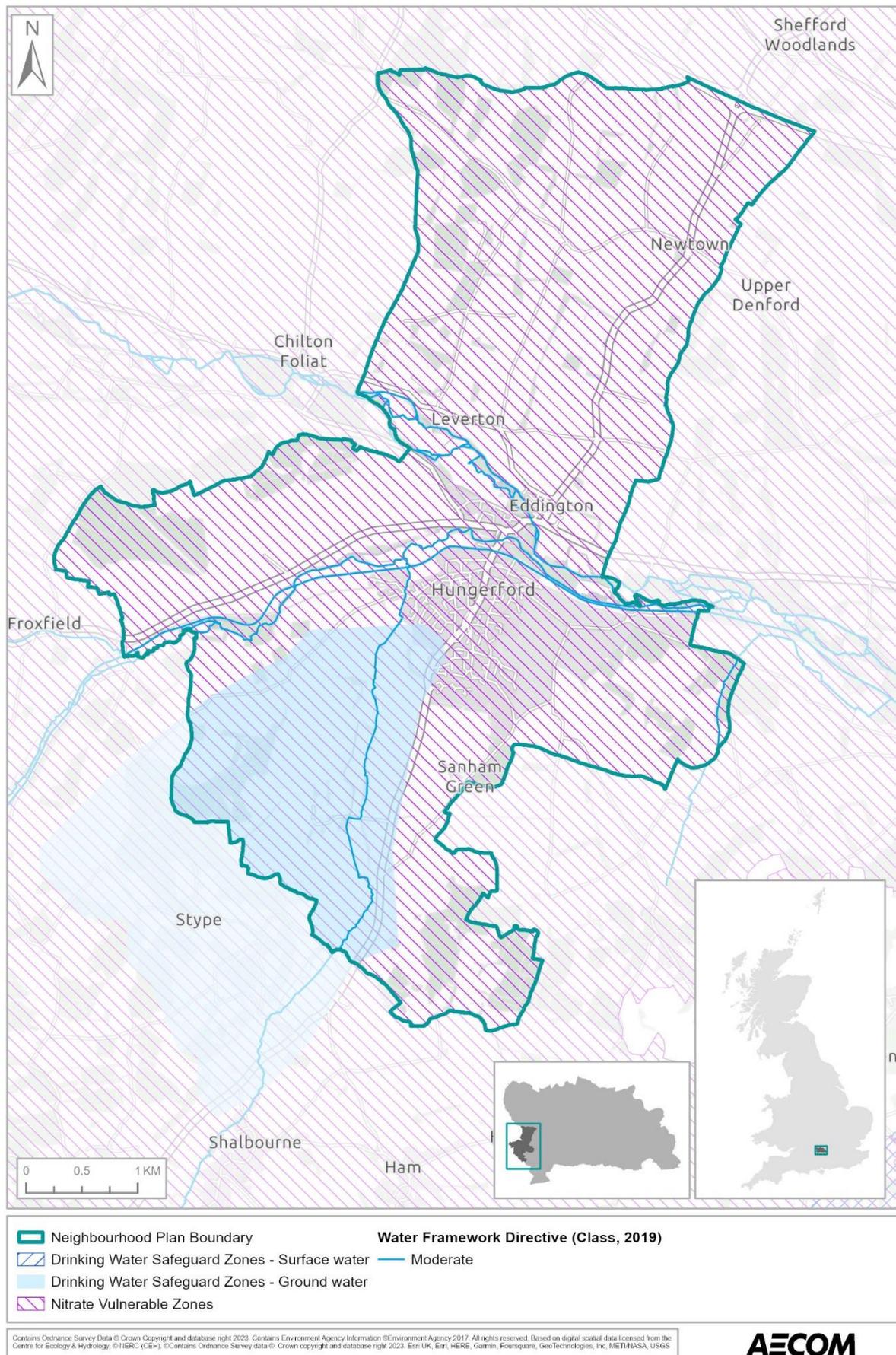
**Figure 8.2: Agricultural land classification (provisional) in the neighbourhood area**



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**AECOM**

**Figure 8.3: Water quality in the neighbourhood area**



## Key statistics

- The neighbourhood area falls into the Kennet Operational Catchment.
- The entire neighbourhood is in Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) 87: Berkshire Downs.

**Table 8.1: Water bodies, their location and their ecological status**

Water Body	Location within Neighbourhood Area	Ecological Status
Middle Kennet (Hungerford to Newbury)	Central to east	Poor as of 2022, but moderate from 2015 until 2019.
Middle Kennet (Marlborough to Hungerford)	North	Good since 2013 (except for 2016).
Kennet and Avon Canal and Dun above Hungerford	East, through the centre	Good since 2015.
Shalbourne (source to Kennet at Hungerford)	South	Moderate since 2016, where it was poor.

## Key evidence sources

8.1 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Environment Agency - Check for Drinking Water Safeguard Zones and NVZs](#)
- [Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer – Kennet Operational Catchment](#)
  - [Kennet \(Hungerford to Newbury\) Water Body](#)
- [Natural England](#)
  - [Agricultural Land Classification Map South East Region](#)
  - [Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile \(BMV\) Agricultural Land – Strategic Scale Map South East Region](#)

## Policy context

**Table 8.2: Additional plans and policies relating to land, soil, and water resources**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#"><u>West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2022-2037</u></a>	2022
<a href="#"><u>Thames River Basin Management Plan</u></a>	2015
<a href="#"><u>Thames Water Water Resources Management Plan 2020-2100</u></a>	2020
<a href="#"><u>West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan 2006-2026</u></a>	2012

## Commentary

- 8.2 The provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) dataset provided by Natural England indicates that the majority of the neighbourhood area comprises Grade 3 ‘Good to Moderate’ agricultural land (see **Figure 8.2**). Small areas of the neighbourhood area that follow the river and floodplain running into the centre are Grade 4 ‘Poor’, whilst sections of Grade 2 ‘Very Good’ land can be found to the south of Hungerford, as well as adjacent to the areas of Grade 4 land. It is not possible to determine whether the Grade 3 land is Grade 3a (better quality) or Grade 3b (poorer quality).
- 8.3 In terms of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, the majority of the neighbourhood area has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land. However, there are some areas, especially just to the north of Hungerford with a moderate (20-60%) likelihood of being underlain by BMV land.
- 8.4 The entirety of the neighbourhood area falls in Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) 87: Berkshire Downs. The area to the southwest of the neighbourhood area is within a groundwater drinking water safeguard zone.
- 8.5 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 a 80-year plan period. The WRMP indicates that there is adequate supply over this period without a need to develop new sources of water.
- 8.6 The neighbourhood area is located within the Kennet Operational Catchment. There are a number of waterbodies that run through the neighbourhood area. The condition of these waterbodies can be seen in **Table 8.2** above.

## Key issues

- 8.7 Allocating land for development could influence changes to land, soil and water resources. It will be important for development to be focused away from BMV land, as well as Grade 2 ALC land and consider potential impacts on the overlapping waterbody catchments and water quality. This could include implementing mitigation measures to ensure water pollution does not occur throughout the development phases.

8.8 It will be important to use the HNP as an opportunity to improve and protect the waterbodies within the area, especially the Middle Kennet (Hungerford to Newbury) which is currently in poor condition and the Shalbourne (source to Kennet at Hungerford) which is currently in moderate condition.

## SEA objective

8.9 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives:

SEA theme	SEA objective
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.

8.10 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

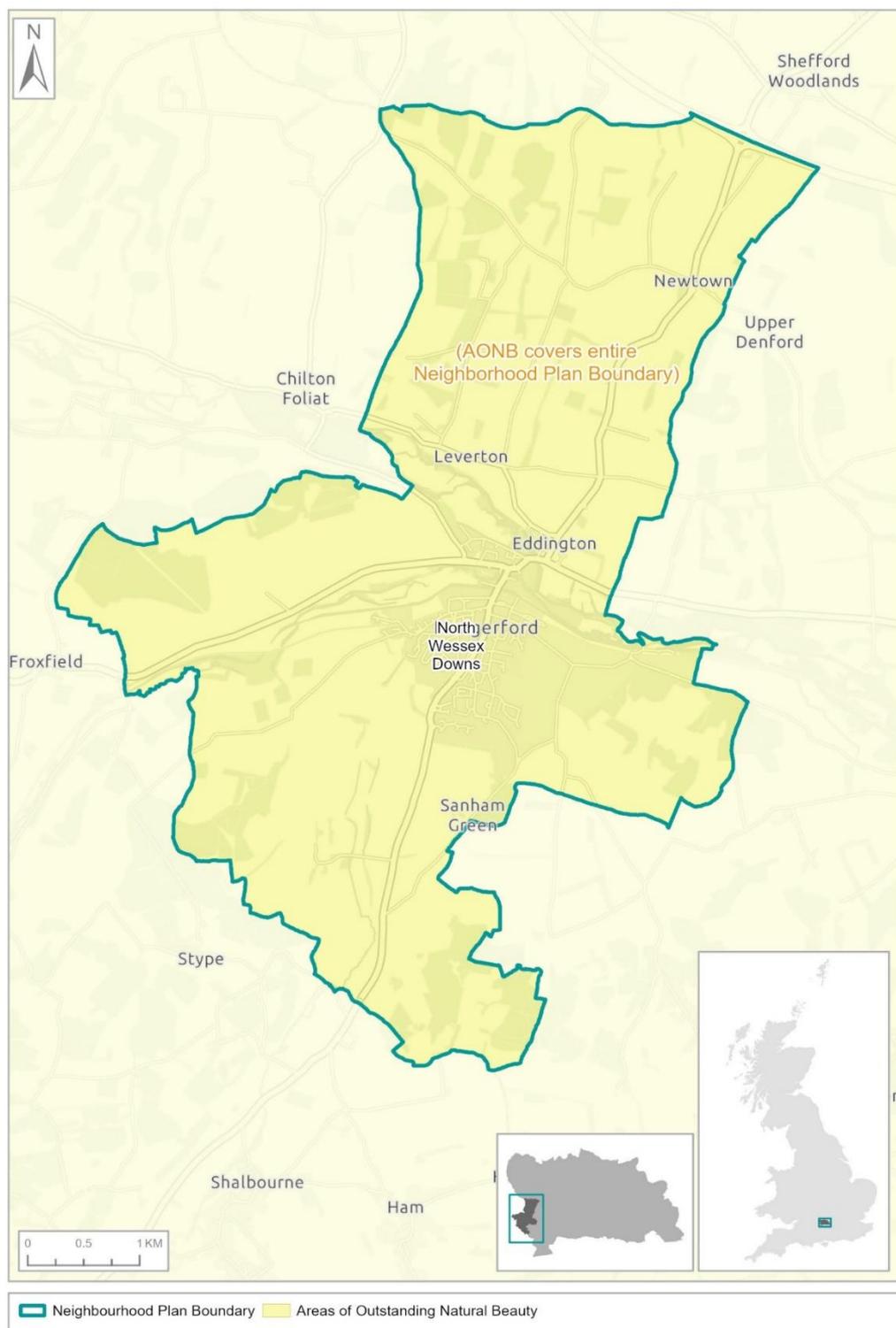
- Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible?
- Identify and avoid the development of BMV agricultural land?
- Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?
- Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality?
- Ensure appropriate drainage 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?
- Avoid the unnecessary sterilisation of, or hindering of access to mineral resources in the neighbourhood area?

# 9. Landscape

9.1 This section seeks to summarise landscape character and key landscape features and sensitivities in the neighbourhood area.

## Maps

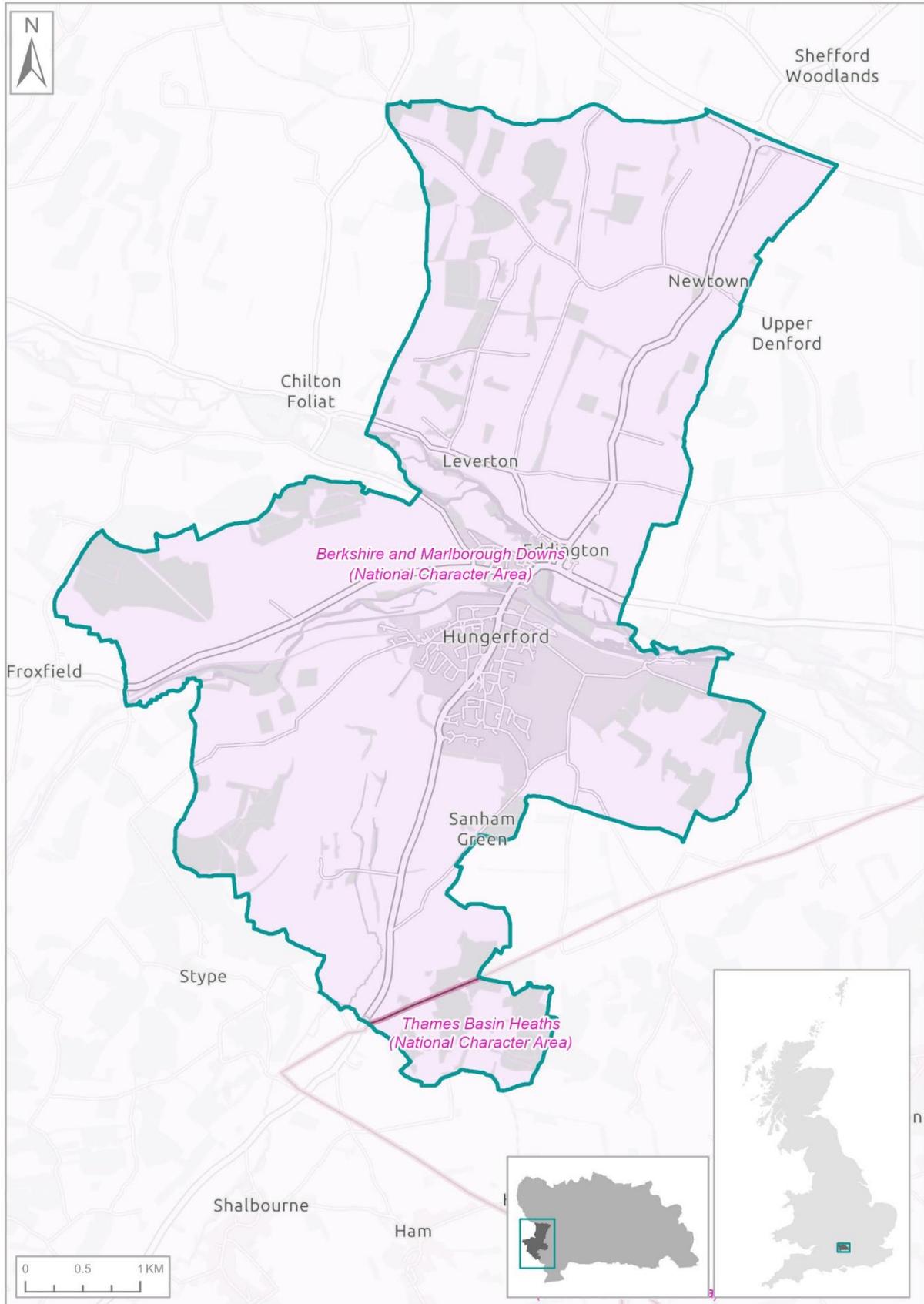
Figure 9.1: Landscape designations in relation to the neighbourhood area



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Esri UK, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS



**Figure 9.2: National character areas in the neighbourhood area**



 Neighbourhood Plan Boundary  National Character Area

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Esri UK, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS

**AECOM**

## Key statistics

- The neighbourhood area sits within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- The neighbourhood area sits within the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs and the Thames Basin Heaths National Character Areas (NCAs) (see **Figure 9.2** above).

## Key evidence sources

9.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [North Wessex Downs National Landscape](#)
- [West Berkshire Council](#)
  - [Brownfield Register 2022](#)
  - [Tree Preservation Order – Online Map](#)

## Policy context

**Table 9.1: Additional plans and policies relating to landscape.**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">West Berkshire Environment Strategy 2020-2030</a>	2020
<a href="#">North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024</a>	2019
<a href="#">West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment</a>	2019
<a href="#">NCA Profile: 116 Berkshire and Marlborough Downs</a>	2013
<a href="#">NCA Profile: 129 Thames Basin Heaths</a>	2014
<a href="#">West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan 2006-2026</a>	2012

## Commentary

9.3 The neighbourhood area falls within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NL – previously Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty<sup>4</sup>). The NL is characterised by expansive chalk downlands in Marlborough, Berkshire, and North Hampshire. Preserving its state with minimal development, the NL encompasses the bright, unspoiled uplands that stretch from the Marlborough Downs to the White Horse Vale in the west. The richly farmed valleys, complement the chalk uplands, creating a harmonious and diverse natural environment. This terrain not only holds ecological significance, preserving downland habitats and ancient woodlands, but also has significant archaeological heritage dating back to 3000 BC.

9.4 The neighbourhood area is within two NCAs, NCA 116: Berkshire and Marlborough Downs primarily, and a small part of the south of the

<sup>4</sup> Since November 2023, all protected landscapes designated as AONBs have been referred to 'National Landscapes'. This change was initiated by the Government to reflect the national importance of these areas, with a view to highlighting their equal place alongside National Parks in helping to achieve wider aims associated with health and wellbeing, sustainable public access, climate change and nature recovery.

neighbourhood area falls within NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths (see **Figure 9.2** above).

9.5 The Thames Basin Heath feature vast arable fields stretch across the sparsely settled, rolling Chalk hills. There are extensive views from the escarpment in particular, punctuated by landmarks including chalk-cut horse figures, beech clumps and ancient monuments. There are a number of historic and heritage features across this landscape, for example there are numerous scheduled monuments. The majority of the area (97%) falls within the North Wessex Downs NL (see above). Farmland habitat supports brown hare, harvest mouse, rare arable plants and farmland birds including stone curlew. Along the escarpment and steep slopes, limited tracts of hanging woodlands and species-rich chalk grassland can be found. Open access downland offers the public the opportunity to see species such as the skylark and Adonis blue butterfly. Key characteristics of the NCA include (but are not limited to):

- Uplifted mass of Chalk dipping south-east into the London Basin and edged by an extensive, complex escarpment.
- Chalk rivers, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland in the major chalk valleys, supported by groundwater.
- Gallops and stables of large horse-racing establishments, with a nucleus in the Lambourn Valley.

9.6 Woodland accounts for a quarter of this NCA, reflecting the predominance of low-grade agricultural land. Only 20 per cent of this woodland is on ancient woodland sites, with the majority of it having grown up or been planted on former heathland – much of which is or was common land. Conifers and rhododendron are particularly distinctive in the east of the NCA. Common land is found across the NCA, with the largest commons found on raised plateaux of Tertiary sands and gravels. On these deposits, farming is largely limited to rough pasture and there are large estates. The Thames river system drains this basin, with major tributaries flowing through the Thames Basin Heaths NCA from the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs NCA in the west, and from the Hampshire Downs NCA, Thames Basin Lowlands NCA and other NCAs to the south.

- Chalk forms the Hampshire Downs escarpment and the river beds of the Kennet and Pang.
- High woodland cover, acid leached soils – farming is limited to rough pasture.
- Patchwork of small to medium-sized fields with woods.

## Key issues

9.7 Due to the location of the neighbourhood area within the North Wessex Downs NL, the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan should have regard to its setting, and to the aims and objectives of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan.

9.8 It will be important for the Hungerford NP to protect the local landscape, including its coherence and characteristics with regard to its NCAs and LCAs.

This will bring benefits to other SEA themes, including biodiversity and climate change, by maintaining features which support wildlife and natural processes, such as meadows and parklands.

## SEA objective

9.9 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.

9.10 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

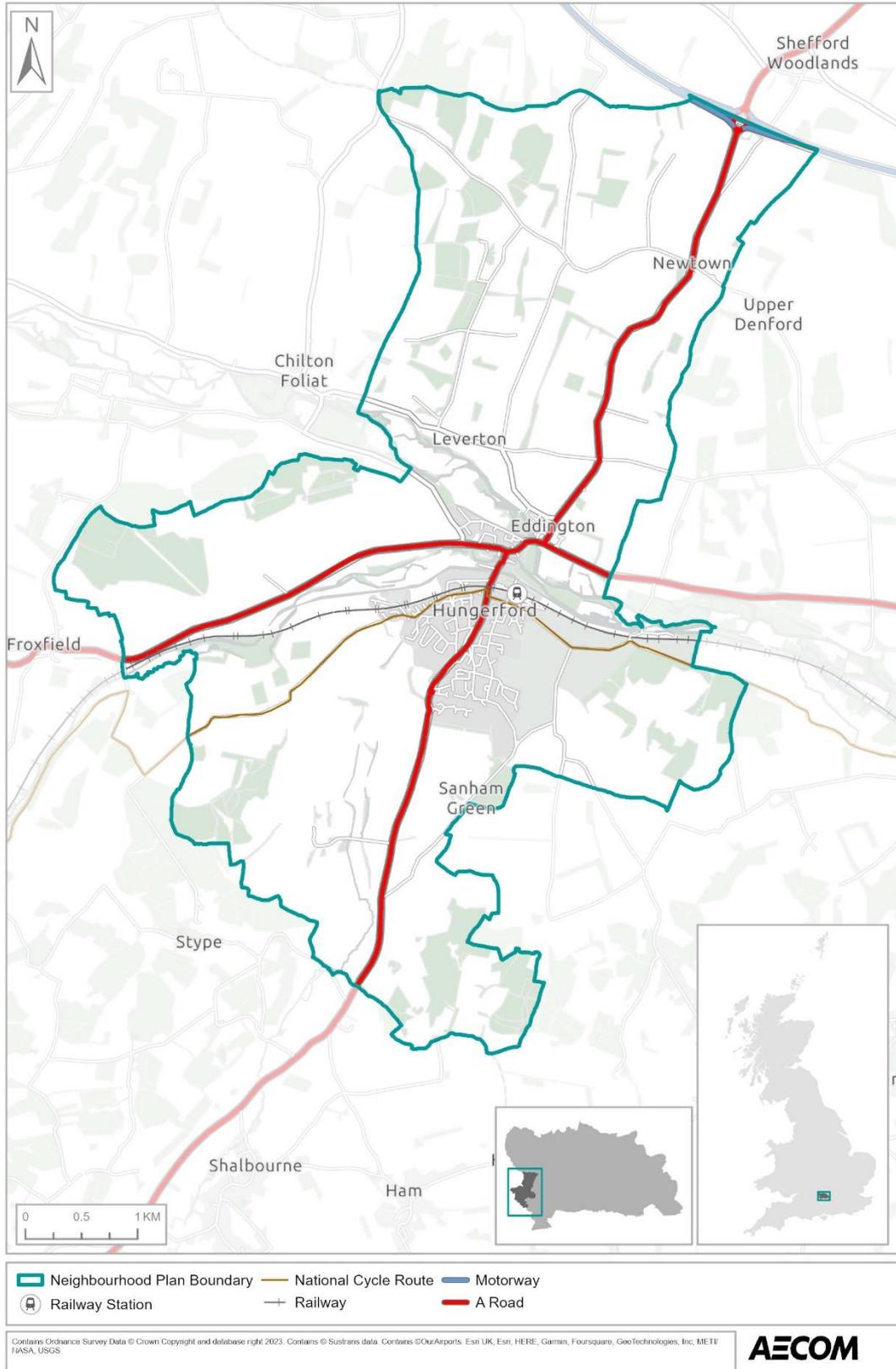
- Protect and/ or enhance the integrity and setting of North Wessex Downs NL?
- Protect and/or enhance the integrity of the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs and Thames Basin Heaths NCAs?
- Protect and / or enhance local landscape character and quality of place?
- Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, 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 neighbourhood area's rural setting, including trees and hedgerows

# 10. Transportation and movement

10.1 This section seeks to summarise transport infrastructure, transport usage, traffic flows and congestion, accessibility, and public rights of way within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

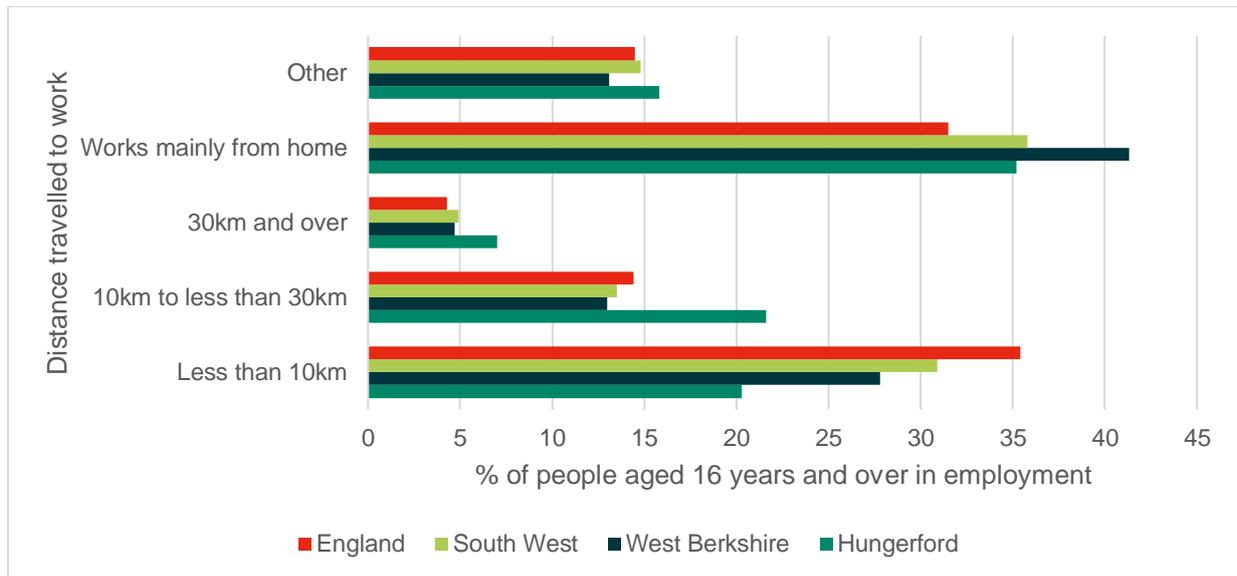
# Maps

Figure 10.1: Strategic transport network in the neighbourhood area

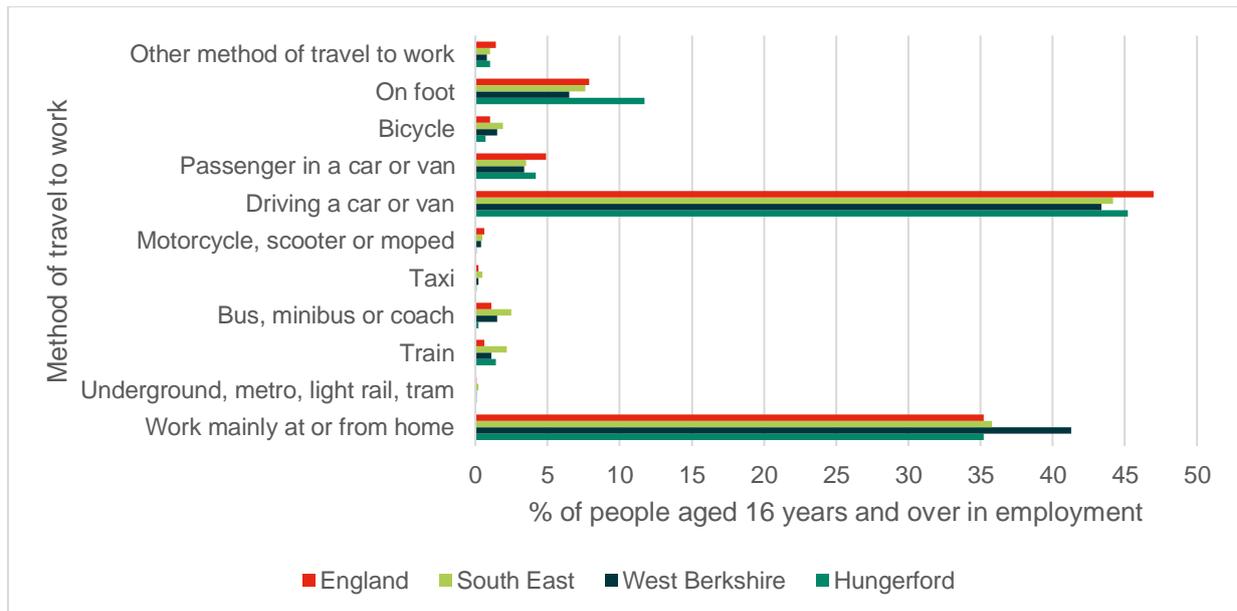


## Key statistics

**Figure 10.2: Distance travelled to work in the neighbourhood area compared to the national average (Census 2021)**



**Figure 10.3: Method of travel to workplace in the neighbourhood area compared to the national average (Census 2021)**



## Key evidence sources

- [Bustimes.org – Hungerford bus service](https://www.bustimes.org/)
- [West Berkshire Council Transport Services – Travel Guide](https://www.westberkshire.gov.uk/transport-services)
- [Great Western Railway](https://www.gwr.co.uk/)
- [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps/)
- [PRoW Map - West Berkshire Online Map](https://www.prow.gov.uk/)
- [Office for National Statistics – Build a custom area profile \(Census 2021\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/)

## Policy context

**Table 10.1: Additional plans and policies relating to transportation and movement**

Document title	Year of publication
<a href="#">Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire 2011 - 2026</a>	2011
<a href="#">West Berkshire Passenger Transport Strategy 2011-2026</a>	2014

## Commentary

10.2 Hungerford railway station is within the neighbourhood area. Hungerford station offers regular rail services to a number of locations, including London Paddington, Bedwyn, Plymouth and Exeter St David's. The railway station at Swindon, accessible via the M4 and train, to the northeast of the neighbourhood area offers a number of services to other locations, such as Cheltenham Spa, Bristol Temple Meads, Swansea and Westbury.

10.3 There are a number of buses that run through the neighbourhood area. These run to and from both Hungerford and Eddington. These are detailed below in **Table 10.2**.

**Table 10.2: Bus services, providers, destinations and frequency.**

Bus service and provider	Where the bus goes	Frequency
<b>3</b> , Newbury & District	Newbury – Inkpen, Kintbury - Hungerford	4 times a day, does not run on Sundays
<b>3A</b> , Newbury & District	Newbury - Hungerford via Hungerford Common, Kintbury	Once a day, does not run on Sundays
<b>3X</b> , Newbury & District	Newbury - A4 - Hungerford	Once a day, does not run on Sundays
<b>3c</b> , Newbury & District	Hungerford - Thatcham	Once a day, does not run on weekends
<b>46A</b> , Stagecoach West	Swindon Bus Station - Hungerford Library	Twice a day, does not run on weekends
<b>110</b> , Salisbury Reds	Marlborough - Bedwyn - Hungerford - Marlborough	Twice a day, does not run on Sundays
<b>120</b> , Swindon's Bus Company	Marlborough - Bedwyn - Hungerford	Once a day, does not run on Sundays
<b>620</b> , Salisbury Reds, Swindon's Bus Company	Hungerford - Marlborough St Johns School	Bus service, runs once a day, does not run on weekends

<b>RCB</b> , Ramsbury Community Bus	Ramsbury Community Bus to Hungerford	Runs once a day on Wednesdays and Fridays
<b>X20</b> , Salisbury Reds, Swindon's Bus Company	Marlborough - Hungerford - Newbury	Runs once a day on Fridays
<b>X46</b> , Stagecoach West	Swindon Bus Station - Hungerford Priory Avenue Foot	Runs twice a day, does not run on weekends
Swindon's Bus Company	Wiltshire Connect, demand responsive between Marlborough, Pewsey & Hungerford	06.00-20.00 Mon-Fri & 08.00-18.00 Sat

10.4 In terms of the strategic road network, the M4 runs north of the neighbourhood area, with the Membury services just to the northwest of the neighbourhood area. The M4 connects west London to southwest Wales. It is likely residents of Hungerford use the M4 and adjoining roads to access further service areas, for example Swindon and Reading. Two A Roads run through the neighbourhood area, the A338 through the centre from the north to the south and the A4 running through to Eddington from the west to the east. The A338 runs from Poole in Dorset, to Besselsleigh in Oxfordshire and the A4 runs from Central London to Avonmouth.

10.5 There are also a number of smaller, unclassified roads that allow for access to different locations with the neighbourhood area.

10.6 The Public Right of Way (PRoW) map provided by West Berkshire Council indicates that the neighbourhood area contains some public footpaths, bridleways and byways within its boundary, however these do not connect to all of the neighbourhood area.

## Key issues

10.7 Future development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase the number of vehicles on local roads. This could exacerbate existing traffic and congestion during peak periods and potentially lead to parking issues in the neighbourhood area.

10.8 Car use in the neighbourhood plan area is significantly higher than the district, and region average. Given the rural nature of the neighbourhood plan area, Hungerford will likely continue the reliance on the private vehicle for travel.

10.9 The cycle routes and PRoW within the neighbourhood area could be improved, with better connectivity throughout the area.

## SEA objective

10.10 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

10.11 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Support the objectives within the West Berkshire Local Transport 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?

# 11. Proposed SEA Framework

- 11.1 The SEA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position and policy context that has been explored for a range of SEA topics (as set out in **Chapters 3 to 10**).
- 11.2 The framework consists of a set of headline objectives and supporting assessment questions, which will be used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft HNP (and reasonable alternatives).
- 11.3 **Table 11.1** below outlines the proposed SEA framework, bringing together the objectives and assessment questions that have been set out at the end of each SEA topic.

**Table 11.1: The proposed SEA Framework**

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and enhance nationally and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites?</li> <li>• Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species, including ancient woodland?</li> <li>• Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks?</li> <li>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?</li> <li>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?</li> <li>• Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure?</li> <li>• Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?</li> <li>• Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?</li> </ul>

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
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"> <li>• Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area?</li> <li>• Sustainably manage water run-off, and reduce runoff where possible?</li> <li>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing?</li> <li>• Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?</li> <li>• Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?</li> <li>• Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people’s needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population?</li> <li>• Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including health infrastructure?</li> <li>• Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities?</li> <li>• Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements, including improved access to open space?</li> <li>• Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?</li> </ul>
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance nationally designated heritage assets?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historical interest, and their settings?</li> <li>• Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the HER?</li> <li>• Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?</li> </ul>

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
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"> <li>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?</li> <li>• Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible?</li> <li>• Identify and avoid the development of BMV agricultural land?</li> <li>• Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?</li> <li>• Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality?</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development?</li> <li>• Protect waterbodies from pollution?</li> <li>• Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling?</li> <li>• Avoid any negative impacts on mineral and waste infrastructure?</li> <li>• Improve waste infrastructure in the area?</li> </ul>
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and/ or enhance the integrity and setting of North Wessex Downs NL?</li> <li>• Protect and / or enhance local landscape character and quality of place?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?</li> <li>• Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place?</li> <li>• Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the neighbourhood area's rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?</li> </ul>
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the objectives within the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes?</li> <li>• Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements?</li> </ul>

<b>SEA theme</b>	<b>SEA objective</b>	<b>Supporting assessment questions</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?</li><li>• Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?</li><li>• Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change?</li><li>• Improve road safety and reduce pollution from vehicles?</li></ul>

## 12. Next steps

### Subsequent stages for the SEA process

12.1 Scoping (the current stage) is the second stage of the SEA process:

- Screening.
- **Scoping.**
- Assess reasonable alternatives (to inform preparation of the draft plan); and
- Prepare the Environmental Report (to inform consultation and plan finalisation).

12.2 The next stage will involve appraising reasonable alternatives for the HNP. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be fed back to Hungerford Parish Council so that they might be considered when preparing the draft HNP.

12.3 Once the draft ('pre-submission version') plan has been prepared, it will be subjected to SEA, and the prepared Environmental Report will go out to consultation alongside it.

12.4 Following consultation on the draft HNP and the Environmental Report, the HNP will be finalised and submitted to West Berkshire Council for Independent Examination.

### Consultation on this Scoping Report

12.5 At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies. The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report; in particular, the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues, and the proposed SEA framework.

12.6 The consultation period runs from Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> of December to Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> of January. Comments on the Scoping Report should be sent to:

Olivia Marter, AECOM

Email address: [Olivia.marter@aecom.com](mailto:Olivia.marter@aecom.com)

12.7 All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

