

Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan

Scoping Report

Prepared by AECOM for the Charing Parish
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

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Quality information

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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Air Quality.....	5
3.	Biodiversity and Geodiversity	6
4.	Climate Change	13
5.	Landscape	21
6.	Historic Environment	28
7.	Land, Soil and Water Resources	33
8.	Population and Community.....	38
9.	Health and Wellbeing.....	46
10.	Transportation.....	49
11.	Next Steps	53

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment in support of Charing's emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The Charing Neighbourhood Plan is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the Ashford Local Plan.
- 1.3 It is currently anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan will be submitted to Ashford Borough Council in early 2020.
- 1.4 Key information relating to the Charing Neighbourhood Plan is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Key facts relating to the Charing Neighbourhood Plan

Name of Responsible Authority	Charing Parish Council
Title of Plan	Charing Neighbourhood Plan
Subject	Neighbourhood planning
Purpose	<p>The Charing Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The plan will be in general conformity with the Ashford Local Plan.</p> <p>The Charing Neighbourhood Plan will be used to guide and shape development within the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>
Timescale	To 2030
Area covered by the plan	The Charing Neighbourhood Plan area covers the parish of Charing in Kent (Figure 1.1).
Summary of content	The Charing Neighbourhood Plan will set out a vision, strategy and range of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Plan contact point	Hugh Billot, Charing Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group hugh@charingkent.org

Relationship of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan with the Ashford Local Plan

- 1.5 The overarching document for the Ashford Local Plan, *the Ashford Local Plan to 2030*¹ was adopted in February 2019 and covers the period between 2011 and 2030. Neighbourhood plans will form part of the development plan for the Borough, alongside, but not as a replacement for the Local Plan. The Local Plan seeks to give communities a solid framework within which appropriate community-led planning policy documents, including neighbourhood plans, can be brought forward. Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and can develop policies and proposals to address

¹ Ashford Borough Council (2019): 'Ashford Local Plan 2030', [online] available at: <
<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/7542/adopted-ashford-local-plan-2030-2.pdf>> [accessed 18/09/19]

local place-based issues. In this way it is intended for the Local Plan to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Ashford Borough, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

- 1.6 The Ashford Local Plan to 2030 supersedes previous policies from Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000, Ashford Core Strategy 2008, Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan 2010, The Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan Document 2010 and The Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document 2012.
- 1.7 Charing is identified in the Local Plan as a village/local service centre which provides day-to-day shopping and leisure needs for the local catchment area. The Local Plan has made site allocations within the parish. The site allocations for Charing are covered under three policies:
 - Policy S28 – Charing – Northdown Service Station, Maidstone Road proposes residential development for an indicative capacity of 20 dwellings;
 - Policy S29 - Charing - Land South of the Arthur Baker Playing Field proposes residential development at Arthur Baker playing fields for residential development with an indicative capacity of 35 units; and
 - Policy S55 – Charing, Land Adjacent to Poppyfields proposes residential development at this site for 180 dwellings.
- 1.8 Policy HOU3a - Residential Windfall Development Within Settlements states that Charing is a settlement where it is acceptable for residential development and infilling of a scale to be satisfactorily integrated within the built-up confines providing that a set of requirements are met. Additionally, Policy HOU5 - Residential Windfall Development in the Countryside states that Charing is also a settlement where it is acceptable for residential development to be adjoining or close to the existing built up confines ensuring that a set of criteria are met.

SEA Explained

- 1.9 The Charing Neighbourhood Plan has been screened in by Ashford Borough Council as requiring a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues.
- 1.10 The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts. Through this approach, the SEA for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.11 SEA is undertaken to meet specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).
- 1.12 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
 - When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 - A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the Draft Plan (i.e the draft Charing Neighbourhood Plan) that presents outcomes from the environmental assessment (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

This scoping report

- 1.13 This 'Scoping Report' is concerned with item 'i' above. It presents a suggested scope for the SEA so that the designated authorities (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency) can provide timely comment.

SEA 'Scoping' Explained

- 1.14 Developing the draft scope for the SEA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:
- Defining the broader context for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan and associated SEA (i.e. EU, UK Government and local policy and commitments), to summarise the regulatory and legislative landscape;
 - Establishing the baseline for the SEA, (i.e. the current and future situation in the area in the absence of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan, in order to help identify the plan's likely significant effects;
 - Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA; and
 - Developing a SEA Framework comprising objectives and appraisal questions on the basis of these issues which can then be used to appraise the draft plan.

Structure of this Report

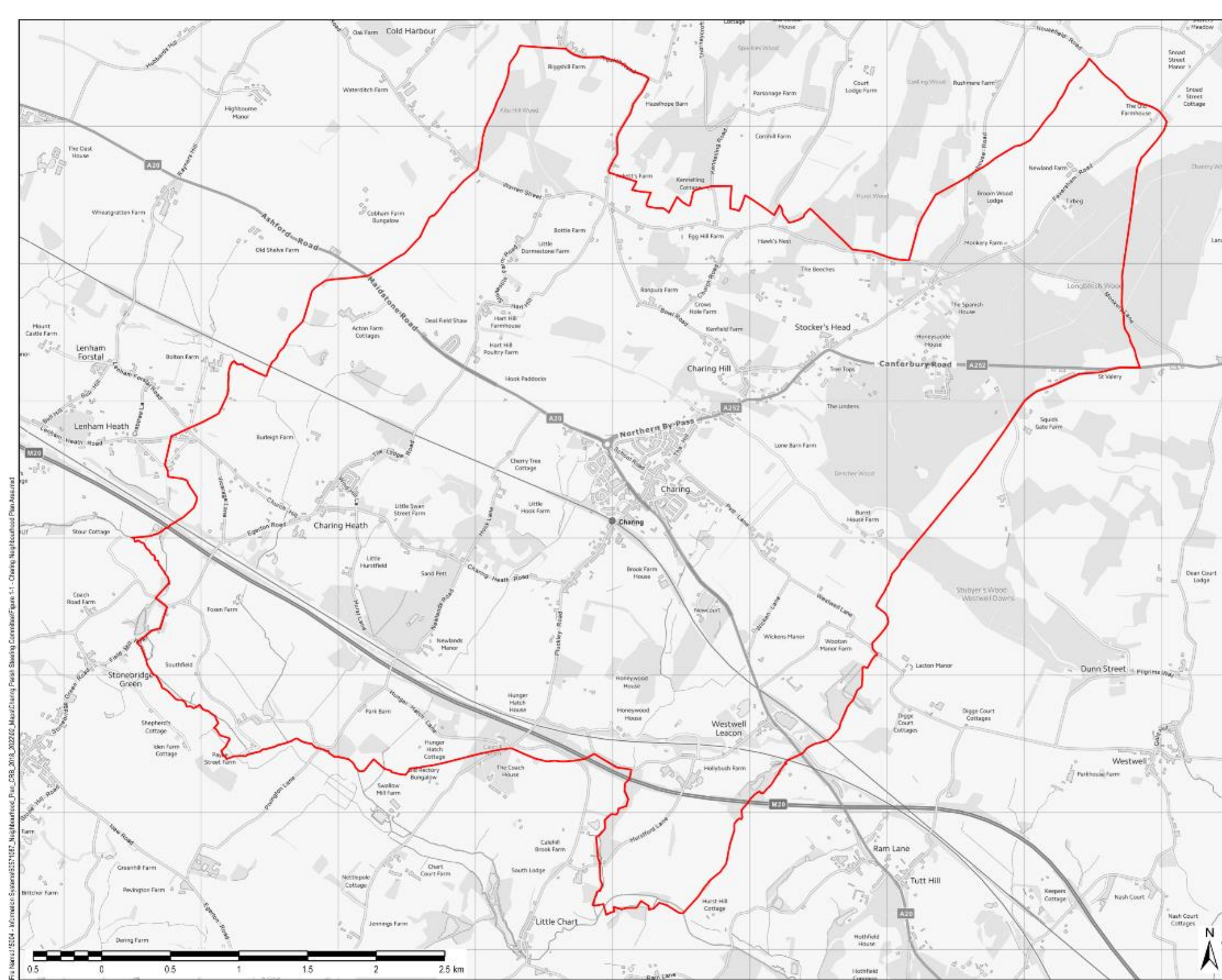
Key sustainability issues

- 1.15 The outcomes of the scoping elements introduced through steps i-iv above have been presented under a series of key environmental themes, as follows:
- Air Quality
 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - Climatic Factors (including flood risk)
 - Landscape
 - Historic Environment
 - Land, Soil and Water Resources
 - Population and Community
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Transportation
- 1.16 The selected environmental themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive². These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects. It is intended that presenting the scoping information under these themes will help enable the reader to easily locate the information of greatest interest to them. Once agreed (i.e. subsequent to consultation on this Scoping Report), the suggested scope presented under these nine themes will provide a methodological 'framework' for the environmental assessment of the draft plan and reasonable alternatives.
- 1.17 The discussion of the scoping information for each theme is presented in Sections 2 to 10.

SEA Framework to assess policy proposals

- 1.18 The SEA Framework provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard 'tests'. Each proposal within the emerging Charing Neighbourhood Plan will be assessed consistently using the framework.
- 1.19 The SEA objectives and appraisal questions proposed for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan SEA are presented under each of the themes in Sections 2 to 10.

² The SEA Directive 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' [our emphasis]



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LEGEND

Charing Neighbourhood Plan Area

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Purpose of Issue: **DRAFT**

Client: **CHARING PARISH STEERING COMMITTEE**

Project Title: **CHARING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Drawing Title: **CHARING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA**

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Date
CN	JN	TS	25/03/2019

ACCOMMODATION OF PROJECT NO: **80571087** Scale @ A3: **1:25,000**

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2. Air Quality

Focus of Theme

- Air pollution sources
- Air quality hotspots
- Air quality management

Policy Context

2.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- *'Planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones is consistent with the local air quality action plan.'*
- *'Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.'*
- *New and existing developments should be prevented from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.*

2.2 Published in January 2018 by the UK Government, 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment'³ sets out a number of goals and policies in order to help the natural world regain and retain good health. In this context, Goal 1 'Clean Air' and the policies contained within 'Chapter 4: Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste' within the 25 year plan directly relate to the air quality SEA theme.

2.3 In terms of the local context, Ashford Borough Council is required under Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995) to monitor air quality across the Borough, report regularly to DEFRA, and take action where nationally set levels are likely to be exceeded. Monitoring is undertaken to assess levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), ozone (O₃), benzene (C₆H₆) and particulates (PM₁₀). Where exceedances exist, areas are declared as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) and local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in the area.

2.4 Policy ENV12 (Air Quality) from the Ashford Local Plan also relates to the Air Quality SEA theme.

³ HM GOV (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf [accessed 18/09/19]

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

- 2.5 As of June 2018, there are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the Neighbourhood Plan area as highlighted in the 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report.⁴
- 2.6 There are no recent or anticipated exceedances of national air quality objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 2.7 Whilst monitoring is not being undertaken in the parish, poor air quality linked to queuing traffic on Station Road as it meets the A20 is a concern amongst local people.

Summary of Future Baseline

- 2.8 New housing and employment provision within the parish and the wider area, including through the Ashford Local Plan, has the potential for adverse effects on air quality through increasing traffic flows and associated levels of pollutants such as NO₂. However, this is unlikely to lead to exceedances of air quality objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan area given the low air pollutant baseline which currently exists.

Key Sustainability Issues

- There are no exceedances or anticipated exceedances of national air quality objectives.
- Traffic and congestion arising from planned new development within and surrounding the area have the potential to increase emissions.
- Poor air quality linked to queuing traffic on Station Road as it meets the A20 is a concern amongst local people.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Air Quality SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Improve air quality in the Neighbourhood Plan area and minimise and/or mitigate against all sources of environmental pollution.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport?• Implement measures (such as appropriate planting and provision of green infrastructure) which will help support air quality in the Neighbourhood Plan area?

⁴ Ashford Borough Council (2018) 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) [online] available at: <<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/6557/ashford-asr-2018.pdf>> [accessed 18/09/19]

3. Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Focus of Theme

- Nature conservation designations
- Geological sites
- Habitats
- Species

Policy Context

- 3.1 At the European level, the EU Biodiversity Strategy⁵ was adopted in May 2011 in order to deliver an established new Europe-wide target to *'halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020'*.
- 3.2 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:
- One of the three overarching objectives of the NPPF is an environmental objective to *'contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment' including by 'helping to improve biodiversity.'*
 - *'Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value[...], take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.'*
 - *'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with the statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'*
 - *'To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:*
 - a) *Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and*
 - b) *Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.'*
- 3.3 The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)⁶ sets out the importance of a healthy, functioning natural environment to sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal well-being. It was in part a response to the UK's failure to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity by 2010 and it signalled a move away from the traditional approach of protecting biodiversity in nature reserves to adopting a landscape approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The NEWP also aims to create a green economy in which economic growth and the health of

⁵ European Commission (2011) Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 [online] available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/EP_resolution_april2012.pdf> [accessed 18/09/19]

⁶ Defra (2012) The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (Natural Environment White Paper) [online] available at: <<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf>> [accessed 18/09/19]

our natural resources sustain each other and markets, business and Government better reflect the value of nature. It includes commitments to:

- Halt biodiversity loss, support functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks by 2020;
- Establish a new voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting to be tested in pilot areas;
- Enable partnerships of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations to establish new Nature Improvement Areas; and
- Address barriers to using green infrastructure to promote sustainable growth.

3.4 Reflecting the commitments within the Natural Environment White Paper and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, 'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services' aims to *'halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people'*⁷.

3.5 The recently published 25 Year Environment Plan⁸ sets out the Government's environmental plan of action over the next quarter century, in the context of Brexit. The Plan aims to tackle the growing problems of waste and soil degradation, improving social justice through tackling pollution and promoting the mental and physical health benefits of the natural world. It also sets out how the Government will address the effects of climate change. These aims are supported by a range of policies which are focused on the following six key areas:

- Using and managing land sustainably;
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes;
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing;
- Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste;
- Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans; and
- Protecting and improving the global environment.

3.6 In this context, Goal 3 'Thriving plants and wildlife' and the policies contained within Chapter 2 'Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' and Chapter 5 'Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans' directly relate to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SEA theme.

3.7 At the local level, policies in the Ashford Local Plan that relate to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity theme include:

- ENV1: Biodiversity;
- ENV2: The Ashford Green Corridor
- ENV3a: Landscape Character and Design;
- ENV4: Light pollution and promoting dark skies; and
- ENV5: Protecting important rural features.

⁷ DEFRA (2011): 'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services', [online] Available to download from: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services>> [accessed 18/0919]

⁸ HM GOV (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf [accessed 18/09/19]

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

European and Nationally designated sites

- 3.8 There are no European designated sites within or in close proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Hart Hill SSSI

- 3.9 Hart Hill SSSI lies within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Notified in March 1992 'Hart Hill SSSI' is approximately 1.4 ha in size and is located towards the north west of the Neighbourhood Plan area. The citation statement for the SSSI states the following⁹:

'This locality shows exposures of the controversial Lenham Beds; deposits variously assigned a Miocene, Pliocene or Pleistocene age by geological authors in the past. They are now, on the basis of their marine gastropod and bivalve fauna, placed in the Pliocene. Lenham Beds lithologies of sand, flints derived from the underlying Chalk and ironstone are present here in pipes up to six metres deep. This is an important site showing deposits from a period otherwise poorly represented in Britain.'

- 3.10 The most recent condition assessments for the SSSI indicate that 100% of the SSSI is considered to be in a 'favourable' condition.

Charing Beech Hangers SSSI

- 3.11 A small section of Charing Beech Hangers SSSI lies within the Neighbourhood Plan area on the eastern boundary. Notified in April 1986 'Charing Beech Hangers SSSI' is approximately 52.6 ha in size. The citation statement for the SSSI states the following¹⁰:

'This site is representative of woodland on Middle and Upper Chalk. Much of the site lies on a steep, south-west facing escarpment which is chiefly dominated by mature pedunculate oak-ash beechwood, although hazel coppice is also abundant. The diverse ground flora is characteristic of the thin chalk soils and includes a number of scarce species. Invertebrates recorded include the rare slug Limax tenellus and the square spot moth Ectropis consonaria.

Beech woodland is best represented at the south-eastern end of the escarpment, especially on the upper slopes where beech occurs in association with oak, ash and sycamore. There is prolific sycamore regeneration, and the dense shade results in an impoverished ground flora of bluebells Hyacinthoides non-scripta and bramble. On the lower slopes beech is less abundant, and there is a more varied understorey which includes yew, field maple, wayfaring tree, wild privet and elder. The sparse ground flora is chiefly dominated by dog's mercury Mercurialis perennis with false brome grass Brachypodium sylvaticum, bramble and ivy Hedera helix occurring frequently. Spurge laurel Daphne laureola and nettle-leaved bellflower Campanula trachelium are also present. Several scarce plants indicative of long-established woodland occur, including yellow bird's nest Monotropa hypopitys, tall broomrape Orobanche elatior and the orchids white helleborine Cephalanthera damasonium, violet helleborine Epipactis purpurata, fly orchid Ophrys insectifera and bird's nest orchid Neottia nidus-avis. Broad-leaved helleborine Epipactis helleborine is found in scattered grassy clearings with fairy flax Linum catharticum and common rockrose Helianthemum nummularium.

⁹ Natural England (no date): 'Hart Hill SSSI', [online] available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1000774&SiteName=hart&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=> [accessed 18/09/19]

¹⁰ Natural England (no date): 'Charing Beech Hangers SSSI', [online] available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1001734&SiteName=&countyCode=24&responsiblePerson=> [accessed 18/09/19]

Woodland dominated by beech, hazel, ash and sycamore, has become established in disused chalk pits at the top of the slope. The understorey layer is similar to that on the lower slopes but also includes hazel, ash, whitebeam and dogwood coppice.

The north-western half of the escarpment is dominated by hazel coppice with some ash under a few large standards of beech and ash. The ground flora is diverse and the species composition resembles that on the lower slopes to the south-east. This woodland type merges with sweet chestnut and hornbeam coppice under pedunculate oak standards on the upper slopes. The sweet chestnut has been cut recently but the hornbeam is more mature.

*Invertebrates recorded from the site include the rare slug *Limax tenellus* and several scarce moths, including *Xestia rhomboidea*, *Depressaria douglasella*, *Ectropis consonaria*, *Pandemis cinnamomeana*, *Anania stachydalis* and *Ptycholomoides aeriferanus*.*

- 3.12 The most recent condition assessments for the SSSI indicate that 100% of the SSSI is considered to be in a 'favourable' condition.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones

- 3.13 SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a GIS tool/dataset which maps zones around each SSSI according to the sensitivities of the features for which it is notified. They specify the types of development that have the potential to have adverse impacts at a given location, including residential, rural-residential and rural non-residential. Natural England is a statutory consultee on development proposals that might impact on SSSIs.
- 3.14 Other than a 50m buffer around Hart Hill and Charing Beech Hangers SSSI, the rest of the Neighbourhood Plan area will not be affected by the SSSI impact risk zones for the type of development likely to be brought forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Locally important sites

Local Wildlife Sites

- 3.15 Local Wildlife Sites are present within the Neighbourhood Plan area including: Charing Hill Chalk Pit (located in the centre of the Neighbourhood Plan area), Longbeech Wood (located towards the east of the Neighbourhood Plan area) and Hurst Wood (located in the centre of the Neighbourhood Plan area, south west of the built up area of Charing).

Priority Habitats

- 3.16 There are a variety of BAP Priority Habitats located within and/or adjacent to the Neighbourhood Plan area, predominantly areas of deciduous woodland, lowland fens and good quality semi-improved grassland.
- 3.17 **Figure 3.1** below shows the designated wildlife sites and BAP priority habitats located within and adjacent to the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Summary of Future Baseline

- 3.18 Habitats and species are likely to continue to be offered protection through the higher level planning framework, however; they will potentially face increasing pressures from future development within the Neighbourhood Plan area with the potential for negative effects on the wider ecological network, which can be exacerbated by the effects of climate change.
- 3.19 The Neighbourhood Development Plan presents an opportunity to maximise benefits for biodiversity by including consideration of important habitats, species, undesignated sites, and connections between designated sites and undesignated sites at a localised scale, and at an early stage of planning for future growth. This is particularly relevant in the siting of new small scale housing development.

Key Sustainability Issues

- Hart Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located within the Neighbourhood Plan area and a small section of Charing Beech Hangers SSSI is also located within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Local Wildlife Sites are present within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- There are numerous Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats present in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the status of the nationally and locally designated sites within and within proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan area including Hart Hill SSSI and Charing Beech Hangers SSSI?• Achieve a net gain in biodiversity?• Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks?• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?

4. Climate Change

Focus of Theme

- Contribution to climate change
- Effects of climate change
- Climate change adaption
- Flood risk

Policy Context

- 4.1 The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report aiming to understand the current and future climate risks and opportunities. The evidence report contains six priority risk areas requiring additional action in the next five years, see below¹¹ :
- Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses and infrastructure;
 - Risks to health, well-being and productivity from high temperatures;
 - Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry;
 - Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity;
 - Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
 - New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants and animals.
- 4.2 The UK Climate Change Act¹² was passed in 2008 and established a framework to develop an economically credible emissions reduction path. It also highlighted the role it would take in contributing to collective action to tackle climate change under the Kyoto Protocol, and more recently as part of the UN-led Paris Agreement.
- 4.3 The Climate Change Act includes the following:
- 2050 Target. The Act commits the UK to reducing emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels.
 - Carbon Budgets. The Act requires the Government to set legally binding 'carbon budgets'. A carbon budget is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period. The carbon budgets are designed to reflect the cost-effective path to achieving the UK's long-term objectives. The first five carbon budgets have been put into legislation and run up to 2032.
 - The Committee on Climate Change was set up to advise the Government on emissions targets, and report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

¹¹ GOV.UK: 'UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report January 2017', [online] available at:

<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017>> [accessed 18/09/19]

¹² GOV.UK (2008): 'Climate Change Act 2008', [online] available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>> [accessed 18/09/19]

- The National Adaptation Programme requires the Government to assess the risks to the UK from climate change, prepare a strategy to address them, and encourage key organisations to do the same. For more detail, visit the UK adaptation policy page 13.

4.4 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- One of the three overarching objectives of the NPPF is an environmental objective to *'contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment' including by 'mitigating and adapting to climate change' and 'moving to a low carbon economy.' 'The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.'*
- *'Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.'*
- *'Local planning authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside areas identified in local plans or other strategic policies that are being taken forward through neighbourhood planning.'*
- *Direct development away from areas at highest risk of flooding (whether existing or future). 'Where development is necessary, it should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.'*

4.5 The Flood and Water Management Act¹⁴ highlights that alternatives to traditional engineering approaches to flood risk management include:

- Incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings, and retro-fitting properties at risk (including historic buildings);
- Utilising the environment in order to reduce flooding, for example through the management of land to reduce runoff and through harnessing the ability of wetlands to store water;
- Identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere;
- Planning to roll back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion; and
- Creating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).¹⁵

4.6 At the local level, policies in the Ashford Local Plan that relate to the Climate Change theme include:

- ENV6: Flood Risk;
- ENV9: Sustainable Drainage;
- ENV10: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy;

¹³ Committee on Climate Change (2017): 'UK Adaptation Policy' [online] available at <<https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-adaptation-policy/>> [accessed 18/09/19]

¹⁴ Flood and Water Management Act (2010) [online] available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents>> [accessed 18/09/19]

¹⁵ N.B. The provision of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 came into force on the 1st of October 2012 and makes it mandatory for any development in England or Wales to incorporate SuDs.

- ENV11: Sustainable Design and Construction – Non-residential; and
- ENV12: Air Quality.

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

Contribution to climate change

- 4.7 In relation to greenhouse gas emissions, source data from the Department of Energy and Climate Change suggests that Ashford has lower per capita emissions in comparison to the South East of England and England as a whole since 2005 (see **Table 4.1**). Ashford has also seen a 35.5% reduction in the percentage of total emissions per capita between 2005 and 2016, slightly lower than the reductions for the South East of England (36.7%) and England (37.6%).

Table 4.1: Carbon dioxide emissions and sources, plus emissions per capita, 2005-2016¹⁶

	Industrial and Commercial (t CO ₂)	Domestic (t CO ₂)	Transport (t CO ₂)	Total (t CO ₂)
Ashford				
2005	2.5	2.5	3.1	7.6
2006	2.5	2.6	3.0	7.5
2007	2.7	2.4	3.0	7.5
2008	2.5	2.4	2.8	7.1
2009	2.3	2.2	2.6	6.5
2010	2.4	2.4	2.5	6.7
2011	2.0	2.1	2.4	6.0
2012	2.1	2.2	2.5	6.1
2013	2.0	2.1	2.4	5.9
2014	1.7	1.8	2.4	5.3
2015	1.6	1.7	2.5	5.2
2016	1.4	1.6	2.5	4.9
South East				
2005	3.0	2.5	2.6	7.9
2006	3.0	2.5	2.6	7.9
2007	2.8	2.4	2.6	7.6
2008	2.7	2.4	2.4	7.3

¹⁶ Department of Energy and Climate Change (2018) 2005 to 2016 UK local and regional CO₂ emissions – data tables [online] available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-2016>> [accessed 18/09/19]

	Industrial and Commercial (t CO ₂)	Domestic (t CO ₂)	Transport (t CO ₂)	Total (t CO ₂)
2009	2.4	2.2	2.3	6.6
2010	2.4	2.3	2.3	6.8
2011	2.2	2.0	2.2	6.2
2012	2.2	2.2	2.2	6.4
2013	2.1	2.1	2.1	6.1
2014	1.7	1.7	2.2	5.4
2015	1.6	1.7	2.2	5.3
2016	1.4	1.6	2.2	5.0
England				
2005	3.8	2.5	2.3	8.5
2006	3.8	2.5	2.2	8.4
2007	3.6	2.4	2.2	8.1
2008	3.5	2.4	2.1	7.8
2009	3.0	2.1	2.0	7.0
2010	3.0	2.3	2.0	7.2
2011	2.7	2.0	1.9	6.5
2012	2.9	2.1	1.9	6.8
2013	2.8	2.0	1.9	6.6
2014	2.4	1.7	1.9	5.9
2015	2.3	1.6	1.9	5.7
2016	2.0	1.5	1.9	5.3

Potential effects of climate change

- 4.8 Following the success of the UK Climate Projections released in 2009 (UKCP09), the Met Office recently released the UK Climate Projections for 2018 (UKCP18).¹⁷ UKCP18 provides the most up to date climate observations and projections out to 2100, using cutting-edge climate science. Projections are broken down to a regional level across the UK and are shown in probabilistic form, which illustrate the potential range of changes and the level of confidence in each prediction.
- 4.9 As highlighted by the research, the median estimate for effects of climate change on the South East by 2040-2059 are as follows:
- Increases in mean summer temperature of 1.5-2.5°C, and mean winter temperature increases of 1-2°C; and
 - Decreases in mean summer precipitation of up to 30%, and increases in mean winter precipitation of up to 30%.
- 4.10 Resulting from these changes, a range of risks may exist for the Neighbourhood Plan area, including:
- Effects on water resources from climate change;
 - Reduction in availability of groundwater for extraction;
 - Adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain;
 - Increased risk of flooding, including increased vulnerability to 1:100 year floods;
 - A need to increase the capacity of wastewater treatment plants and sewers;
 - A need to upgrade flood defences;
 - Soil erosion due to flash flooding;
 - Loss of species that are at the edge of their southerly distribution;
 - Spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution;
 - Increased demand for air-conditioning;
 - Increased drought and flood related problems such as soil shrinkages and subsidence;
 - Risk of road surfaces melting more frequently due to increased temperature; and
 - Flooding of roads.

¹⁷ Data released 26th November 2018 [online] available at: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/collaboration/ukcp> [accessed 18/09/19]

Flood risk

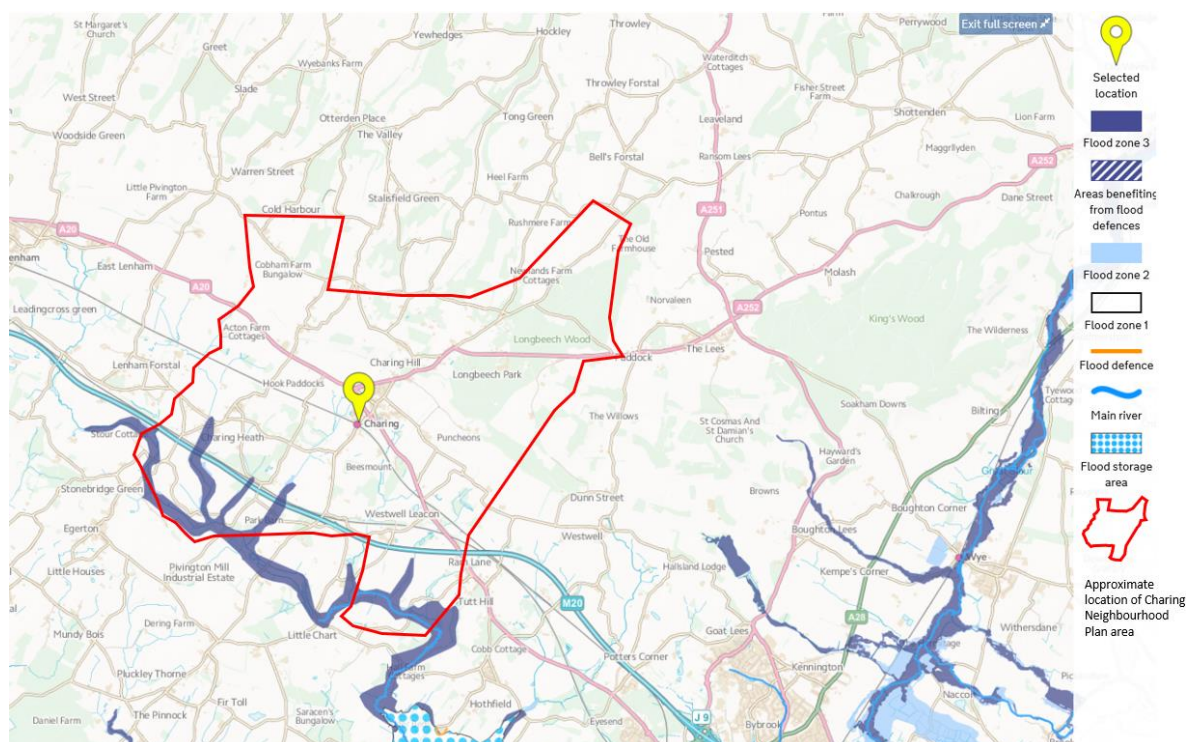


Figure 4.1: Fluvial flood risk within the Neighbourhood Plan area¹⁸

- 4.11 As shown in **Figure 4.1**, the majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area is located within Flood Zone 1, showing that there is a <0.1% chance (1 in 1000) of river flooding in any given year. There are areas of land adjacent to the Great Stour (southern area of the Neighbourhood Plan area) which are located within Flood Risk Zone 3, and have a >1% chance of being flooded each year.
- 4.12 The Great Stour is a section of the River Stour and as a result of historic flooding, two flood storage reservoirs were constructed and became operational in 1989 to provide a level of flood alleviation around Ashford.¹⁹
- 4.13 Surface water drainage and sewer flooding is a risk for some parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area, with sections of medium-high risk predominantly located around the Great Stour and its tributaries, as depicted in **Figure 4.2**.

¹⁸ GOV UK (2019): 'Flood Map for Planning', [online] available at: <<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>> [accessed 18/09/19]

¹⁹ JBA Consulting (2014): 'Ashford Borough Council - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment' [online] available at: <<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/5478/final-ashford-sfra-report-july-2014.pdf>> [accessed 18/09/19]

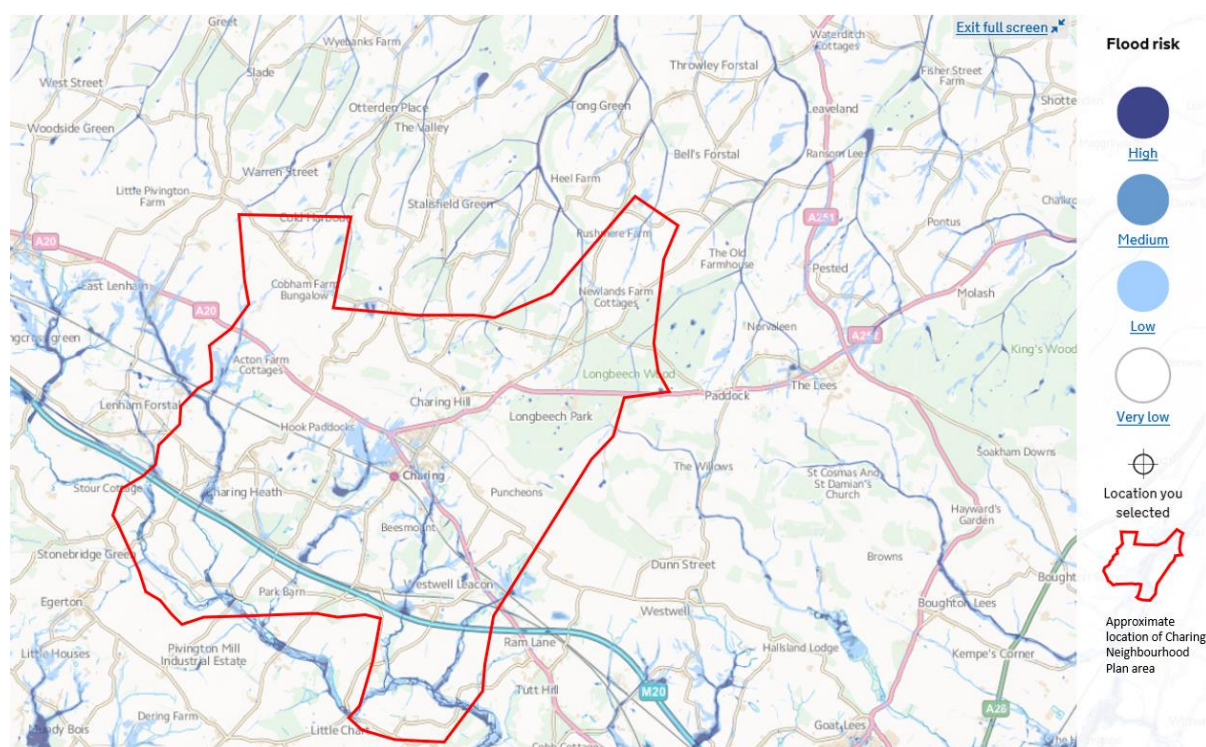


Figure 4.2: Surface water flood risk within the Neighbourhood Plan area²⁰

Summary of Future Baseline

- 4.14 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the Neighbourhood Plan area, with increases in mean summer and winter temperatures, increases in mean precipitation in winter and decreases in mean precipitation in summer. This is likely to increase the risks associated with climate change, with an increased need for resilience and adaptation.
- 4.15 In terms of climate change contribution, per capita greenhouse gas emissions generated in the Neighbourhood Plan area may continue to decrease with wider adoption of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies, including electric cars and busses. However, increases in the built footprint of the Neighbourhood Plan area would contribute to increases in the absolute levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Key Sustainability Issues

- Any increases in the built footprint of the Neighbourhood Plan area (associated with the delivery of new housing and employment land) has the potential to increase overall greenhouse gas emissions in the parish.
- Ashford has seen a 35.5% reduction in the percentage of total emissions per capita between 2005 and 2016, slightly lower than the reductions for the South East of England (36.7%) and England (37.6%).
- The areas at highest risk of fluvial flooding (Flood Zone 3) in the Neighbourhood Plan area are those adjacent to the Great Stour.
- Within Charing, there are areas of land at medium-high risk of surface water flooding.

²⁰ GOV UK (2017): 'Long term flood risk assessment for locations in England', [online] available to access from: <<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk/>> [accessed 18/09/19]

- The Charing Neighbourhood Plan should seek to increase the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan area to the effects of climate change by supporting and encouraging adaptation strategies.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Climate Change SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan area	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of journeys made? • Reduce the need to travel? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing surface water runoff (either within the plan area or downstream)? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

5. Landscape

Focus of Theme

- Internationally and nationally protected landscapes
- Landscape and townscape character and quality
- Designated and non-designated sites and areas
- Visual amenity

Policy Context

5.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- *'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty [...]. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.'*
- Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy making provision for *'conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure.'*
- Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments *'are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation of change (such as increased densities).'*
- *'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*
 - i. *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils*
 - ii. *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and*
 - iii. *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.'*

5.2 At the local level, policies in the Ashford Local Plan that relate to the Landscape theme include:

- ENV3a: Landscape Character and Design;
- ENV3b: Landscape Character and Design in the AONBs; and
- ENV5: Protecting important rural features.

5.3 The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan²¹ sets out the vision of the future of this special landscape. It seeks to address key issues and threats and sets out aims, and policies and actions for the positive management of the Kent Downs. The vision of the plan is *'In 2034... the qualities and distinctive features of the Kent Downs AONB, the dramatic south-facing scarp, secluded dry valleys, network of tiny lanes, isolated farmsteads, churches and oasts, orchards, dramatic cliffs, the ancient woodlands and delicate chalk*

²¹ Kent Downs AONB (2014) The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019 [online] available at: < <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/explore-kent-bucket/uploads/sites/7/2018/04/18113849/KDAONB-Management-Plan.pdf> > [accessed 18/09/19]

grassland along with the ancient, remote and tranquil qualities, are valued, secured and strengthened.'

5.4 The Kent Downs AONB management plan seeks for a landscape in which:

- The vision, policies and actions of the AONB Management Plan are supported, promoted and delivered through strong collaborative partnerships, individual actions, strategy and policy and development management decisions; and
- The AONB Partnership provides leadership and direction for the future of the AONB but is open to the views of all people, and is adaptive and flexible to change.

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

Kent Downs AONB

5.5 The north eastern half of the Neighbourhood Plan area lies within Kent Downs AONB (as shown in **Figure 5.1**). Designated in 1968, the Kent Downs AONB is made up of diverse special characteristics and qualities which together distinguish it as a landscape of national and international importance and which are consistently identified and valued by the public, individuals, institutions, organisations and experts alike. The special characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs natural beauty have been identified as:

- Dramatic landform and views;
- Biodiversity-rich habitats;
- Farmed landscape;
- Woodland and trees;
- Geology and natural resources;
- Vibrant communities;
- Development pressures; and
- Access, enjoyment and understanding.

5.6 The Kent Downs AONB continues from the Surrey border in a widening ribbon of rolling countryside to meet the sea at the cliffs of Dover. Inland, the Downs rise to over 240m, cresting in a prominent escarpment above the Weald to the south. It is traversed by the three prominent river valleys of the Darent, Medway and Stour.²²

5.7 The AONB roughly follows the southeast's outcrop of chalk and greensand, the two ridges running parallel with each other to the coast. The chalk ridge, with its characteristic dip slope and dry valleys, has great wildlife importance in its unimproved chalk grassland, scrub communities and broadleaved woodlands.²³

5.8 The Kent Downs AONB is made up of 13 main character areas in recognition of the local identity of the different areas of the AONB landscape.²⁴ The Neighbourhood Plan area lies within Hollingbourne Vale and Mid Kent Downs character areas.

5.9 The Hollingbourne Vale character area has the following key characteristics:

²² National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (2019) Kent Downs AONB [online] available at: <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/aonbs/kent-downs> [accessed 19/09/19]

²³ National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (2019) Kent Downs AONB [online] available at: <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/aonbs/kent-downs> [accessed 19/09/19]

²⁴ Kent Downs AONB Unit (2019), Landscape character [online] available at: < <https://www.kentdowns.org.uk/landscape-management/landscape-character/> > [accessed 19/09/19]

- Yew dominated scarp woodlands in the west, open cultivated fields on the scarp in the east, with many hedgerow trees;
- Extensive views from the scarp;
- Large arable scarp foot fields;
- Some mixed farmland;
- Predominantly grassland on scarp;
- Thick hedges along Pilgrim's Way;
- Historic springline villages; and
- Scarp crossed by considerable number of roads and footpaths (some, former drove-ways).

5.10 The overall landscape character objectives for the Hollingbourne Vale character area are to:

- Restore a strong hedgerow network on the scarp foot based on remaining field boundaries, and to return cultivated areas of the scarp to species rich chalk grassland;
- Conserve, create and manage a good hedgerow network, including patches along Pilgrim's Way; and
- Reduce the impact of the existing road and railway network on the landscape.

5.11 The Mid Kent Downs character area has the following key characteristics:

- Series of wide ridges and steep-sided dry valleys;
- Extensive coppice woodlands and some large expanses of conifer woodland;
- Much surviving original ancient woodland;
- Large arable fields on the plateaux;
- Hedgerow trees prominent in parts;
- Orchards and shelterbelts around Chatham, Bicknor and Faversham;
- Tiny, scattered villages linked by narrow lanes; and
- Hop gardens and parkland.

5.12 The overall landscape character objectives for the Mid Kent Downs character area are to:

- Manage and restore hedgerows, trees and woodlands, especially in the valleys;
- Seek to conserve the small scale of the roads and villages and the remote quality of the countryside; and
- Maintain the existing diversity of orchards, hop gardens, parkland and farmland, and control urban fringe pressures.

National Character Areas

5.13 National Character Areas (NCAs) are landscape areas which share similar characteristics, following natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries. Developed by Natural England, NCA profiles describe the natural and cultural features that shape each of these landscapes, providing a broad context to their character. The southern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area is within the 'Wealden Greensand' NCA²⁵ and the northern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area is within 'North Downs' NCA²⁶.

²⁵ Natural England (2014): 'NCA Profile 120: Wealden Greensand (NE465)', [online] available at: <<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5331490007154688?category=587130>> [accessed 19/09/19]

²⁶ Natural England (2014): 'NCA Profile 119: North Downs (NE431)', [online] available at: <<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/7036466>> [accessed 19/09/19]

5.14 Around a quarter of the Wealden Greensand NCA is made up of extensive belts of woodland and is an area of outstanding landscape, geological, historical and biodiversity interest. Development pressures are likely to pose significant challenges within the NCA, with increasing demands on water resources, the landscape, biodiversity and the sense of place. Key characteristics of this NCA include:

- A long, narrow belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography, including outcrops of Upper Greensand, Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. The Greensand forms escarpments separated by a clay vale: the overall undulating and organic landform – particularly in the west – gives a sense of intimacy to the landscape.
- There are extensive areas of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch, with some areas having been converted to sweet chestnut coppice in past centuries.
- Fields are predominantly small or medium, in irregular patterns derived from medieval enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows and shaws, with character and species reflecting the underlying soils. On the clay, hedgerows are dense and species-rich, with occasional standard oaks. On more acidic soils they generally consist of hawthorn and blackthorn, also with occasional oak trees, and often trimmed low.
- Agricultural land comprises a mosaic of mixed farming, with pasture and arable land set within a wooded framework. There is a fruit-growing orchard belt in Kent and also around Selborne in Hampshire.
- The rural settlement pattern is a mixture of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and some nucleated villages. Large houses set within extensive parks and gardens are found throughout the area.
- In the east of Kent, the Wealden Greensand has a gentler and more open aspect than in the wooded west. This part of the area is also more marked by development, with the presence of major towns and communication corridors such as the M26, M25 and M20 motorways and railway lines including the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (High Speed 1).
- There are a range of historic landscape features, including field monuments, old military defences, prehistoric tumuli, iron-age hill forts, Roman forts, the Royal Military Canal, small quarries and relics of the iron industry (including hammer ponds). Sunken lanes cut into the sandstone are a historic and characteristic feature, as are older deer parks and more recent 18th-century parklands.
- Surface water is an important feature across the Greensand, with many streams and rivers passing through the NCA: the Western Rother, Wey, Arun, Medway and the Great and East Stour.

5.15 The North Downs NCA forms a chain of chalk hills extending from the Hog's Back in Surrey and ending dramatically at the internationally renowned White Cliffs of Dover. The settlement pattern is characterised by traditional small, nucleated villages, scattered farms and large houses with timber framing, flint walls and Wealden brick detailing. Twisting sunken lanes, often aligned along ancient drove roads, cut across the scarp and are a feature of much of the dip slope. The Kent Downs and Surrey Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations are testament to the scenic qualities and natural beauty of the area. Key characteristics of this NCA include:

- Cretaceous Chalk forms the backbone of the North Downs. A distinctive chalk downland ridge rises up from the surrounding land, with a steep scarp slope to the south providing extensive views across Kent, Surrey and Sussex and across the Channel seascape to France.
- Chalk soils are predominant across the NCA but the upper part of the dip slope is capped by extensive clay-with-flint deposits. Patches of clay and sandy soils also occur with coombe deposits common in dry valleys.

- The area is cut by the deep valleys of the Stour, Medway, Darent, Wey and Mole. The river valleys cut through the chalk ridge, providing distinctive local landscapes which contrast with the steep scarp slope.
- Woodland is found primarily on the steeper slopes of the scarp, valley sides and areas of the dip slope capped with clay-with-flints. Wellwooded hedgerows and shaws are an important component of the field boundaries, contributing to a strongly wooded character. Much of the woodland is ancient.
- Tracts of species-rich chalk grassland and patches of chalk heath are important downland habitats and of international importance.
- Ancient paths, drove roads and trackways, often sunken, cross the landscape and are a distinctive feature of the dip slope. Defensive structures such as castles, hill forts and Second World War installations, and historic parks, buildings and monuments are found throughout.
- Small, nucleated villages and scattered farmsteads including oasts and barns form the settlement pattern, with local flint, chalk and Wealden brick the vernacular materials.

Local Landscape Character

- 5.16 As part of the previous Core Strategy, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was prepared to promote regard for the landscape and to ensure new development makes a positive contribution to the landscape. The Landscape Character SPD was published in 2011²⁷. The document draws on two Landscape Character Assessments which were carried out in 2005 and 2009.
- 5.17 The Kent Downs AONB has not been surveyed as part of the Landscape Character Assessment work and is treated as separate landscape character areas, which should be obtained from the AONB management plans (as discussed above). The south western half of the Neighbourhood Plan area which is not located in Kent Downs AONB is in a landscape character area identified as 'Charing Heath Farmlands'. The key characteristics of this landscape character area are:
- Mixed farmland;
 - Varied field pattern;
 - Small woodland copses and plantations of chestnut coppice;
 - Pine woodland;
 - Mature isolated trees across pasture;
 - Heathland character with a significant amount of gorse and silver birch;
 - Sand extraction and reed filled ponds post extraction; and
 - Major transport links.

Summary of Future Baseline

- 5.18 New development has the potential to lead to incremental but small changes in landscape and townscape character and quality in and around the Neighbourhood Plan area. This includes from the loss of landscape features and areas with an important visual amenity value.
- 5.19 Inappropriate levels of development within the open countryside could negatively impact upon the landscape features which contribute to the distinctive character of the special qualities of the AONB.

²⁷ Ashford Borough Council (2011): 'Landscape Character SPD', [online] available at: <
https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/6150/landscapespd_adopted_april_2011.pdf> [accessed 19/09/19]

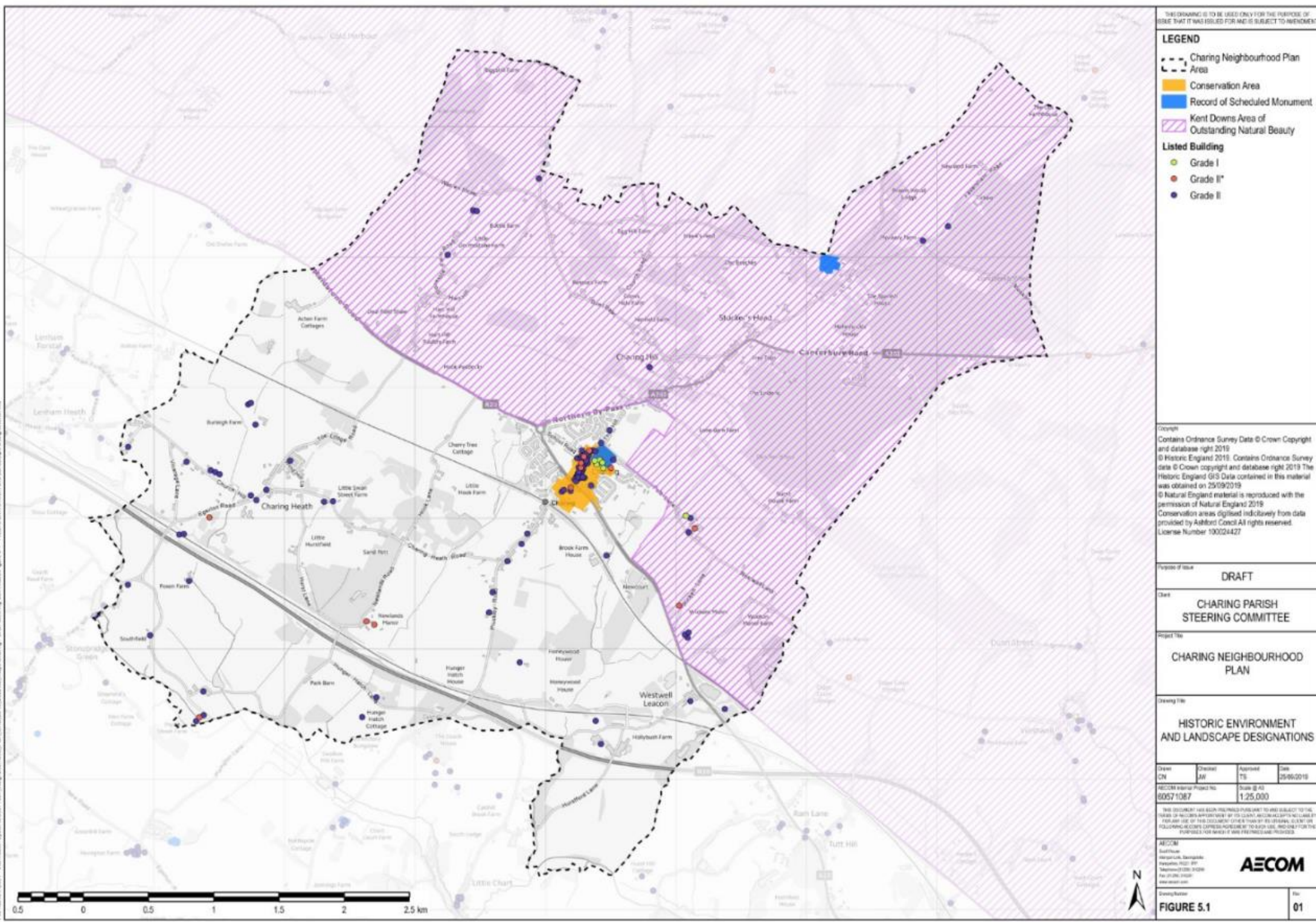
Key Sustainability Issues

- The north eastern half of the Neighbourhood Plan area lies within Kent Downs AONB which is recognised as a nationally designated landscape.
- The Kent Downs AONB is made up of 13 main character areas in recognition of the local identity of the different areas of the AONB landscape. The Neighbourhood Plan area lies within Hollingbourne Vale and Mid Kent Downs character areas.
- The southern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the Wealden Greensand NCA which is identified as an area of outstanding landscape, geological, historical and biodiversity interest.
- The northern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the North Downs NCA which is identified for its scenic qualities and natural beauty.
- The south western part of the Neighbourhood Plan area which is not in Kent Downs AONB is described in a local landscape study of being an area of: mixed farmland, varied field pattern, small woodland copses and plantations of chestnut coppice.
- The potential effects of development proposed through the Charing Neighbourhood Plan may have implications for the overall character and appearance of Charing in the future.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Landscape SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and villagescapes.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the Kent Downs AONB, in line with the Management Plan? • Conserve and enhance locally important landscape and villagescape features within the Neighbourhood Plan area? • Conserve and enhance local diversity and character?

File Name: I:\0304 - Information Systems\0507\087 - Map\Charing Parish Steering Committee\Fig 5.1 - Historic Environment and Landscape Designations.mxd



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LEGEND

- Charing Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Conservation Area
- Record of Scheduled Monument
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Listed Building
 - Grade I
 - Grade II*
 - Grade II

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Purpose of Issue
DRAFT

Client
CHARING PARISH STEERING COMMITTEE

Project Title
CHARING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Drawing Title
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Date
CN	JW	TS	25/06/2019

AECOM Internal Project No. 60571087 Scale @ A0 1:25,000

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FIGURE 5.1

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6. Historic Environment

Focus of Theme

- Designated and non-designated heritage assets
- Setting, special qualities and significance of heritage assets
- Locally important heritage assets
- Historic character of the Neighbourhood Plan area

Policy Context

6.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Heritage assets should be recognised as an *'irreplaceable resource'* that should be conserved in a *'manner appropriate to their significance'*, taking account of *'the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits'* of conservation, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness.
- Plans should set out a *'positive strategy'* for the *'conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment'*, including those heritage assets that are most at risk.
- *'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'*

6.2 The policies contained within Chapter 2 'Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' and Goal 6 'Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment' of the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' directly relates to the Landscape and Historic Environment SEA theme.

6.3 The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England²⁸ sets out its vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life.

6.4 Historic England is the statutory body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment. Guidance and advice notes provide essential information for local planning authorities, neighbourhood groups, developers, consultants, landowners and other interested parties on historic environment considerations, and are regularly reviewed and updated in light of legislative changes. The following guidance and advice notes are particularly relevant and should be read in conjunction with the others.

6.5 Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1 (February 2016)²⁹ outlines ways to manage change that conserves and enhances historic areas in order to positively contribute to sustainable development. Principally, the advice note emphasises the importance of:

²⁸ HM Government (2010) The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England [online] available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6763.aspx [accessed 19/09/19]

²⁹ Historic England (2016): 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Advice Note 1', [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-designation-appraisal-management-advice-note-1/> [accessed 19/09/19]

- Understanding the different types of special architectural and historic interest which underpin the designations; and
 - Recognising the value of implementing controls through the appraisal and/or management plan which positively contribute to the significance and value of conservation areas.
- 6.6 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA): Historic England Advice Note 8 (December 2016)³⁰ provides support to all stakeholders involved in assessing the effects of certain plans and programmes on the historic environment. It offers advice on heritage considerations during each stage of the SA/SEA process and helps to establish the basis for robust and comprehensive assessments.
- 6.7 Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition) (December 2017)³¹ provides general advice on understanding setting, and how it may contribute to the significance of heritage assets and allow that significance to be appreciated, as well as advice on how views can contribute to setting. Specifically, Part 2 of the advice note outlines a five stepped approach to conducting a broad assessment of setting:
- Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
 - Step 2: Asses the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
 - Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
 - Step 4: Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
 - Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.
- 6.8 Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic England Advice Note 11 (October 2018)³² outlines the importance of considering the historic environment whilst preparing the plan (section 1), which culminates in a checklist of relevant of issues to consider, followed by an overview of what this means in terms of evidence gathering (section 2). Sections 3 to 5 of the advice note focus on how to translate evidence into policy, understand the SEA process and Historic England's role in neighbourhood planning.
- 6.9 At the local level, policies in the Ashford Local Plan that relate to the Historic Environment theme include:
- ENV3a: Landscape Character and Design;
 - ENV5: Protecting important rural features;
 - ENV13: Conservation and Enhancement of Heritage Assets;
 - ENV14: Conservation Areas; and
 - ENV15: Archaeology.

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

6.10 **Figure 5.1** identifies designated heritage assets within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

³⁰ Historic England (2016): 'SA and SEA: Advice Note 8' [online] available at: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>> [accessed 19/09/19]

³¹ Historic England (2017): 'Setting of Heritage Assets: 2nd Edition', [online] available to download via: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>> [accessed 19/09/19]

³² Historic England (2018): 'Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment', [online] available at: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>> [accessed 19/09/19]

- 6.11 Historic England is the statutory consultee for certain categories of listed building consent and all applications for scheduled monument consent. The historic environment is protected through the planning system, via conditions imposed on developers and other mechanisms.
- 6.12 The Neighbourhood Plan area contains six Grade I, 12 Grade II* and 102 Grade II listed buildings as well as three scheduled monuments and a number of unscheduled monuments. Many of the listed buildings are located within the Charing Conservation Area. Grade I buildings within the Conservation Area are within the Scheduled Monument of the Archbishop's Palace. These Grade I listed buildings comprise the Palace Farmhouse, the Barn formerly the Great Hall, an Outhouse once part of the West Range, and Cottages and Gatehouse being the South Range. The remaining Grade I building is Pett Place in the country to the east of Conservation Area. Gatehouse adjoining'.
- 6.13 The 12 Grade II* listed buildings that located in the Neighbourhood Plan area are:
- 'Wakeley House' located in the built up area of Charing.
 - 'Ludwell House' located in the built up area of Charing.
 - 'Peirce House' located in the built up area of Charing.
 - 'Sherborne House' located in the built up area of Charing.
 - 'The Old House' located in the built up area of Charing within the Conservation Area.
 - 'The Old Vicarage Cottage' located in the built up area of Charing within the Conservation Area.
 - 'Brockton Manor' located towards the west of the Neighbourhood Plan area.
 - 'Chapel at Newlands Stud Farm' located in the countryside towards the south of the Neighbourhood Plan area.
 - 'Newlands Stud Farmhouse' located in the countryside towards the south of the Neighbourhood Plan area.
 - 'Tramhatch' located in the countryside towards the south of the Neighbourhood Plan area.
 - 'Wickens Manor' located towards the east of the Neighbourhood Plan area near Pett.
 - 'Tithe Barn to the south east of Pett Place' located towards the east of the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 6.14 Two of the Grade I listed buildings (Palace Farmhouse and Palace Cottages and the remains of the Gatehouse adjoining), as well as one scheduled monument (The archbishop's palace) are identified as 'at risk' on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register³³. However, the Gatehouse has since been restored as a residential property and is no longer at risk. The scheduled monument is listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register as priority A with 'no solution agreed' to prevent further loss of fabric. This refers to the Barn which has now been stabilised and is the subject of a current study by Historic England.
- 6.15 The Neighbourhood Plan area contains three scheduled monuments:
- 'Dispersed medieval settlement remains at Chapel Wood' (located on the northern boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area). The monument includes the remains of a dispersed medieval

³³ Historic England (2019) Heritage at Risk Register [online] available at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/> [accessed 20/09/19]

settlement situated on a chalk hill which forms part of the Kent Downs, around 2.25km north east of Charing. 13th and 14th century remains can be found here.

- 'The Archbishop's Palace' (located in the centre of the built-up area of Charing). The monument, which is set back from Charing High Street to the north of the parish church, includes the remains of the archiepiscopal manor house, associated buildings and precinct where this has been unaffected by recent development. The scheduled monument is surrounded by a Grade II listed wall and the South Range. Within the walled area and north of the Farmhouse are paddocks in which there are signs of ruins associated with the Palace. To the east of the Barn is a small courtyard where the Palace Kitchen seemed to have been.
- 'Ruined chapel at Pett' (located by Pett Farm towards the east of the Neighbourhood Plan area). It is situated on gently sloping ground, east of Pett Lane near Charing. It is thought that the original materials were removed from the Norman cellar of the old house at Pett Place and reformed in the 18th century to form a folly.

6.16 Conservation areas are designated because of their special architectural and historic interest³⁴. Conservation area appraisals are a tool to demonstrate the area's special interest, explaining the reasons for designation and providing a greater understanding and articulation of its character - mentioned within the 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' advice note by Historic England. Ideally, appraisals should be regularly reviewed as part of the management of the conservation area and can be developed into a management plan.

6.17 A conservation area covers part of the built-up area of Charing within the centre of the Neighbourhood Plan area, where a cluster of listed buildings are present. However, a conservation area appraisal has not been prepared for this conservation area. Ashford Borough Council are currently in the process of updating conservation area appraisals and management plans for the 43 conservation areas which are within Ashford borough.³⁵ A conservation area appraisal is being prepared for Charing but is not yet publicly available.

6.18 It should be noted that not all the area's historic environment features are subject to statutory designations, and non-designated features comprise a large part of what people have contact with as part of daily life – whether at home, work or leisure. Although not designated, many buildings and areas are of historic interest and are important by local communities. For example, open spaces and key distinctive buildings in the area are likely to be of value for local people.

6.19 Following a high-level review of the Historic Environmental Record (HER) for Kent (accessed via the Heritage Gateway)³⁶, there are 278 records within Charing Parish including a variety of structures and archaeological finds such as: medieval field systems, post-medieval churches, Roman ditches, settlements, houses, Neolithic findspots and Romano enclosures.

Summary of Future Baseline

6.20 New development areas in the Neighbourhood Plan area have the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets; for example, through inappropriate design and layout. It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations offer a degree of protection to heritage assets and their settings.

6.21 Alongside, new development need not be harmful to the significance of a heritage asset, and in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan area there may be opportunity for new development to enhance the historic setting of the village and better reveal assets' heritage significance.

³⁴ Historic England (2019): 'Conservation Areas', [online] available at: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/local/conservation-areas/>> [accessed 20/09/19]

³⁵ Ashford Borough Council (2019): 'Conservation Areas', [online] available at: <<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/building-conservation/conservation-areas/>> [accessed 20/09/19]

³⁶ Heritage Gateway (2019): 'Historic Environmental Record for Kent', [online] available at: <<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results.aspx>> [accessed 20/09/19]

Key Sustainability Issues

- The Neighbourhood Plan area contains six Grade I, eleven Grade II* and 101 Grade II nationally designated listed buildings which are protected through the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990.
- There are three scheduled monuments located within or adjacent to the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Two of the Grade I listed buildings as well as one scheduled monument are identified as 'at risk' on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.
- A Conservation Area is present within the Neighbourhood Plan area, which covers the built-up area of Charing; however, a conservation appraisal has not yet been prepared.
- The HER for Kent contains 278 records within Charing Parish including a variety of structures and archaeological finds such as: medieval field systems, post-medieval churches, Roman ditches, settlements, houses, Neolithic findspots and Romano enclosures.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Historic Environment SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets within the Neighbourhood Plan area	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their setting? • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of locally important features and their settings? • Support the integrity of the historic setting of key buildings of cultural heritage interest as listed on the Kent HER? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the environment? • Conserve and enhance archaeological remains, including historic landscapes? • Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?

7. Land, Soil and Water Resources

Focus of Theme

- Quality of agricultural land
- Water resources and water quality
- Mineral safeguarding areas

Policy Context

- 7.1 The EU's Soil Thematic Strategy³⁷ presents a strategy for protecting soil resources in Europe. The main aim of the strategy is to minimise soil degradation and limit associated detrimental effects linked to water quality and quantity, human health, climate change, biodiversity, and food safety.
- 7.2 Adopted in October 2000, the purpose of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) is to establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater, driving a catchment-based approach to water management. In England and Wales there are 100 water catchments and it is Defra's intention is to establish a 'framework for integrated catchment management' across England. The Environment Agency is establishing 'Significant Water Management Issues' and recently presented second River Basin Management Plans to ministers. The plans seek to deliver the objectives of the WFD namely:
- Enhance the status and prevent the further deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and associated wetlands which depend on aquatic ecosystems;
 - Promote the sustainable use of water;
 - Reduce the pollution of water, especially by 'priority' and 'priority hazardous' substances;
 - Ensure the progressive reduction of groundwater pollution; and
 - Contribute to achieving 'good' water quality status for as many waterbodies as possible by 2027.
- 7.3 Key messages from the NPPF include:
- *'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*
 - i. *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils; and*
 - ii. *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.'*
 - Prevent new or existing development from being 'adversely affected' by the presence of 'unacceptable levels' of soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate 'despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate'.
 - *'Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.'*

³⁷ European Commission (2006) Soil Thematic Policy [online] available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index_en.htm> [accessed 19/09/19]

- *'Encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains.'*
 - Planning policies and decisions should *'give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs'*, and *'promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.'*
 - Taking a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for water supply.
 - Prevent new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution.
 - The government has produced a separate plan that specifically deals with planning policy in relation to waste management; this should be read in conjunction with the NPPF.
- 7.4 Along with the policies contained within Chapter 1 'Using and managing land sustainably' and Chapter 4 'Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste', Goal 2 'Clean and plentiful water', Goal 5 'Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently' and Goal 8 'Minimising waste' of the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' directly relates to the Land, Soil and Water Resources SEA theme.
- 7.5 Other key documents at the national level include Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England³⁸, which sets out a vision for soil use in England, and the Water White Paper³⁹, which sets out the Government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It states the measures that will be taken to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources. In terms of waste management, the Government Review of Waste Policy in England⁴⁰ recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials.
- 7.6 In terms of waste management, the Government Review of Waste Policy in England⁴¹ recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials.
- 7.7 The National Waste Management Plan⁴² provides an analysis of the current waste management situation in England and evaluates how it will support the implementation of the objectives and provisions of the revised Waste Framework Directive⁴³. This includes an assessment of the need for new collection schemes, additional waste infrastructure and investment channels, as well as providing general or strategic waste management policies.
- 7.8 At the local level, policies in the Ashford Local Plan that relate to the Land, Soil and Water Resources theme include:
- ENV7: Water Efficiency; and
 - ENV8: Water Quality, Supply and Treatment.

³⁸ Defra (2009) Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England [online] available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-our-soils-a-strategy-for-england>> [accessed 19/09/19]

³⁹ Defra (2011) Water for life (The Water White Paper) [online] available at <<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm82/8230/8230.pdf>> [accessed 19/09/19]

⁴⁰ Defra (2011) Government Review of Waste Policy in England [online] available at: <<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13540-waste-policy-review110614.pdf>> [accessed 19/09/19]

⁴¹ DEFRA (2011) Government Review of Waste Policy in England [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69401/pb13540-waste-policy-review110614.pdf [accessed 19/09/19]

⁴² DEFRA (2013) Waste Management Plan for England [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265810/pb14100-waste-management-plan-20131213.pdf [accessed 19/09/19]

⁴³ Directive 2008/98/EC

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

Soil Resources

- 7.9 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) classifies land into size grades (plus 'non-agricultural land' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are recognised as being the 'best and most versatile' land and Grades 3b to 5 of poorer quality. In this context, there is a need to avoid loss of higher quality 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.
- 7.10 In terms of the location of the best and most versatile agricultural land, a detailed classification has been undertaken in the middle and southern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Of these patches of land that have been classified, the majority has been classified as Grade 2 or Grade 3b, as well as small sections of Grade 1, Grade 3a, Grade 3b and 'Other' land. The areas of Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3a land are therefore classified as the best and most versatile.
- 7.11 At the local level a detailed classification has not been undertaken for the majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area. As such, there is a need to rely on the national 'Provisional Agricultural Land Quality' dataset.
- 7.12 The Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset⁴⁴ shows that the Neighbourhood Plan area is predominantly covered by Grade 3 agricultural land with a strip of Grade 2 agricultural land passing through the middle, however; without the subset grading (3a or 3b) it is not possible to tell at this stage whether the agricultural land is considered to be 'best and most versatile'. It is also important to note that the national dataset is of very low resolution, and may not necessarily provide an accurate reflection of the agricultural land quality within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Water Resources

- 7.13 The main watercourse flowing through the Neighbourhood Plan area is the Great Stour and its tributaries. This is part of the River Stour river system and lies in the southern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area. It flows south east and eventually flows into the North Sea at Pegwell Bay.
- 7.14 The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) requires Member States to identify areas where groundwater have nitrate concentrations of more than 50 mg/l nitrate or are thought to be at risk of nitrate contamination. Areas associated with such groundwater are designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) within which, Member States are required to establish Action Programmes to reduce and prevent further nitrate contamination. In this regard, most of the Neighbourhood Plan area overlaps with the 'River Great Stour' NVZ.
- 7.15 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been defined by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes and springs that are used for public drinking water supply. The zones show the risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area. Within the Neighbourhood Plan Area there are two SPZs located on Hook Lane and Charing Heath Road. SPZ1 is categorised as the inner zone of an SPZ and is the most vulnerable to contamination and most likely to influence the use of infiltration. Adjacent to this SPZ1 area are areas of SPZ2 (outer zone) and SPZ3 (Total Catchment).

Water Quality

⁴⁴ Natural England (2018) Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007) [online] available at <<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/141047?category=5954148537204736>> [accessed 19/09/19]

- 7.16 Charing is located within the South East River Basin District, overlapping with the 'Stour' Management Catchment and the 'Stour' Operational Catchment. There are four water bodies within the Operational Catchment (including Upper Great Stour).
- 7.17 Based on the most recently completed water quality assessments undertaken in 2016, the Environment Agency's Catchment Data Explorer⁴⁵ classifies Upper Great Stour⁴⁶ as having a 'good' chemical status and 'poor' ecological status. The overall classification for the waterbody in 2016 was 'poor'.
- 7.18 The reasons for not achieving good status (RNAGs) are primarily attributed to the following activities: sewage discharge, transport drainage and poor nutrient management.

Summary of Future Baseline

- 7.19 Future development has the potential to affect water quality through diffuse pollution, waste water discharges, water run-off, and modification. However, water companies are likely to maintain adequate water supply and wastewater management over the plan period, and the requirements of the Water Framework Directive are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality within the Neighbourhood Plan area and wider area.
- 7.20 In the absence of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification assessment for the majority of the Parish, it remains uncertain whether new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area will lead to losses of higher quality (best and most versatile) agricultural land.

Key Sustainability Issues

- There is a lack of evidence to ascertain agricultural land quality within the Neighbourhood Plan area. National provisional quality datasets indicate that the majority of land within the Neighbourhood Plan area is Grade 3 and as part of a precautionary approach it is noted that there is the potential for loss of high quality (Grade 3a 'best and most versatile') agricultural land.
- Most of the Neighbourhood Plan area lies within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.
- There are two areas of the Neighbourhood Plan area located within SPZ1. SPZ1 is categorised as the inner zone of an SPZ and is the most vulnerable to contamination and most likely to influence the use of infiltration.
- The Upper Great Stour has an overall water quality classification as 'poor'.

⁴⁵ Environment Agency (2019): 'Catchment Data Explorer', [online] available to access via: <<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/>> [accessed 19/09/19]

⁴⁶ Environment Agency (2019): 'Catchment Data Explorer – Stour Upper', [online] available to access via: <<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/OperationalCatchment/3501>> [accessed 19/09/19]

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Land, Soil and Water Resources SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the use of previously developed land? Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which in the parish may comprise Grade 1 to 3a agricultural land? Protect the integrity of mineral safeguarding areas?
Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the amount of waste produced? Support the minimisation, reuse and recycling of waste? Maximise opportunities for local management of waste in order to minimise export of waste to areas outside? Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction?
Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support improvements to water quality? Minimise water consumption? Protect surface water resources? Protect groundwater resources?

8. Population and Community

Focus of Theme

- Population size
- Population density
- Age structure
- Deprivation
- Housing mix and affordability
- Education and skills

Policy Context

8.1 Key messages from the NPPF include:

- One of the three overarching objectives of the NPPF is a social objective to; *'support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing.'*
- To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing, strategic policies *'should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.'*
- The size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. Where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required, and expect it to be met on-site where possible.
- Recognise the important contribution of small and medium sized development sites in meeting housing needs. Local Plans should identify land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare, and neighbourhood planning groups should also consider the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites.
- In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. Authorities should consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs.
- Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.
- Ensure that developments create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Places should contain clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high-quality public spaces, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.
- Ensuring that there is a *'sufficient choice of school places'* and taking a *'proactive, positive and collaborative approach'* to bringing forward *'development that will widen choice in education'*.

- 8.2 The 'Ready for Ageing?' report, published by the Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change⁴⁷ warns that society is underprepared for an ageing population. The report states that *'longer lives can be a great benefit, but there has been a collective failure to address the implications and without urgent action this great boon could turn into a series of miserable crises'*. The report recognises that the supply of specialist housing for the older generation is insufficient for the demand. There is a need for central and local Government, housing associations, and house builders to ensure that these housing needs are better addressed, giving as much priority to promoting an adequate market of social housing for the older generation as is given to the younger generation.
- 8.3 At the local level, policies from Chapter 2 (Strategic Policies), Chapter 6: (Housing Policies), Chapter 7 (Employment and the Local Economy), Chapter 10 (Community Facilities) and Chapter 11 (Implementation) in the Ashford Local Plan relate to the Population and Community theme.

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

Population

Table 8.1: Population growth 2001-2011⁴⁸

Date	Charing	Ashford	South East	England
2001	2,694	102,661	8,000,645	49,138,831
2011	2,766	117,956	8,634,750	53,012,456
Population Change 2001-2011	+2.7%	+13%	+7.93%	+7.9%

- 8.4 As shown in **Table 8.1**, the population of Charing increased by 2.7% between 2001 and 2011, lower than the increases for Ashford, the South East of England and England averages.

⁴⁷ Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change (2013) Ready for Ageing? [online] available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/public-services-committee/report-ready-for-ageing/> [accessed 19/09/19]

⁴⁸ ONS (no date): Census 2011: Population Density 2011 (Table QS102EW); Population Density 2001 (Table UV02)

Age Structure

Table 8.2: Age Structure (2011)⁴⁹

	Charing	Ashford	South East	England
0-15	14.5%	20.8%	19.0%	18.9%
16-24	7.3%	10.4%	11.2%	11.9%
25-44	19.8%	25.5%	26.5%	27.5%
45-59	21.9%	19.9%	19.9%	19.4%
60+	36.4%	23.4%	23.4%	22.3%
Total Population	2,766	117,956	8,634,750	53,012,456

- 8.5 Generally, there are a higher proportion of residents within the 60+ age category within the Neighbourhood Plan area (36.4%) in comparison to the total for the Ashford (23.4%), the South East of England (23.4%) and England (22.3%), as shown in **Table 8.2**.
- 8.6 A lower proportion of residents are within the working age categories (25-44 and 45-59) in the Neighbourhood Plan area (41.7%) in comparison to the totals for Ashford (45.3%), the South East of England (46.4%) and England (46.9%).
- 8.7 Additionally, 21.9% of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the younger age categories (0-15 and 16-24), lower than the total for Ashford (31.2%), the South East of England (30.2%) and England (30.8%).

Household Deprivation

- 8.8 Census statistics measure deprivation across four 'dimensions' of deprivation, summarized below:
- **Employment:** Any person in the household (not a full-time student) that is either unemployed or long-term sick.
 - **Education:** No person in the household has at least a level 2 qualification and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student.
 - **Health and Disability:** Any person in the household that has generally 'bad' or 'very bad' health, or has a long term health problem.
 - **Housing:** The household accommodation is either overcrowded (with an occupancy rating of -1 or less), in a shared dwelling or has no central heating.

⁴⁹ ONS (no date): Census 2011: Age Structure 2011 (Table KS102EW)

Table 8.3: Relative household deprivation dimensions⁵⁰

	Charing	Ashford	South East	England
Household not deprived	43.2%	46.8%	47.7%	42.5%
Deprived in 1 dimension	32.5%	32.5%	32.2%	32.7%
Deprived in 2 dimensions	21.2%	17.0%	16.0%	19.1%
Deprived in 3 dimensions	3.1%	3.4%	3.7%	5.1%
Deprived in 4 dimensions	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%

8.9 Based on the information presented in **Table 8.3**, more households are deprived in one or more dimensions within the Neighbourhood Plan area (56.8%) in comparison to the totals for Ashford (53.2%) and the South East of England (52.3%). However, the total for the Neighbourhood Plan area is similar to the total for England (57.5%). Out of the 56.8% of households which are deprived in the Neighbourhood Plan area, the majority are deprived in one or two dimensions, which is similar to the regional and national trends.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

8.10 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation constructed by combining seven domains of deprivation according to their respective weights, as described below. The seven deprivation domains are as follows:

- **Income:** The proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income, including those individuals that are out-of-work and those that are in work but who have low earnings (satisfying the respective means tests).
- **Employment:** The proportion of the working-age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those individuals who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness or disability, or caring responsibilities.
- **Education, Skills and Training:** The lack of attainment and skills in the local population.
- **Health Deprivation and Disability:** The risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. Morbidity, disability and premature mortality are also considered, excluding the aspects of behaviour or environment that may be predictive of future health deprivation.
- **Crime:** The risk of personal and material victimisation at local level.
- **Barriers to Housing and Services:** The physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, with indicators categorised in two sub-domains.
 - a. 'Geographical Barriers': relating to the physical proximity of local services
 - b. 'Wider Barriers': relating to access to housing, such as affordability.
- **Living Environment:** The quality of the local environment, with indicators falling categorised in two sub-domains.
 - c. 'Indoors Living Environment' measures the quality of housing.
 - d. 'Outdoors Living Environment' measures air quality and road traffic accidents.
- Two supplementary indices (subsets of the Income deprivation domains), are also included:

⁵⁰ ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Households by Deprivation Dimensions 2011 (Table QS119EW)

1. Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index: The proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.
2. Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index: The proportion of all those aged 60 or over who experience income deprivation.

8.11 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)⁵¹ are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardized geographies designed to be as consistent in population as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. In relation to the IMD 2019, LSOAs are ranked out of the 32,844 in England and Wales, with 1 being the most deprived. Ranks are normalized into deciles, with a value of 1 reflecting the top 10% most deprived LSOAs in England and Wales.

8.12 The Neighbourhood Plan area contains three LSOAs. The Ashford 002B LSOA covers the southern section of the Neighbourhood Plan area and the Ashford 002A covers the northern section of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Ashford 002E also partly covers the south western part of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Ashford 002A and Ashford 002E are within the 50% most deprived areas within England and Ashford 002B is within the 40% most deprived areas within England.

Housing Tenure

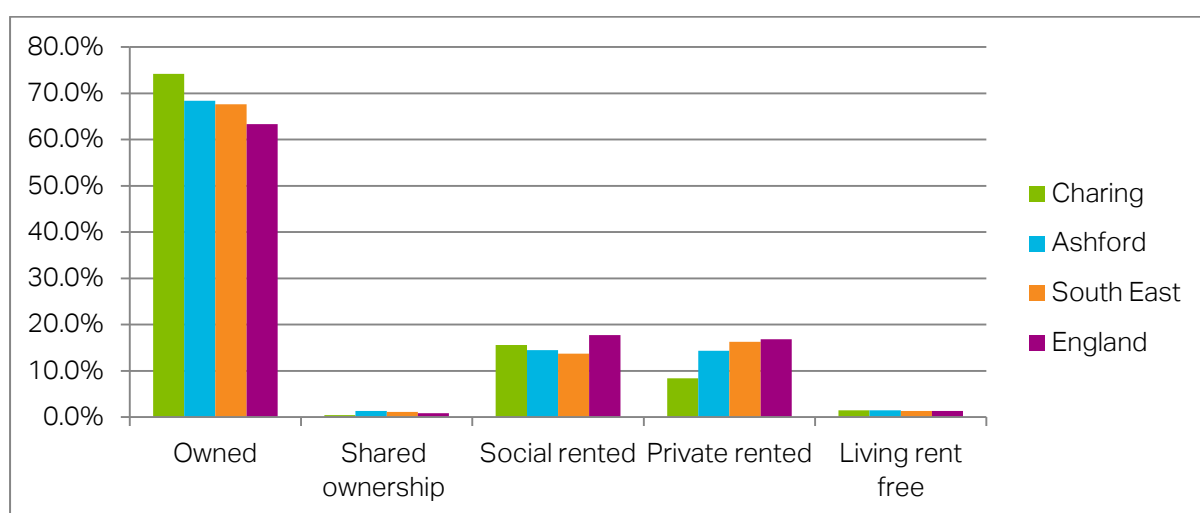


Figure 8.1: 'Tenure by Household'⁵²

8.13 Within the Neighbourhood Plan area, 74.2% of residents either own their home outright or with a mortgage, higher than the totals for Ashford (68.4%), the South East of England (67.6%) and England (63.3%).

8.14 A lower proportion of residents live within privately rented and social rented housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area in comparison to the regional and national figures.

8.15 A similar percentage of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area live in rent-free accommodation or shared ownership accommodation in comparison to the regional and national trends shown in **Figure 8.1**.

⁵¹ DCLG (2015): Indices of Deprivation Explorer', [online] available at: <<http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>> [accessed 18/09/19]

⁵² ONS (no date): Census 2011: Tenure-Households 2011 (Table QS405EW)

Education

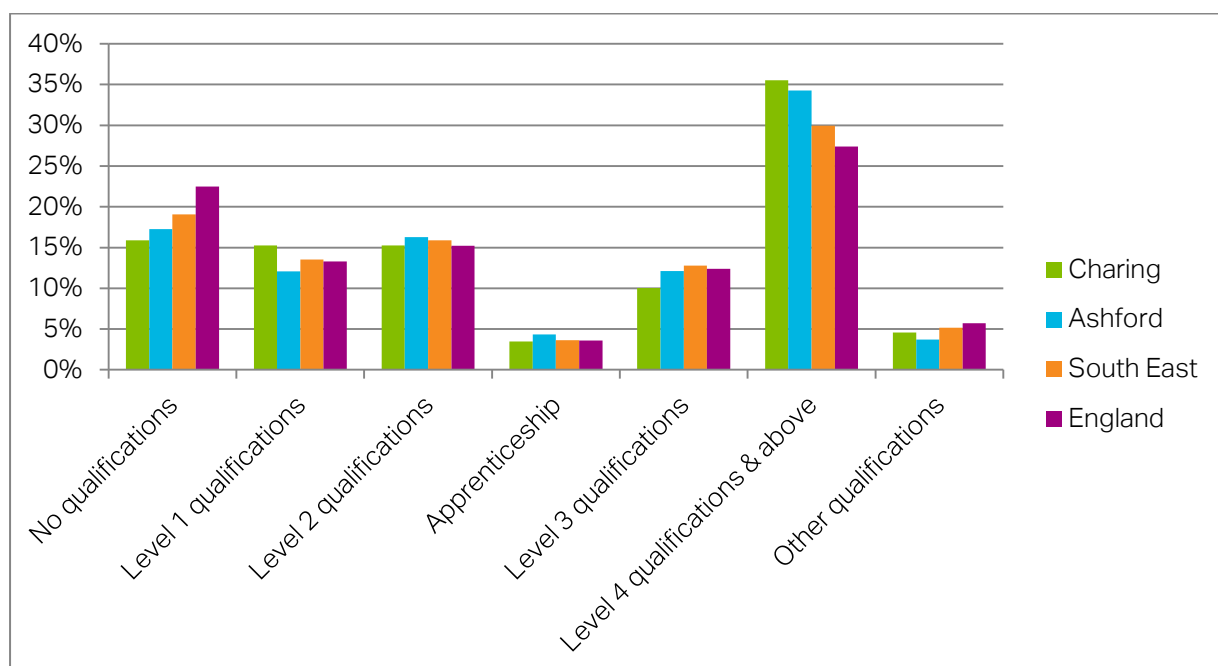


Figure 8.2: 'Highest level of Qualification' ⁵³

- 8.16 Based on the 2011 census data presented in **Figure 8.2**, 15.9% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area have no qualifications, lower than the totals for Ashford (17.2%), the South East of England (19.1%) and England (22.5%).
- 8.17 Comparatively, 35.5% of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area have a Level 4 qualification or above, which broadly aligns to the total for Ashford (34.3%) but is higher than the totals for the South East of England (29.9%) and England (27.4%).

Employment

- 8.18 Regarding employment within the Neighbourhood Plan area, the following three occupation categories support the most residents:

- Managers, directors, senior officials (17.0%);
- Professional occupations (17.7%); and
- Elementary occupations (13.4%).

- 8.19 Overall, 48.1% of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area are employed in one of the above three occupation categories, broadly aligning to the total for Ashford (36.9%) but greater than the totals for the South East of England (44.8%) and England (41.1%). This is highlighted in **Figure 8.3** below.

⁵³ ONS (no date): Census 2011: Highest Level of Qualification 2011 (Table QS501EW)

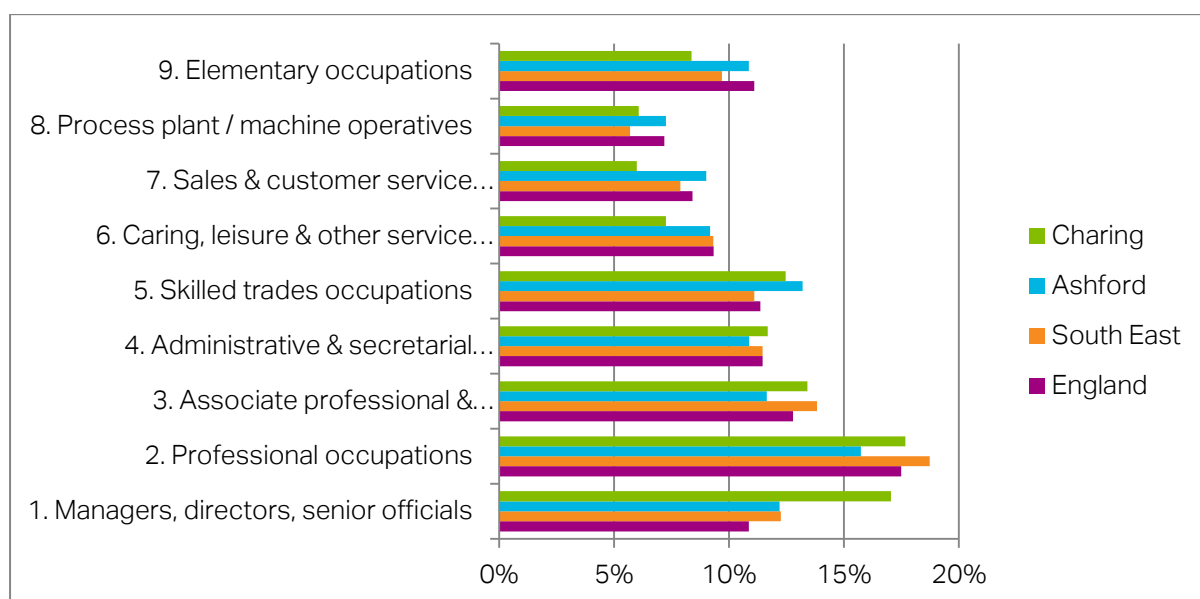


Figure 8.3: 'Occupation of usual residents aged 16 to 74 in employment'⁵⁴

Community Assets

8.20 The Neighbourhood Plan area has a range of local community facilities which serve the needs of the local community and play a vital role in supporting the Parish's sense of identity. Such facilities include: Charing Parish Hall, Charing Surgery, Charing Church of England Primary School, St Peter & St Pauls Church, Charing Methodist Church, Holy Trinity Charing Heath, Charing Heath And Lenham Heath Memorial Hall, Charing Sports Club, Charing Train Station as well as pubs and restaurants/cafes. Additionally, Charing Parish's website lists 19 clubs and organisations which take place in Charing.⁵⁵ However, there are significant pressures on local services and facilities in the Neighbourhood Area. This is in part given significant recent population growth in the parish. Therefore there is still a need for new infrastructure in Charing in order to meet population growth.

Summary of Future Baseline

8.21 As the population of the Neighbourhood Plan area continues to age, this could potentially negatively impact upon the future vitality of the local community and economy of certain parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area, whilst also placing additional pressures to existing services and facilities. The suitability (e.g. size and design) and affordability of housing for local requirements depends on the implementation of appropriate housing policies through the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Unplanned development may have wider implications in terms of transport and access to infrastructure, or the natural environment. New allocations through the Ashford Local Plan is likely to place pressure on local services, facilities and amenities.

Key Sustainability Issues

- The population of Charing increased by 2.7% between 2001 and 2011, lower than the increases for Ashford, the South East of England and England averages.
- Generally, there is a higher proportion of residents within the 60+ age category within the Neighbourhood Plan area (36.4%) in comparison to the total for the Ashford (23.4%), the South East of England (23.4%) and England (22.3%), as shown in **Table 8.2**
- The proportion of residents with the 60+ age category is likely to continue to increase.

⁵⁴ ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Occupation 2011' (Table KS608EW)

⁵⁵ Charing Parish Council (2019): 'Local Clubs and Societies', [online] available at: < <https://www.charingkent.org/local-information/local-clubs-and-societies> > [accessed 20/09/19]

- There are levels of deprivation within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area contains two LSOAs, both of which are within the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods within England.
- A higher proportion of residents own their home outright or with a mortgage in the Neighbourhood Plan area in comparison to the regional and national trends.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area has a range of local community facilities, clubs and organisations which serve the needs of the local community and play a vital role in supporting the Parish's sense of identity.
- There is a significant need for new community infrastructure in order to meet the Parish's population growth.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Population and Community SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities? • Minimise fuel poverty? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents? • Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?
Reduce deprivation and promote a more inclusive and self-contained community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of land for allotments and cemeteries? • Provide additional community infrastructure to meet existing and future deficits?
Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Support enhancements to the current housing stock? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs? • Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? • Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?

9. Health and Wellbeing

Focus of Theme

- Health indicators and deprivation
- Influences on health and wellbeing

Policy Context

9.1 Key messages from the NPPF include:

- One of the three overarching objectives of the NPPF is a social objective to; *'support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing.'*
- *'Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and wellbeing needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.'*
- Policies and decisions should take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.
- Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and wellbeing of communities. Development should avoid building on existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields.
- Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

9.2 In relation to other key national messages in relation to health, Fair Society, Healthy Lives⁵⁶ ('The Marmot Review') investigated health inequalities in England and the actions needed in order to tackle them. Subsequently, a supplementary report was prepared providing additional evidence relating to spatial planning and health on the basis that there is: "overwhelming evidence that health and environmental inequalities are inexorably linked and that poor environments contribute significantly to poor health and health inequalities".

9.3 The increasing role that local level authorities are expected to play in providing health outcomes is demonstrated by recent government legislation. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred responsibility for public health from the NHS to local government, giving local authorities a duty to improve the health of the people who live in their areas. This will require a more holistic approach to health across all local government functions.

9.4 At the local level, policies from the Ashford Local Plan which relate to the Health and Wellbeing theme include:

- ENV2: The Ashford Green Corridor;
- COM1: Meeting the Community's Needs;

⁵⁶ The Marmot Review (2011) The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning [online] available to download from: < <https://www.nice.org.uk/media/default/About/what-we-do/NICE-guidance/NICE-guidelines/Public-health-guidelines/Additional-publications/Spatial-planning/the-marmot-review-implications-for-spatial-planning.pdf> > last accessed [24/09/18]

- COM2: Recreation, Sport, Play and Open Spaces; and
- IMP4: Governance of public community space and facilities.

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

Health indicators and deprivation

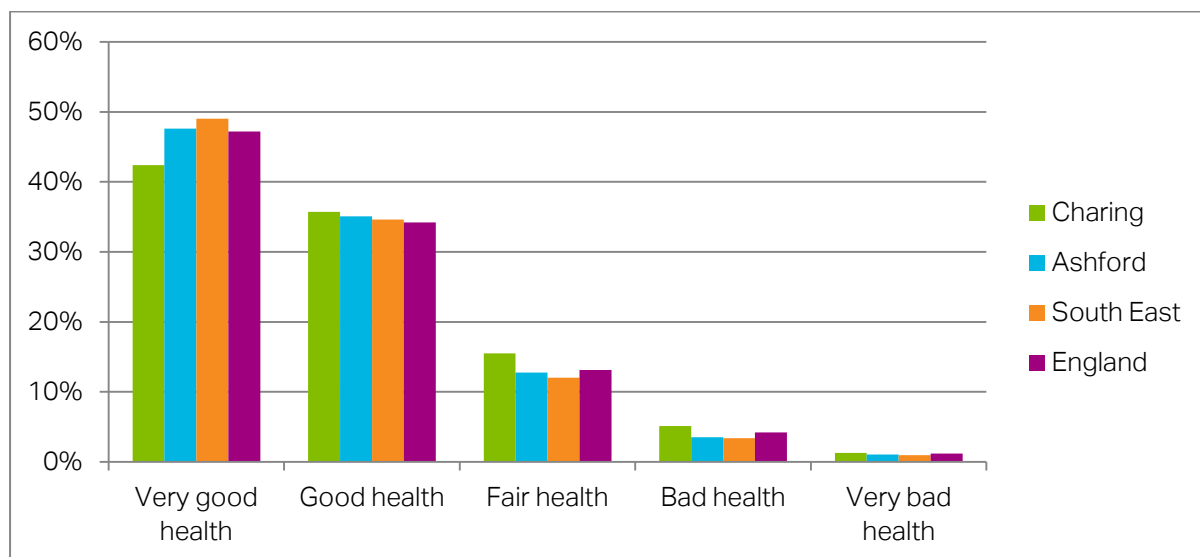


Figure 9.1: 'General Health'⁵⁷

- 9.5 Deprivation is a significant contributor to poor health and can have adverse effects on wellbeing, with elements related to poor housing quality, living environment, income and employment previously discussed in detail in Chapter 8. As highlighted in **Figure 9.1**, 78.1% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area consider themselves as having 'very good health' or 'good health', lower than the totals for Ashford (82.7%), the South East of England (83.6%) and England (81.4%).
- 9.6 Additionally, 6.4% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area consider themselves to have 'bad health' or 'very bad health', higher than the totals for Ashford (4.6%), the South East of England (4.3%) and England (5.4%).
- 9.7 The total percentage of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area who report that their activities are limited 'a lot' is greater than the totals for Ashford, the South East of England and England, shown in **Table 9.1** below.
- 9.8 77.3% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area confirm that their activities are 'not limited'. This is lower than the totals for Ashford (83.8%), the South East of England (84.3%) and England (82.4%).

⁵⁷ ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'General Health 2011' (Table QS302EW)

Table 9.1: Disability⁵⁸

	Charing	Ashford	South East	England
Activities limited 'a lot'	10.1%	7.1%	6.9%	8.3%
Activities limited 'a little'	12.7%	9.0%	8.8%	9.3%
Activities 'not limited'	77.3%	83.8%	84.3%	82.4%

Summary of Future Baseline

- 9.9 As the population continues to age, this has the potential to place pressures on the existing services and facilities within the timeframe of the Neighbourhood Plan. This could negatively impact on the future vitality of the local community and economy.
- 9.10 Obesity is also seen as an increasing issue by health professionals, and one that will contribute to significant health impacts on individuals, including increasing the risk of a range of diseases, including heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

Key Sustainability Issues

- 78.1% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area consider themselves as having 'very good health' or 'good health', lower than the totals for Ashford (82.7%), the South East of England (83.6%) and England (81.4%).
- A higher proportion of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area report that their activities are limited in some way compared to regional and national averages.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Health and Wellbeing SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups? • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards? • Promote the use of healthier modes of travel? • Improve access to the countryside for recreational use? • Avoiding any negative impacts to the quality and extent of existing recreational assets, such as formal or informal footpaths?

⁵⁸ ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Long-term Health Problem or Disability 2011' (Table QS303EW)

10. Transportation

Focus of Theme

- Transportation infrastructure
- Traffic flows and congestion
- Accessibility
- Car ownership
- Travel to work

Policy Context

10.1 European and UK transport policies and plans place emphasis on the modernisation and sustainability of the transport network. Specific objectives include reducing pollution and road congestion through improvements to public transport, walking and cycling networks and reducing the need to travel. National policy also focuses on the need for the transport network to support sustainable economic growth.

10.2 Key messages from the NPPF include:

- *'Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:*
 - i. The potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed*
 - ii. Opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised*
 - iii. Opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued*
 - iv. The environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account*
 - v. Patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.'*
- *'Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.'*

10.3 At the local level, each Local Transport Authority in England and Wales has a statutory duty to produce and adopt a Local Transport Plan through the Local Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008.⁵⁹ Kent's Local Transport Plan 4⁶⁰ highlights the strategic transport priorities in Kent which are:

- A new Lower Thames Crossing;
- Bifurcation of port traffic;
- Transport infrastructure to support growth in the Thames Estuary including Crossrail extension to Ebbsfleet;

⁵⁹ Local Transport Act 2008 [online] available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/26/contents> [accessed 15/02/19]

⁶⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031 [online] available at: < https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/72668/Local-transport-plan-4.pdf > [accessed 04/04/19]

- A solution to Operation Stack;
- Provision for overnight lorry parking;
- Journey time improvements and Thanet Parkway Railway Station;
- Ashford International Station signalling;
- Rail improvements; and
- Bus improvements.

10.4 At the local level, policies from the Ashford Local Plan which relate to the Transportation theme include policies within Chapter 8 (Transport) and IMP1 (Transportation).

- ENV2: The Ashford Green Corridor;
- COM1: Meeting the Community's Needs;
- COM2: Recreation, Sport, Play and Open Spaces; and
- IMP4: Governance of public community space and facilities.

Baseline Summary

Summary of Current Baseline

Rail network

10.5 The Neighbourhood Plan area is well connected by rail services, with frequent services throughout the day from Charing railway station. Journey times from Charing to London Victoria are approximately 90 minutes, to Maidstone approximately 17 minutes, and to Ashford approximately nine minutes.

Bus network

10.6 Regarding the bus network, there are three main routes through Charing which are operated by Stagecoach and R & J Coaches but only one route that is open to all members of the public. Stagecoach provide a service to Ashford, Lenham, Harrietsham and Maidstone. This service operates daily on an hourly basis. R & J Coaches provide a service to The Lenham School specifically for students, therefore only operating on school days and at specific times. Stagecoach also provides a service to Ashford's schools.

Road network and congestion

10.7 The Neighbourhood Plan area is relatively well connected to the road network. The A20 passes through the centre of Charing providing a route to the south to Ashford and to the north to Lenham. Additionally, a network of country roads are also present in the Neighbourhood Plan area, providing local access routes through the plan area. The M20 also passes through the southern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area providing a northern link to the M25 with access to London and to the south to Dover. However, the motorway is only accessible via Junction 8 (near Hollingbourne) and at Junction 9 at Ashford.

Cycle and footpath network

10.8 National Cycle Network 17 passes through the Neighbourhood Plan area. There is also a comprehensive public rights of way network within the Neighbourhood Plan area, with numerous footpaths linking key locations and connecting to the village centre.

Availability of cars and vans

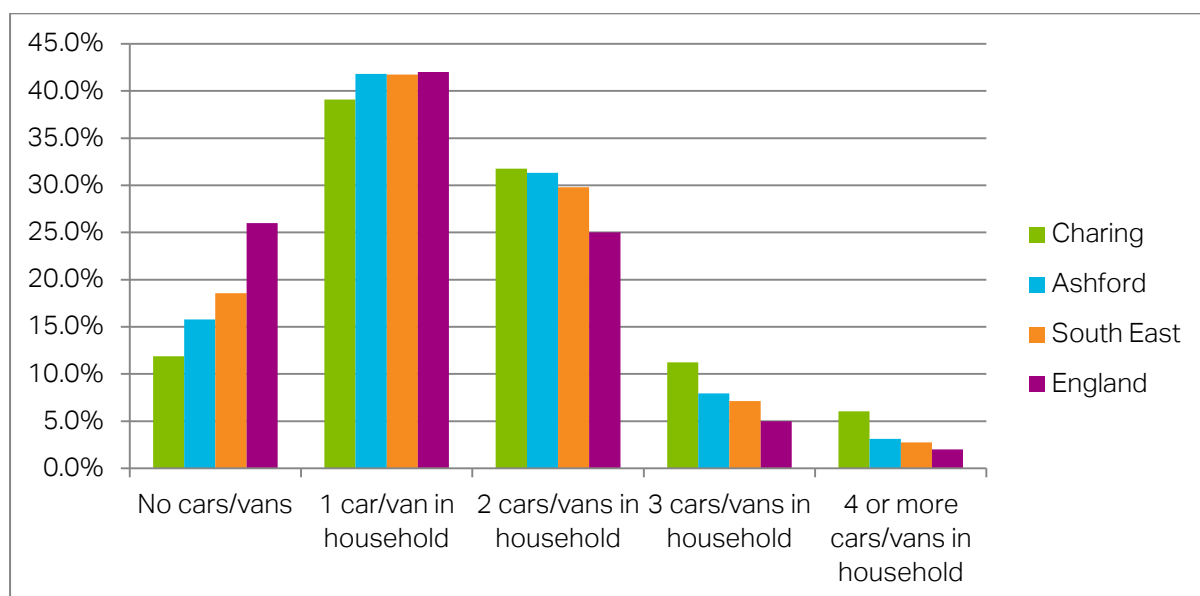


Figure 10.2: 'Car and van ownership' ⁶¹

10.9 Based on the 2011 census data presented in **Figure 10.2**, 88.1% of households in the Neighbourhood Plan area have access to at least one car or van, which is lower than the totals for Ashford (84.2%), the South East (81.4%) and England (74.2%). However, the total number of households in the Neighbourhood Plan area with access to at least two cars or vans is higher than the regional and national trends.

Travel to work

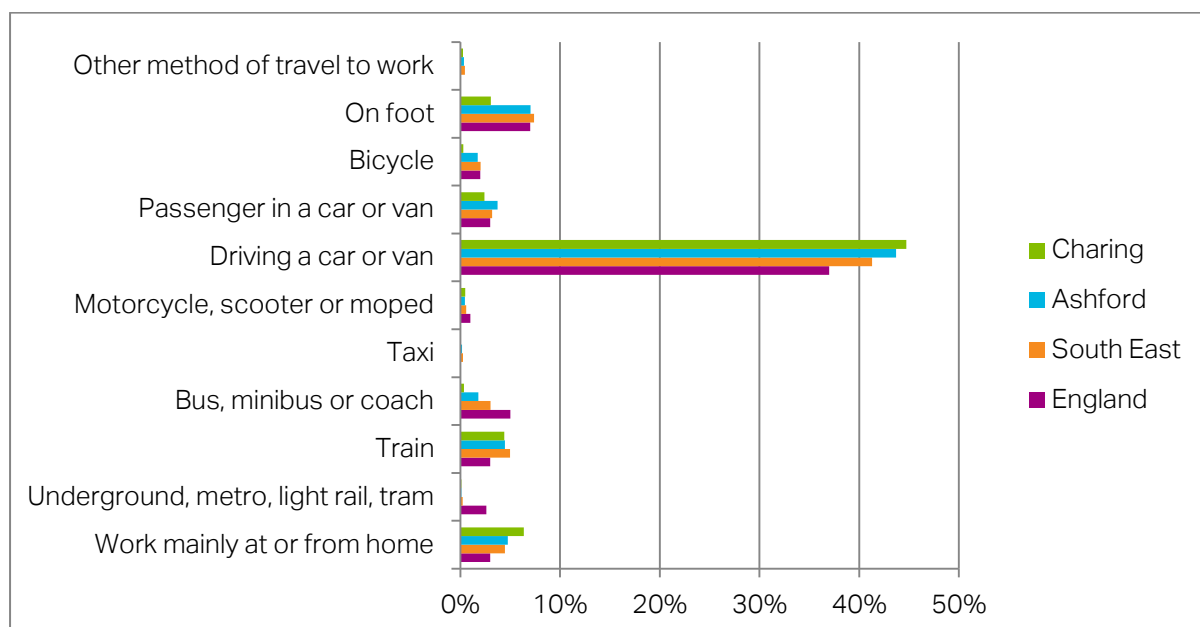


Figure 10.3: 'Method of Travel to Work' ⁶²

10.10 As shown in **Figure 10.3**, the most popular method of travelling to work in the Neighbourhood Plan area is via driving a car or van (44.7%) which is higher than the totals for Ashford (43.7%), the South East of England (41.3%) and England (37.0%).

⁶¹ ONS (no date): 'Car or Van Availability 2011', (Table QS416EW)

⁶² ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Method of Travel to Work 2011' (Table QS701EW)

10.11 7,8% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area either catch a train, bus, minibus, coach or walk to work. This is lower than the percentage for Ashford (13.3%), the South East of England (15.4%) and England (15.0%).

Summary of Future Baseline

10.12 New development has the potential to increase traffic and lead to additional congestion issues within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

10.13 There will be a continuing need for development to be situated in accessible locations which limit the need to travel by private car.

Key Sustainability Issues

- Charing railway station lies within the Neighbourhood Plan area, which provides a direct service to London Victoria, Maidstone and Ashford.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is well linked to the surrounding road network, with access to the A20 and a network of country roads.
- Residents have access to a network of footpaths and local cycle routes within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- New development taken forward through recent Local Plan allocations has the potential increase traffic and congestion issues in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Transportation SEA theme?

SEA objective	Assessment Questions
Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel? • Facilitate working from home and remote working? • Improve road safety? • Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?

11. Next Steps

Subsequent stages for the SEA process

- 11.1 The five stages of the SEA process⁶³ are identified below. Scoping (the current stage) is the second stage of the SEA process.
- vi. Screening;
 - vii. Scoping;
 - viii. Assess reasonable alternatives, with a view to informing preparation of the draft plan;
 - ix. Assess the draft plan and prepare the Environmental Report with a view to informing consultation and plan finalisation;
 - x. Publish a 'statement' at the time of plan adoption in order to 'tell the story' of plan-making / SEA (and present 'measures concerning monitoring')
- 11.2 The next stage will involve appraising reasonable alternatives for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan. This will consider alternative policy approaches for the plan, including alternative spatial strategies. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be fed back to Charing Parish Steering Committee (the Neighbourhood Plan group) so that they might be taken into account when preparing the draft plan.
- 11.3 Once the draft ('Regulation 14') plan has been prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan group, it will be subjected to SEA and the Environmental Report prepared for consultation alongside it.
- 11.4 Following submission to Ashford Borough Council, and consultation, the Neighbourhood Plan will be put forward for Independent Examination.

Consultation on the Scoping Report

- 11.5 Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SEA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public.
- 11.6 The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The Scoping Report has been released to these three statutory consultees.
- 11.7 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.
- 11.8 The consultation period runs from 17th October 2019 to 21st November 2019. Comments on the Scoping Report should be sent to:
- Tamsin Stevens, AECOM
- Email address: tamsin.stevens@aecom.com
- 11.9 All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

⁶³ In accordance with the stages set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance

