

## 6. Non-Technical Summary

### Context

- 6.1. The subject of the Environmental Report is the draft Isleham Neighbourhood Plan (INP), which was published for consultation from June to September 2021<sup>40</sup>. The plan has been prepared by Isleham Parish Council with the support of local volunteers. This Environmental Report documents the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the draft INP and will inform the continued preparation of the plan. It is expected to be submitted alongside the INP prior to the independent examination of the neighbourhood plan.
- 6.2. SEA is a crucial part of preparing a neighbourhood plan and is essential in demonstrating the plan meets the basic conditions<sup>41</sup> and other statutory requirements. Whilst SEA originates from a European Directive<sup>42</sup>, the process has been incorporated into UK law<sup>43</sup> and remains in force despite the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

### Screening exercise

- 6.3. In June 2021, East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) undertook an initial screening assessment of the INP which concluded the plan requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – this is commonly referred to as being *screened in*.
- 6.4. ECDC also concluded that the INP is not likely to lead to adverse harm to sites designated for nature conservation through the National Sites Network<sup>44</sup> or Ramsar Sites. Therefore, a full Habitats Regulations Assessment is not required.

### Scope

- 6.5. ECDC's screening assessment findings and scope of the Environmental Report were set out in a *Scoping Report*. The Scoping Report was published for consultation with statutory consultation bodies<sup>45</sup> between 29 June and 03 August 2021. The responses from the statutory bodies have been taken into consideration in carrying out the SEA.
- 6.6. The methodology<sup>46</sup> applied in this SEA and the content of this Environmental Report, reflect requirements set out in relevant legislation. This includes key information about the Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Area including an outline of the content and objectives of the INP, its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes, and relevant environmental characteristics of the Neighbourhood Area. These are described in Section 3.
- 6.7. Section 4 provides an initial screening assessment of the INP's policies against various SEA themes<sup>47</sup> to identify the likelihood of significant effects on the environment. This assessment draws on the environmental constraints and characteristics identified in section 3.

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<sup>40</sup> Regulation 14 pre-submission draft consultation

<sup>41</sup> As set out in 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Namely, *Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment* (the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive).

<sup>43</sup> As *The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004* (i.e. the 'SEA Regulations').

<sup>44</sup> Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, formerly part of the Natura 2000 network.

<sup>45</sup> The consultation bodies are Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.

<sup>46</sup> Set out in section 2.

<sup>47</sup> The SEA themes are defined by the SEA Regulations 2004 and include biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage,

6.8. The assessment (at Section 4) identifies the potential for likely significant effects to arise in respect of the development of proposed site allocation ISL7, namely:

- **Potential effects on County Wildlife Sites within, or in proximity of, the Neighbourhood Area;**
- **The proposed site allocation intersects a Source Protection Zone, and therefore has the potential to impact upon groundwater resources; and**
- **The proposed site allocation adjoins Isleham's Conservation Area and is in proximity of non-designated heritage assets of archaeological importance. The effects of development on and the setting of the Conservation Area and non-designated heritage assets are not known at this stage.**

6.9. In addition, through the assessment, it was identified that primary school capacity in Isleham is limited and has influenced decision-making in respect of potential residential development sites in the past.

6.10. A number of the INP's objectives and policies are particularly environmentally conscientious and address environmental issues positively by seeking to improve the quality of new development to reduce its impacts on the environment. The assessment concluded that such policies and objectives, whilst positive, are not likely to constitute 'significant effects' for the purposes of SEA.

#### Alternative policy options

6.11. The potential effects on the environment identified through the screening assessment relate to the development of the draft INP's proposed site allocation IN7. Therefore, the reasonable alternatives considered in the assessment include various 'areas of search' for alternative site allocations. The following five areas of search were identified as 'reasonable alternatives' to draft site allocation ISL7:

- AOS1 - Land west of Hall Barn Road, south of Cornwell Close
- AOS2 - Woodland south of Aves Close
- AOS3 - Land north of The Causeway, south of Sun Street
- AOS4 - Land north of Beck Road, south of Festival Road
- AOS5 - Land west of Sheldrick's Road

6.12. In addition, a further option of omitting the site allocation from the INP was considered.

#### SEA Framework

6.13. Section 5 appraises each option against a SEA Framework. The SEA Framework has been reproduced from ECDC's latest Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

#### Mitigation measures

6.14. The purpose of appraising sites against the SEA Framework is to identify potential impacts of the 'reasonable alternative' policy options in respect of various SA Objectives.

6.15. A number of positive and negative effects were identified in respect of each policy option, and no specific option was identified as being wholly *unsustainable*. Moreover, it is likely that the

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including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the inter-relationship between these issues.

adverse impacts of proposed site allocation ISL7, or Areas of Search 1 to 5, could be appropriately mitigated.

- 6.16. The formulation of mitigation measures was informed through consultation with statutory bodies, and related to potential effects on designated nature conservation sites, groundwater, resources, the historic environment, and availability of school places.
- 6.17. Natural England supported the initial screening assessment's conclusion that significant effects on sites designated for nature conservation are not likely. However, during consultation on the Scoping Report Natural England requested a site-specific policy requirement be included in the INP to avoid recreational disturbance on sites designated for nature conservation.
- 6.18. Environment Agency provided specific advice to mitigate potential adverse impacts on groundwater resources, relating to proposed site allocation ISL7 only.
- 6.19. Following appraisal against the SEA Framework and consultation with statutory bodies, it is recommended that the following mitigation measures be incorporated into the draft INP:

*Recommended mitigation measure 1 - Nature conservation sites (all site options)*

**Development proposals should undertake an ecological assessment which considers the effects of increased recreational pressure on sensitive sites designated for nature conservation.**

*Recommended mitigation measure 2 - Groundwater resources (SA ISL7 only)*

**The Environment Agency's groundwater protection hierarchy should be incorporated into plans and when proposing new development.**

**Proposals for new development or redevelopment should promote sustainable design, incorporate mitigation measures, account for climate change, and protect and enhance the water environment.**

**An assessment of contamination should be undertaken in line with Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) guidance and undertaken by suitably competent persons. Development proposals should only be permitted where it is demonstrated that any identified contamination is capable of being appropriately remediated or rendered innocuous to make the site suitable for the proposed end use.**

**The developer should address risks to controlled waters from contamination following the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Environment Agency Guiding Principles for Land Contamination.**

**The development should support the Government's expectation that SuDS be provided in new developments. Infiltration SuDS need to meet the criteria in Groundwater Protection Position Statements G1 and G9 to G13.**

*Recommended mitigation measure 3 – Historic environment (dependent on site option)*

**The design of the scheme should respond appropriately to Isleham's rich historic environment and be informed by a Heritage Statement which, as a minimum, should:**

- identify the relationship of the site to heritage assets;
- describe the significance of the heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including where appropriate the contribution made by the development site to their setting;
- quantify the impact of the development on the significance of the heritage asset;

and

- **recommend and justify the mitigation measures that should be taken in designing the scheme to avoid or limit harm to heritage assets owing to development within their settings.**

**Proposals for development of the site must be accompanied by pre-determination archaeological fieldwork. [Applies to AOS1, AOS2, AOS5 only]**

**An archaeological condition will be imposed on any planning consent granted for development of this site [Applies to AOS4 only].**

*Recommended mitigation measure 4 – Community infrastructure (all site options)*

**To accommodate the likely increase in demand for school places, development proposals should contribute to the expansion or re-location of Isleham primary school.**

## Monitoring

- 6.20. The purpose of monitoring is to identify adverse effects and enable appropriate remedial action following the plan's implementation. ECDC recommends that Isleham Parish Council monitor the implementation of the INP using the following relevant indicators and targets:

| Indicator  | Target   | Data source  |
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| Condition of designated sites                                  | All of the following sites to achieve 'favourable' or 'unfavourable – recovering' condition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breckland SPA / SAC</li> <li>• Fenland (Chippenham Fen) SAC / Ramsar</li> <li>• Devils Dyke SAC</li> <li>• Fenland (Wicken Fen) SAC / Ramsar</li> <li>• Norfolk Valley Fens SAC</li> <li>• Ouse Washes SPA / SAC / Ramsar</li> <li>• Rex Graham Reserve SAC</li> </ul> | Natural England's Designated Sites View database, available at: <a href="https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/sitelist.aspx">https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/sitelist.aspx</a>  |
| Quantitative and chemical status of groundwater                | Achieve 'good' status for both quantitative and chemical status.   | Objectives data for South Level and Cut-Off Channel Operational Catchment, available at: <a href="https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/OperationalCatchment/3414/objectives">https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/OperationalCatchment/3414/objectives</a> |
| Number of designated heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Area | No net reduction in the number of designated historic assets in the Neighbourhood Area.  | National Heritage List for England, available at: <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/</a>  |

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|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Availability of school places | Maintain sufficient capacity of school places in Isleham | Annual 0-19 Education Organisation Plan, available at:<br><br><a href="https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/working-together-children-families-and-adults/strategies-policies-and-plans/strategies-for-schools-and-learning">https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/working-together-children-families-and-adults/strategies-policies-and-plans/strategies-for-schools-and-learning</a> |
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## Conclusions

- 6.21. The assessment has concluded that as currently drafted, the INP could lead to significant effects on the environment. However, ECDC is satisfied that, subject to incorporating the measures recommended in this Environmental Report, such effects can be adequately mitigated or avoided.
- 6.22. Consequently, the INP, where modified to reflect the recommendations of this Environmental Report, is not expected to give rise to significant effects on the environment.