

# Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report to accompany the Regulation 14  
version of the Neighbourhood Plan

Charing Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

December 2019



## Quality information

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## Revision History

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# Non-Technical Summary

## What is Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform the Charing Neighbourhood Plan. This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan groups use SEA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects through the Neighbourhood Plan and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.

## What is the Charing Neighbourhood Plan?

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 adopted Ashford Local Plan.

It is anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan will be submitted to Ashford Borough Council for subsequent independent examination in early 2019.

## Purpose of this Environmental Report

This Environmental Report, which accompanies the current 'Regulation 14' version of the Neighbourhood Plan, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (October 2019), which includes information about the Neighbourhood Plan area's environment and community.

The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives; and
- Provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.

The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes;
- Relevant aspects of the current and future state of the environment and key sustainability issues;
- The SEA Framework of objectives against which the Charing Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed;
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan;
- The likely significant environmental effects of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan; and
- The next steps for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying SEA process.



## Assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan

### Context for growth in the Neighbourhood Plan area

The recently adopted Ashford Local Plan (February 2020) places Charing in the borough's settlement hierarchy as a village/local service centre. These settlements perform the role of serving the day-to-day service, shopping and leisure needs for the settlement's local catchment area.

Significant recent growth has taken place in the Neighbourhood Plan area. In conjunction with the period covered by the Local Plan (i.e. 2011 to 2030), in total 621 dwellings have been delivered in the parish to date. This comprises an increase of 47.8% in the number of dwellings in the Neighbourhood Plan area since 2011, resulting in a population increase of 62% in Charing Village and 53% in the parish as a whole.

Extensive community consultation has been undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan to date. Key elements highlighted from this engagement with the community has highlighted the following:

- Recent growth has not been accompanied by the delivery of appropriate community infrastructure to serve recent increases in population.
- There is a need for significant improvements to infrastructure and facilities to take place in the parish.
- Recent development has led to significant incursion into open countryside, affecting the character of the parish.
- The delivery of smaller sites for housing is preferable to larger sites to limit impacts on the character of the parish's settlements.
- There is a need for an element of appropriate development to enable existing residents to downsize and remain in the parish and younger people/first-time buyers/renters to secure a place to live.
- The delivery of small sites in Charing Heath would be supported in principle to support the community vitality of the settlement.

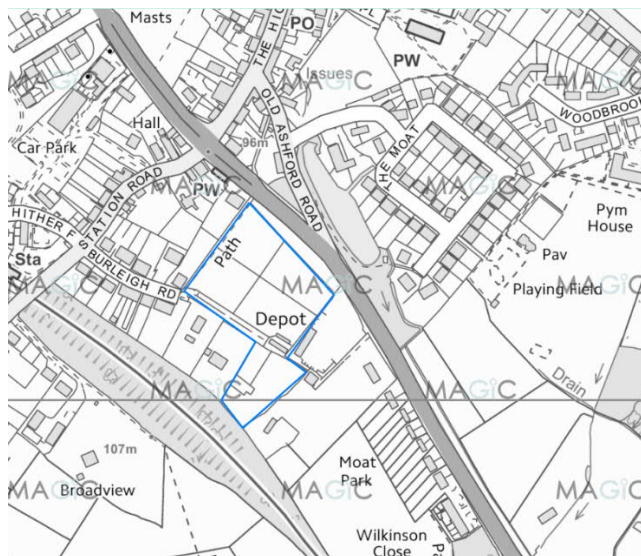
### Assessment of reasonable alternatives for Charing village

Given the significant expansion of the community since 2011, there is not an expectation that further larger-scale housing growth should be delivered in the Neighbourhood Plan area during the plan period.

As highlighted above, there is a perspective that recent growth in the village has not been accompanied by appropriate infrastructure and service provision, and that community facilities and amenities are insufficient for the existing population. In light of this, there is a recognition amongst the community that growth of an appropriate scale may be beneficial to deliver through the Neighbourhood Plan if it delivers significant new community provision. Such provision would potentially likely include a new community centre, enhanced medical facilities, flexible business units and additional parking provision.

With this in mind, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee sought potential options for delivering similar community infrastructure on a site. Following this consultation, one site (incorporating two adjoining areas of land totalling 2ha) came forward at Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow. This is located close to the centre of Charing village, situated to the south west of the A20 (see map below).





**Figure NTS1: Location of the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site in Charing village**

The owners have highlighted that if 48 market homes were to be delivered on the site, an amount of land will be gifted to the Charing Parish Council for the construction of a new community hall, integrated business units and a new village car park. Following further negotiation, it has been established that the following would be delivered on the site alongside the 48 homes:

- A new village hall;
- Rooms to provide additional health services to residents;
- An educational unit, society meeting rooms;
- An administrative office for use by the parish clerk;
- Parish archives;
- Small museum;
- Parish council chamber;
- Six business units; and
- A new 40-space car park.

Following consultation and engagement with landowners, it has been established that there are no other locations in the vicinity of Charing village where comparable community provision could be delivered through a similar level of housing.

To support decision making on this element of the Neighbourhood Plan, two options have been considered as reasonable alternatives through the SEA process with regards to the proposals. The first option would take forward an allocation at this location for the provision highlighted above. A second option would not take forward such an allocation.

The options considered are therefore as follows:

- **Option A:** Deliver an allocation through the Charing Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for 48 market dwellings and new community facilities, incorporating a community hall, integrated business units and a new village car park.
- **Option B:** Do not deliver an allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for this provision.

The appraisal findings relating to the assessment of the above two options are presented in Table 4.1 of this Environmental Report.



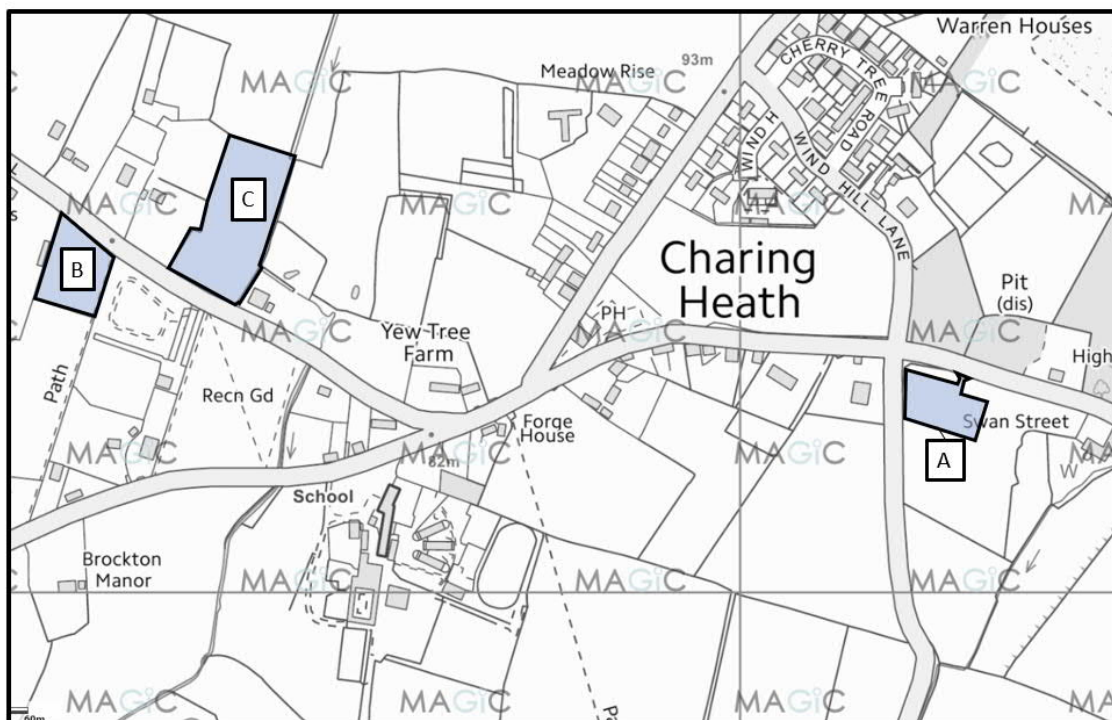
### Assessment of reasonable alternatives for Charing Heath

Community consultation has highlighted that there is a desire for small scale and limited residential development in Charing Heath. This given the community's aim to support the vitality of the settlement.

Following a call for sites undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee in March 2016, three sites were proposed by landowners in Charing Heath. These are as follows.

- Land north-west of Swan Street (Site A);
- Land next to Crofters (Site B); and
- Land at Church Hill (Site C).

The location of these sites in Charing Heath are below.



**Figure NTS2: Location of sites proposed in Charing Heath**

To support the consideration of the suitability of these sites for a potential allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan, the SEA process has undertaken an appraisal of the key environmental constraints present at each of the sites. This has considered the potential effects that may arise as a result of small-scale housing development (up to ten dwellings, reflecting community consultation) at these locations.

In this context the sites have been considered in relation to the SEA Framework of objectives and decision-making questions developed during SEA scoping (Chapter 3 of the Environmental Report) and the baseline information. This SEA site assessment was undertaken separately to the site assessment undertaken by the Charing Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.

Tables 4.1 to 4.3 in the main body of the Environmental Report present the findings of the assessment. A summary of the appraisal findings is presented below:



**Table NTS1: Summary of SEA site appraisal findings**

Site	Air quality	Biodiversity	Climate Change	Landscape	Historic Env	Land, Soil and Water Resources	Population and Community	Health and Wellbeing	Transport
Site A									
Site B									
Site C									

Key		
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		
Neutral/no effect		

## Assessment of the current version of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan

The current 'Regulation 14' version of the Neighbourhood Plan proposes 47 planning policies to guide development proposals in Charing Parish. These were developed following extensive community consultation and evidence gathering.

The assessment has concluded that the current version of the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to significant long-term positive effects in relation to the 'Population and Community' and 'Health and Wellbeing' SEA themes. These benefits largely relate to the Neighbourhood Plan's focus on providing significant new community and health infrastructure in Charing, the delivery of appropriate scale housing to meet local needs, support for the vitality and vibrancy of the parish, and the protection and enhancement of the quality of the public realm and neighbourhood distinctiveness.

The allocations proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to have impacts on the setting (but not the fabric) of features and areas nationally and locally designated for the historic environment in Charing and Charing Heath. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan however proactively respond to these constraints, including through having a close focus on conserving and enhancing the fabric and setting of the historic environment, and on protecting landscape and villagescape character. Taken together, the policies will help limit negative effects from new development on landscape/villagescape character and on the setting of the historic environment. The plan policies also seek to enhance a key heritage feature deemed to be 'at risk' in the parish, the Archbishop's Palace. Overall therefore, no significant effects have been identified in relation to the 'Historic Environment' theme, and positive effects are anticipated in relation to the 'Landscape' theme.

New development has the potential to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land in the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, given the lack of detailed land classification undertaken in the parish, it is unclear as to what extent this will lead to the loss of areas of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. The Neighbourhood Plan also recognizes the importance of Groundwater Protection Zones within which some of the proposed allocations lie in, seeking to ensure that groundwater resources are protected through new development. As such, the overall significance of impacts in relation to the 'Land, Soil and Water Resources' SEA theme is uncertain.

In terms of the 'Air Quality', 'Biodiversity', 'Climate Change' and 'Transportation' themes, the Neighbourhood Plan will initiate a number of beneficial approaches. These are not though considered to be significant in the context of the SEA process given the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan and the scale of proposals.



## Next steps

This Environmental Report accompanies the Charing Neighbourhood Plan for Regulation 14 consultation.

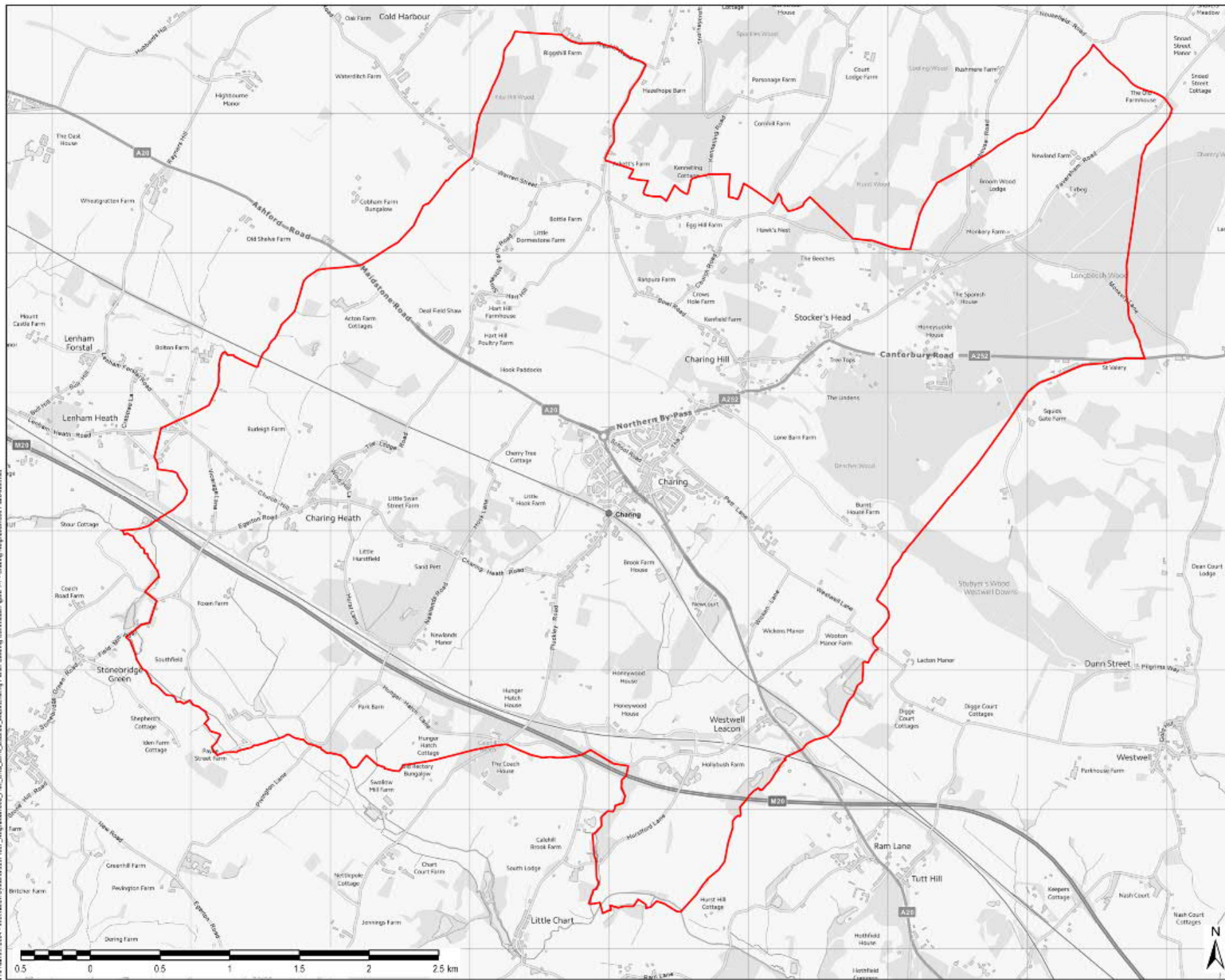
Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, and the Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Ashford Borough Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.

At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Ashford Local Plan.

If Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by Ashford Borough Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Charing Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the development plan for Charing Parish.



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# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 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 during the first half of 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 Charing Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>
Timescale	To 2030
Area covered by the plan	The Charing Neighbourhood Plan area covers the parish of Charing in Kent ( <b>Figure 1.1</b> ).
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	<p>Hugh Billot, Charing Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee</p> <p><a href="mailto:hugh@charingkent.org">hugh@charingkent.org</a></p>



## SEA explained

- 1.5 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a mechanism for considering and communicating the impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key sustainability issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative impacts. Through this approach, the SEA for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the developing plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.6 SEA is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which transpose into national law the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive<sup>1</sup>. It also widens the scope of the assessment from focussing on environmental issues to further consider social and economic issues.
- 1.7 The Charing Neighbourhood Plan has been screened in by Ashford Borough Council as requiring an SEA. To meet this requirement, the Neighbourhood Plan is undergoing an SEA process which incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive.
- 1.8 The SEA will be undertaken to meet specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).
- 1.9 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
  1. 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
  2. A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for alongside the Draft Plan (i.e. the Regulation 14 version of the 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC



## Structure of this SEA Environmental Report

1.10 This document is the SEA Environmental Report for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan and hence needs to answer all four of the questions listed below with a view to providing the information required by the SEA Regulations. Each of the four questions is answered in turn within this report, as follows:

**Table 1.2: Questions that must be answered by the SEA Environmental Report in order to meet the regulatory<sup>2</sup> requirements**

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... <sup>3</sup>
<b>What's the scope of the SEA?</b>	<p>What is the plan seeking to achieve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.</li> </ul>
	<p>What is the sustainability 'context'?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relevant environmental protection <b>objectives</b>, established at international or national level.</li> <li>Any existing environmental <b>problems</b> which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.</li> </ul>
	<p>What is the sustainability 'baseline'?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan.</li> <li>The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.</li> <li>Any existing environmental <b>problems</b> which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.</li> </ul>
	<p>What are the key issues &amp; objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key <b>problems/issues</b> and <b>objectives</b> that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment.</li> </ul>
<b>What has plan-making/SEA involved up to this point?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the <b>alternatives</b> dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach).</li> <li>The likely significant effects associated with <b>alternatives</b>.</li> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of <b>alternatives</b> appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.</li> </ul>
<b>What are the assessment findings at this stage?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The likely significant effects associated with <b>the Regulation 14 version of the plan</b>.</li> <li>The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing <b>the Regulation 14 version of the plan</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>What happens next?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The next steps for plan making / SEA process.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

<sup>3</sup> NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.



## 2. Local Plan context and vision for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan

### Local Plan context for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The overarching document for the Ashford Local Plan, *the Ashford Local Plan to 2030*<sup>4</sup> 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 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

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<sup>4</sup> 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]



## Vision, aims and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.5 The vision statement for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan, which was developed during the earlier stages of plan development, is as follows:

“

*Our vision for the parish of Charing at the end of the plan period is that both new and existing residents will be enjoying the same benefits or greater benefits of living in the village and parish as current residents do and that the area will be an even more attractive community in which to live and work.*

### Vision statement for the Charing Neighbourhood Plan

”

- 2.6 To support the vision statement, the Neighbourhood Plan outlines 16 key objectives:

- 1) To minimise the impact of new developments on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems;
- 2) To ensure the beautiful views inwards and outwards are not compromised and the public open spaces are protected;
- 3) To improve and increase Charing village parking;
- 4) To establish a multi-purpose community centre with attractions for all;
- 5) To provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home;
- 6) To enhance the prospects of local business and take actions to create additional employment;
- 7) To reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution;
- 8) To ensure the village character and spirit are maintained and where possible enhanced;
- 9) To support actions likely to re-establish a pub/restaurant/hotel in the heart of the village;
- 10) To support the enhancement of and improvement in the level of healthcare provision;
- 11) To promote retail activity to the parish, especially Charing High Street ;
- 12) To take actions to ensure road traffic congestion does not get worse and that road networks in the parish are safe for both vehicle users and pedestrians;
- 13) To establish a formal cycle and footpath between Charing and Charing Heath;
- 14) To support the full restoration of the Archbishop's Palace;
- 15) To support all initiatives which preserve heritage in the parish; and
- 16) To promote sustainable tourism.



## 3. What is the scope of the SEA?

### SEA Scoping Report

- 3.1 The SEA Regulations require that: “*When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.<sup>5</sup> These authorities were consulted on the scope of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan SEA in October 2019.
- 3.2 The purpose of scoping was to outline the ‘scope’ of the SEA through setting out:
- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional and local plans and strategies relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan;
  - Baseline data against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed;
  - The key sustainability issues for the Neighbourhood Plan; and
  - An ‘SEA Framework’ of objectives against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.
- 3.3 Responses received on the Scoping Report, and how they were addressed, have been summarised below.

**Table 3.1: Consultation responses received on the SEA Scoping Report**

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<b>Natural England</b> <i>Sharon Jenkins, Consultations Team (email response received on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019)</i>	
Natural England has no specific comments to make on this neighbourhood plan SEA scoping.	Comment noted. The annex has provided an essential reference point during the SEA process.
However, we refer you to the advice in the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.	
<b>Environment Agency</b> <i>Jennifer Wilson, Planning Specialist (email response received on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019)</i>	
I don't know if you are aware but we now charge for advice as part of our cost recovery process on consultations that fall outside of the Local Plan "Regulations" – Non statutory advice. We are happy to provide this advice if you so wish. We charge £100 per officer per hour + VAT. I would estimate that a review of this document plus administration would cost in the region of £500 + VAT but we would only charge for the actual time taken.	Comment noted. Further comments have not been sought.

<sup>5</sup> In-line with Article 6(3).of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because ‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities,[they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme’.



## Consultation response

## How the response was considered and addressed

Some general advice that may help you decide:

We always recommend an objective is included to protect and enhance the environment. Indicators should relate to the environmental constraints in your local area. This may include flood risk, water quality, biodiversity.

Together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission we have published joint advice on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. (copy attached). There is a useful check list in this document.

We also recommend your SEA takes account of relevant Ashford Borough Council's policies, plans and strategies including ABC's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, flood risk strategies (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-risk-management-current-schemes-and-strategies>), and the South East River Basin Management Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/south-east-river-basin-management-plan>)

Comments noted. The context review section for the land, soil and water resources baseline information (presented in Appendix A) has been updated to include a reference to the South East River Basin Management Plan.

## Historic England

*Robert Lloyd Sweet, Historic Places Adviser (email response received on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019)*

That you for consulting Historic England not he draft Scoping report for SEA of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan. I am pleased to note the review of heritage assets in the neighbourhood plan area I note that the conservation area is identified as currently being prepared. It would be helpful to state that this should be an important piece of data for the emerging neighbourhood plan and that the steering group would be advised to work closely with the Council's conservation star to ensure its findings are taken into account.

Comment noted. The baseline section for the historic environment theme (presented in Appendix A) has been updated to include a comment on the steering group being advised to work closely with the council to ensure that the findings of the conservation area appraisal are taken into account.

I would be grateful if you could please update the reference to Historic England Advice Note 1 on page 28 to the most recent version published in February 2019.

Comment noted. The context review section for the historic environment baseline information (presented in Appendix A) has been updated to include a reference to the most recent Historic England Advice Note 1.



Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>With regard to the SEA Objectives Charing is an unusual neighbourhood plan area in having a number of highly graded 'at risk' heritage assets located within the built up area. Given the identification of these in the baseline we feel it is right that their current condition is identified as a sustainability issue and therefore that there should be an associated sustainability objective relating to these against which the plan is tested. In our consideration of these features it is necessary to consider that heritage assets that have relatively limited options for reuse will require a high level of creativity and potentially adaptation ensure their conservation. As such, the objective should focus on avoiding impediments to measures that may address the at risk nature of the site, rather than prescribing measures or a level of conservation that is considered desirable. We would like to suggest wording such as:</p> <p>"Avoid restricting measures necessary to address the 'at risk' status of the Charing Palace Scheduled Monument, Farmhouse and Gatehouse and the viable use other structures".</p> <p>With the associated assessment question:</p> <p>"Will the proposal/option limit possible uses of the at risk heritage uses and make their conservation more problematic"</p>	<p>Comment noted. An objective and assessment question have been added to reflect the 'at risk' heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>

- 3.4 Baseline information (including the context review and baseline data) is presented in **Appendix A**. The key sustainability issues and SEA Framework are presented below.

## Key Sustainability Issues

### Air Quality

- 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.

### Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 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.

### Climate Change

- 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.
- 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.

## Landscape

- 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.

## Historic Environment

- 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.

## Land, Soil and Water Resources

- 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'.

## Population and Community

- 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.
- 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.

## Health and Wellbeing

- 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.

## Transportation

- 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.

## SEA Framework

- 3.5 The SEA Framework provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard 'tests'. Each proposal within the Charing Neighbourhood Plan will be assessed consistently using the framework.

SEA Objective	Assessment questions
<b>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</b>	
Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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?</li> <li>• Achieve a net gain in biodiversity?</li> <li>• Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks?</li> <li>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?</li> </ul>



SEA Objective	Assessment questions
<b>Climate change</b>	
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"> <li>• Reduce the number of journeys made?</li> <li>• Reduce the need to travel?</li> <li>• Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport?</li> <li>• Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?</li> <li>• Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources?</li> <li>• Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• 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?</li> <li>• Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change?</li> <li>• Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing surface water runoff (either within the plan area or downstream)?</li> <li>• Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area?</li> <li>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape</b>	
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"> <li>• Conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the Kent Downs AONB, in line with the Management Plan?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance locally important landscape and villagescape features within the Neighbourhood Plan area?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance local diversity and character?</li> </ul>
<b>Historic Environment</b>	
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"> <li>• Conserve and enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their setting?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of locally important features and their settings?</li> <li>• Support the integrity of the historic setting of key buildings of cultural heritage interest as listed on the Kent HER?</li> <li>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the environment?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance archaeological remains, including historic landscapes?</li> <li>• Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?</li> </ul>



SEA Objective	Assessment questions
Avoid restricting measures which are necessary to address the 'at risk' status of the Charing Palace Scheduled Monument, Farmhouse and Gatehouse and the viable use of other structures	<p>Will the proposal/option help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the condition of features at risk which are listed on the Heritage at Risk register?</li> </ul>
<b>Land, Soil and Water Resources</b>	
Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the use of previously developed land?</li> <li>• Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which in the parish may comprise Grade 1 to 3a agricultural land?</li> <li>• Protect the integrity of mineral safeguarding areas?</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Reduce the amount of waste produced?</li> <li>• Support the minimisation, reuse and recycling of waste?</li> <li>• Maximise opportunities for local management of waste in order to minimise export of waste to areas outside?</li> <li>• Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction?</li> </ul>
Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support improvements to water quality?</li> <li>• Minimise water consumption?</li> <li>• Protect surface water resources?</li> <li>• Protect groundwater resources?</li> </ul>
<b>Population and Community</b>	
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"> <li>• Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities?</li> <li>• Minimise fuel poverty?</li> <li>• Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents?</li> <li>• Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?</li> <li>• Support the provision of land for allotments and cemeteries?</li> </ul>
Reduce deprivation and promote a more inclusive and self-contained community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide additional community infrastructure to meet existing and future deficits?</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?</li> <li>• Support enhancements to the current housing stock?</li> <li>• Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?</li> <li>• Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs?</li> <li>• Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?</li> <li>• Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?</li> </ul>



SEA Objective	Assessment questions
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	
Improve the health and wellbeing residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups?</li> <li>Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards?</li> <li>Promote the use of healthier modes of travel?</li> <li>Improve access to the countryside for recreational use?</li> <li>Avoiding any negative impacts to the quality and extent of existing recreational assets, such as formal or informal footpaths?</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	
Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel?</li> <li>Facilitate working from home and remote working?</li> <li>Improve road safety?</li> <li>Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?</li> </ul>



## 4. What has plan making / SEA involved up to this point?

### Introduction

- 4.1 In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include...
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
  - The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.
- 4.2 The 'narrative' of plan-making / SEA up to this point is told within this part of the Environmental Report. Specifically, this section explains how preparation of the current version of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by an assessment of alternative locations for non-strategic scale development in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 4.3 The following sections therefore describe how the SEA process to date has informed the preferred development strategy for the Neighbourhood Plan area and potential locations for development. Specifically, this chapter explains how the Charing Neighbourhood Plan's development strategy has been shaped through considering alternative approaches for the location of housing and community infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

### Overview of plan making / SEA work undertaken since 2016

- 4.4 Charing Neighbourhood Plan's development began early in 2016, initiated by Charing Parish Council. It has been led by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, which includes representatives of the Parish Council and volunteers from the local community.
- 4.5 Significant public consultation has been carried out to date to support the Neighbourhood Plan. This has gathered local views and opinions, with a view to engaging local people throughout the Neighbourhood Plan's development process. This has included events, engagement workshops, community questionnaires, and surveys of residents, businesses and traders, exhibitions and publicity exercises.
- 4.6 The Statement of Consultation which will accompany the Charing Neighbourhood Plan at submission will describe in detail how the community has been involved during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### Context for growth in the Neighbourhood Plan area

- 4.7 The recently adopted Ashford Local Plan (February 2020) places Charing in the borough's settlement hierarchy as a village/local service centre. These settlements perform the role of serving the day-to-day service, shopping and leisure needs for the settlement's local catchment area.
- 4.8 In light of this, the Local Plan allocates 235 dwellings for residential development on three sites in the vicinity of Charing, as follows:
- Charing - Northdown Service Station, Maidstone Road: 20 dwellings
  - Charing - Land South of the Arthur Baker Playing Field: 35 dwellings.
  - Charing, Land Adjacent to Poppyfields: 180 dwellings
- 4.9 In addition to the above allocations, significant recent growth has taken place in the Neighbourhood Plan area. In conjunction with the period covered by the Local Plan (i.e. 2011 to 2030), in total 621 dwellings have been delivered in the parish to date. This comprises an increase of 47.8% in the number of dwellings in the Neighbourhood Plan area since 2011, resulting in a population increase of 62% in Charing Village and 53% in the parish as a whole.



4.10 As highlighted above, extensive community consultation has been undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan to date. Key elements highlighted from this engagement with the community has highlighted the following:

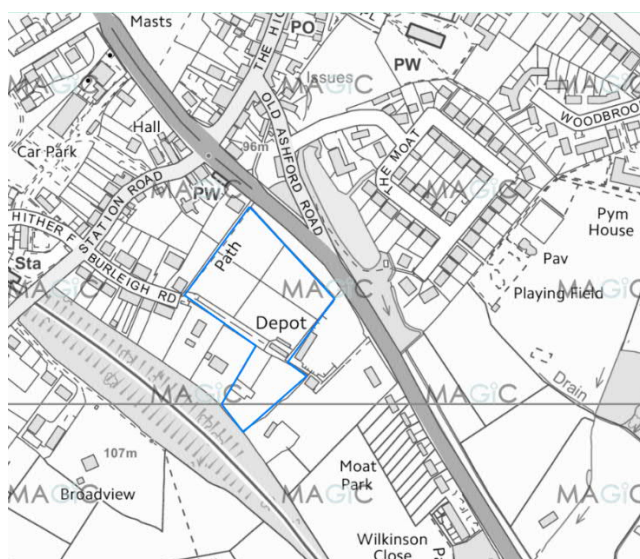
- Recent growth has not been accompanied by the delivery of appropriate community infrastructure to serve recent increases in population.
- There is a need for significant improvements to infrastructure and facilities to take place in the parish.
- Recent development has led to significant incursion into open countryside, affecting the character of the parish.
- The delivery of smaller sites for housing is preferable to larger sites to limit impacts on the character of the parish's settlements.
- There is a need for an element of appropriate development to enable existing residents to downsize and remain in the parish and younger people/first-time buyers/renters to secure a place to live.
- The delivery of small sites in Charing Heath would be supported in principle to support the community vitality of the settlement.

## Assessment of reasonable alternatives for Charing village

4.11 Given the significant expansion of the community since 2011, there is not an expectation that further larger-scale housing growth should be delivered in the Neighbourhood Plan area during the plan period.

4.12 As highlighted above, there is a perspective that recent growth in the village has not been accompanied by appropriate infrastructure and service provision, and that community facilities and amenities are insufficient for the existing population. In light of this, there is a recognition amongst the community that growth of an appropriate scale may be beneficial to deliver through the Neighbourhood Plan if it delivers significant new community provision. Such provision would potentially likely include a new community centre, enhanced medical facilities, flexible business units and additional parking provision.

4.13 With this in mind, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee sought potential options for delivering similar community infrastructure on a site. Following this consultation, one site (incorporating two adjoining areas of land totalling 2ha) came forward at Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow. This is located close to the centre of Charing village, situated to the south west of the A20 (see map below).



**Figure 4.1: Location of the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site in Charing village**



- 4.14 The owners have highlighted that if 48 market homes were to be delivered on the site, an amount of land will be gifted to the Charing Parish Council for the construction of a new community hall, integrated business units and a new village car park. Following further negotiation, it has been established that the following would be delivered on the site alongside the 48 homes:
- A new village hall;
  - Rooms to provide additional health services to residents;
  - An educational unit, society meeting rooms;
  - An administrative office for use by the parish clerk;
  - Parish archives;
  - Small museum;
  - Parish council chamber;
  - Six business units; and
  - A new 40-space car park.
- 4.15 Following consultation and engagement with landowners, it has been established that there are no other locations in the vicinity of Charing village where comparable community provision could be delivered through a similar level of housing.
- 4.16 To support decision making on this element of the Neighbourhood Plan, two options have been considered as reasonable alternatives through the SEA process with regards to the proposals. The first option would take forward an allocation at this location for the provision highlighted above. A second option would not take forward such an allocation.
- 4.17 The options considered are therefore as follows:
- **Option A:** Deliver an allocation through the Charing Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for 48 market dwellings and new community facilities, incorporating a community hall, integrated business units and a new village car park.
  - **Option B:** Do not deliver an allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for this provision.
- 4.18 Table 4.1 below presents the findings of the appraisal of Option 1 and 2 outlined above. To support the assessment findings, the options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SEA theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the comparative sustainability performance of the three options in relation to each theme considered.



**Table 4.1: Appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives linked to housing use**

**Option A:** Deliver an allocation through the Charing Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for 48 market dwellings and new community facilities, incorporating a community hall, integrated business units and a new village car park.

**Option B:** Do not deliver an allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for this provision.

SEA theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Rank of preference	
		Opt A	Opt B
<b>Air quality</b>	<p>Development of the site through Option A will increase traffic movements in the vicinity of the site. This has the potential to contribute to air pollutants from road transport.</p> <p>However, the site is located in an area with good air quality; the area is not at risk of exceedances of objectives for key air pollutants. The site is also in excellent proximity to services and facilities in Charing village centre (less than 200m) and is located approximately 200m to Charing railway station, with direct services to Ashford, Maidstone, Canterbury and London. As such, development of the site through Option A will support the use of alternative modes of transport to the private car.</p> <p>Therefore, given the relatively good air quality baseline in the area, and the accessibility of the site by non-car modes, development proposed through Option A is unlikely to have significant effects on air quality in the area.</p>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Biodiversity and geodiversity</b>	<p>The site to be taken forward through Option A does not contain significant biodiversity constraints.</p> <p>There are no European or nationally designated biodiversity or geodiversity sites within or adjacent or close to the boundary of the site and the site is not within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the type of development likely to be taken forward. No Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites or Regionally Important Geological Sites are within the vicinity of the site.</p> <p>The south western boundary of the site is adjacent to an area of Deciduous Woodland BAP Priority Habitat associated with the railway corridor. Whilst direct impacts on the woodland from landtake and fragmentation are not anticipated through Option A, disturbance may take place from new development at this location from noise, light pollution or trampling from enhanced access. However, given only a very limited part of the site is adjacent to this habitat, and development at the site is unlikely to readily increase access to the habitat (which is located on the railway embankment), negative effects are not anticipated.</p> <p>Whilst the site does not have significant biodiversity constraints, site boundaries have some biodiversity value, including trees and hedgerows which are components of local ecological networks. However, development of the site is unlikely to lead to the loss of key habitats if these key features are retained following ecological survey.</p> <p>Development at this location also has the potential to enhance habitats and ecological connectivity. However, the site is not within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area, and with regard to existing habitats on the site, according to the Kent mapping tool, the location is of 'medium habitat opportunity' for neutral grassland and 'minor habitat opportunity' for chalk grassland.</p>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>



**Option A:** Deliver an allocation through the Charing Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for 48 market dwellings and new community facilities, incorporating a community hall, integrated business units and a new village car park.

**Option B:** Do not deliver an allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for this provision.

SEA theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Rank of preference	
		Opt A	Opt B
<b>Climate change</b>	<p>Development of the site through Option A will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of the village and an intensification of uses at this location.</p> <p>These increases are unlikely to be significant given the size of the site and the scale of likely development. The site is also in excellent proximity to the services and facilities in the village centre (c.200m). In combination with the proposals for delivering community provision on the site, Option A will help to limit the need to travel to local amenities (and associated greenhouse gas emissions).</p> <p>In relation to adapting to the effects of climate change, the site is not located within identified flood risk zones for fluvial flooding. A very limited surface water pathway is located in the north western part of the site; this is not however a significant constraint.</p>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Landscape</b>	<p>The site is not within the AONB, or visible from the AONB. In terms of wider landscape character, the site is screened from the wider countryside by existing development. Therefore, no significant effects on landscape character are anticipated from development taken forward through Option A.</p>	<b>=</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Historic environment</b>	<p>The site comprises an open area within the Charing Conservation Area. Development of the site will therefore impact on the character of the conservation area.</p> <p>However, a number of elements limit the potential for significant effects on the village's heritage resource. In terms of nationally listed buildings, the closest listed building (the Grade II listed 'The Firs') is located 50m to the north west of the site boundary. This is screened from the site by the existing row of trees on the north west boundary and the presence of The Grange. Further listed buildings are present on Station Road, located c.100m to the north west of the site. These includes the Grade II* listed 'The Old House', and the Grade II listed 'Clonmore' and 29-33 Station Road. Again, impacts on the settings of these features are limited by the flat topography of the location, and existing screening afforded by trees and existing development. As such development taken forward through Option A is unlikely to lead to significant effects on the setting of these listed buildings.</p> <p>In terms of other features listed on the Historic Environment Record, none are present on or adjacent to the site. Development of the site would also not affect the setting of other key features of historic interest in the parish, including the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul or the Archbishop's Palace.</p> <p>Overall therefore, whilst the site is located within the conservation area, development at this location is unlikely to lead to significant impacts on the fabric or setting of key features of historic environment interest.</p>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>



**Option A:** Deliver an allocation through the Charing Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for 48 market dwellings and new community facilities, incorporating a community hall, integrated business units and a new village car park.

**Option B:** Do not deliver an allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan at the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site for this provision.

SEA theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Rank of preference	
		Opt A	Opt B
<b>Land, soil and water resources</b>	<p>The site is a mixture of a previously developed and greenfield land, albeit largely underdeveloped. Development of the site would lead to the loss of some agricultural land.</p> <p>Recent agricultural land classification has not been undertaken on the site. However, according to pre-1988 classification, the land has the potential to be Grade 2 land (although this is uncertain given detailed classification has not been undertaken). This is potentially land classified as 'the best and most versatile' agricultural land.</p> <p>The site is not located within a Groundwater Source Protection Zone.</p>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Population and community</b>	<p>Allocation of the site through Option A will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. It will also deliver significant community infrastructure, including: a new village hall; rooms to provide additional health services to residents; an educational unit, society meeting rooms; small museum; six business units; and a new 40-space car park. The delivery of these have the potential to lead to significant positive effects for community infrastructure.</p> <p>The site is also located in excellent proximity to services and facilities in Charing village centre (less than 200m), which will limit the need for residents to travel for the services and facilities provided here. This will support accessibility to key amenities in the village.</p>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	<p>The site is accessible to the doctors' surgery at Surgery Close which is located 250m to the north of the site. The proposals for the site through Option A would also deliver complementary health services. This will help enhance health services in the village.</p> <p>The site is accessible to the village's Public Rights of Way network via a footpath which runs through the site and is accessible to the services and facilities in the village centre. Development of the site through Option A will therefore support walking and cycling and healthier lifestyles.</p>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Transport</b>	<p>The site is located in excellent proximity to services and facilities in Charing village centre (less than 200m). The site is also located approximately 200m to Charing railway station, with direct services to Ashford, Maidstone, Canterbury and London. As such, development of the site through Option A will support accessibility to services, facilities and amenities and public transport networks.</p>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

## Assessment of reasonable alternatives for Charing Heath

4.19 As indicated above, community consultation has highlighted that there is a desire for small scale and limited residential development in Charing Heath. This given the community's aim to support the vitality of the settlement.

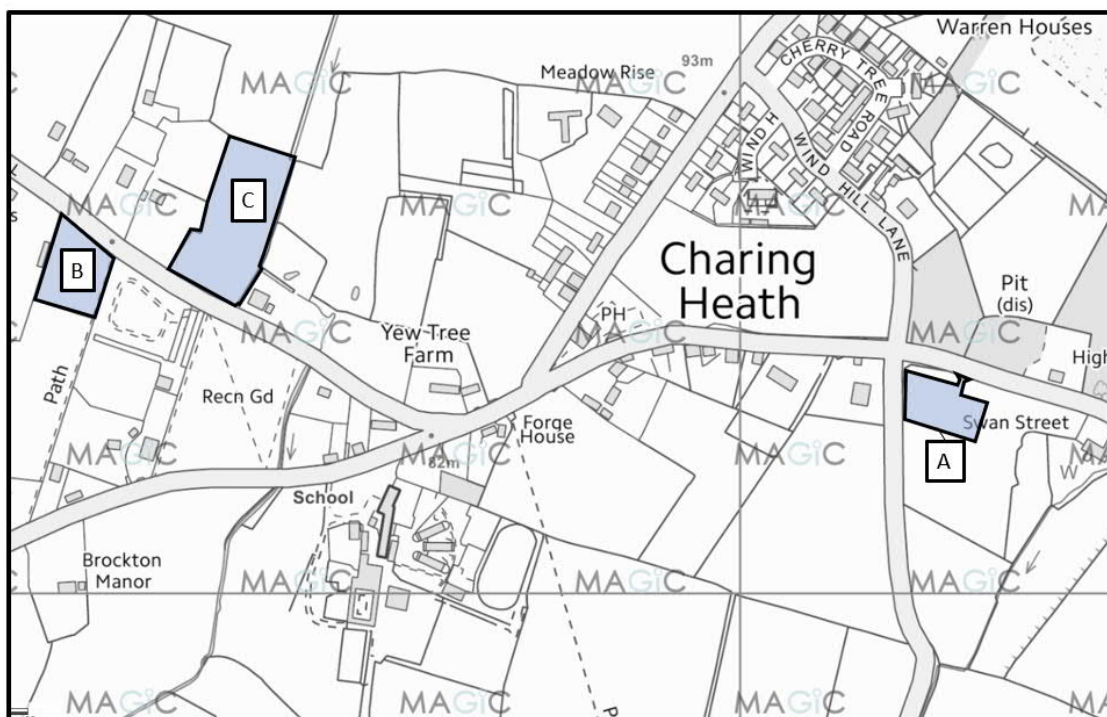
4.20 Following a call for sites undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee in March 2016, three sites were proposed by landowners in Charing Heath. These are as follows.

- Land north-west of Swan Street (Site A);



- Land next to Crofters (Site B); and
- Land at Church Hill (Site C).

4.21 The location of these sites in Charing Heath are below.



**Figure 4.2: Location of sites proposed in Charing Heath**

- 4.22 To support the consideration of the suitability of these sites for a potential allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan, the SEA process has undertaken an appraisal of the key environmental constraints present at each of the sites. This has considered the potential effects that may arise as a result of small-scale housing development (up to ten dwellings, reflecting community consultation) at these locations.
- 4.23 In this context the sites have been considered in relation to the SEA Framework of objectives and decision-making questions developed during SEA scoping (Chapter 3) and the baseline information. This SEA site assessment was undertaken separately to the site assessment undertaken by the Charing Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.
- 4.24 The tables which follow present a summary of this assessment and provide an indication of each site's sustainability performance in relation to the nine SEA themes.



## SEA site appraisal findings

**Table 4.2: Site A, Land north-west of Swan Street**

SEA theme	Commentary, Site A: Land north-west of Swan Street	
Air quality	The location is not within an area at risk of exceedances of objectives for air quality. Development at this scale in this location is unlikely to lead to significant impacts on these low baseline levels of air pollutants.	
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<p>The site does not contain significant biodiversity constraints.</p> <p>There are no European or nationally designated biodiversity or geodiversity sites within or adjacent or close to the boundary of the site.</p> <p>The site is not within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the type of development proposed.</p> <p>There are no BAP Priority Habitats on or in the vicinity of the site. The closest Local Wildlife Site is Hurst Wood, which is approximately 500m to the south.</p> <p>Whilst the site itself does not have significant biodiversity constraints, the site is bounded by mature field boundaries incorporating trees and hedgerows which form important components of local ecological networks. However, it is likely that the majority of these features can be kept in situ.</p>	
Climate Change	<p>Development of the site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Charing Heath and an intensification of uses at this location, although these are unlikely to be significant given the size of the site and the scale of likely development.</p> <p>The site is in relative proximity to some facilities in Charing Heath. The site is approximately 265m from the Red Lion pub, 520m from a recreation ground and 930m from Holy Trinity Church and Charing Heath and Lenham Heath Memorial Hall. This will help limit the need to travel to some local amenities. However, there will be a need to travel by car to most services and facilities, with implications for greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>In relation to adapting to the effects of climate change, the site is not located within identified flood risk zones for fluvial or surface water flooding.</p>	
Landscape	The site slopes down to the south and as a result there are some views in from the open countryside from the south and south east. However, the site is small in scale, and is screened in most directions by trees and hedging. Development of the site is also unlikely to affect views from the AONB.	
Historic Environment	<p>The site is not within the setting of a Conservation Area.</p> <p>No nationally listed buildings are present on the site. The nearest listed building (the Grade II listed Swan Street) is located 100m to the east of the site. The site has the potential to be visible from this feature, although it is partly screened by vegetation.</p> <p>There are no features listed on the Historic Environment Record present on the site.</p>	



SEA theme		Commentary, Site A: Land north-west of Swan Street	
Land, Soil and Water Resources		<p>A detailed Agricultural Land Classification for this site has not been undertaken and there is therefore a need to rely on the national 'Provisional Agricultural Land Quality' dataset. The Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset shows that the site is predominantly covered by Grade 3 agricultural land, 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.</p> <p>As the site is a greenfield location, development would not make the best use of previously developed land.</p> <p>The site is also located within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and an Outer Protection (Zone 2) of a Groundwater Source Protection Zone.</p>	
Population and Community		<p>Allocation of the site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs, including through the delivery of affordable housing. Development at the site is also likely to contribute to the viability and vitality of Charing Heath.</p> <p>The site is located in good proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath (265m from the Red Lion pub and 520m from a recreation ground) which will limit the need for residents to travel for the amenities provided here. However, for most services and facilities, there will be a need to travel to Charing and further afield.</p>	
Health and Wellbeing		Development of this site is not likely to directly impact the health and wellbeing of residents. The site is accessible to the local public right of way network.	
Transportation		<p>The site is located in good proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath. However, there will be a need to travel to most services and facilities.</p> <p>In this context the site is located approximately 250m to the nearest bus stop, with services to Maidstone and Ashford. Charing train station is also approximately 1.8km away.</p>	
<b>Key</b>			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral/no effect		Uncertain effects	

**Table 4.3: Site B, Land next to Crofters**

SEA theme		Commentary, Site B: Land next to Crofters	
Air quality		The location is not within an area at risk of exceedances of objectives for air quality. Development at this scale in this location is unlikely to lead to significant impacts on these low baseline levels of air pollutants.	



SEA theme	Commentary, Site B: Land next to Crofters
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<p>The site does not contain significant biodiversity constraints.</p> <p>There are no European or nationally designated biodiversity or geodiversity sites within or adjacent or close to the boundary of the site.</p> <p>The site is not within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the type of development proposed.</p> <p>There are no BAP Priority Habitats on or in the vicinity of the site, or Local Wildlife Sites.</p> <p>Whilst the site itself does not have significant biodiversity constraints, the site is bounded by mature field boundaries incorporating trees and hedgerows which form important components of local ecological networks. However, it is likely that the majority of these features can be kept in situ.</p>
Climate Change	<p>Development of the site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of the village and an intensification of uses at this location, although these are unlikely to be significant given the size of the site and the scale of likely development.</p> <p>The site is in relative proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath. The site is approximately 240m from the Red Lion pub, 90m from a recreation ground and 240m from Holy Trinity Church and Charing Heath and Lenham Heath Memorial Hall. This will help limit the need to travel to some local amenities. However, there will be a need to travel by car to most services and facilities, with implications for greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>In relation to adapting to the effects of climate change, the site is not located within identified flood risk zones for fluvial or surface water flooding.</p>
Landscape	<p>Development lies to the north, east and west of the site and would therefore contribute to a linear pattern of development. The site will be screened by vegetation from the caravan park which lies to the east of the site. However, there is the potential for short views in from Crofters Nursery which lies to the west.</p> <p>Whilst significant impacts on landscape character are not anticipated, the site is open in part to the open countryside to the south.</p> <p>Development of the site is unlikely to affect views from the AONB.</p>
Historic Environment	<p>The site is not within the setting of a Conservation Area.</p> <p>There are three Grade II listed buildings located opposite the site on the northern side of Church Hill (approximately 50m away). These are: Fayre Acre; The Thatched Cottage; and Church Hill Cottage. Church Hill Cottage has also been identified on the HER as a nursery garden of local interest. However, these features, which are over 50m distant from the site, are largely screened from the site by existing trees and dense vegetation along the north site of Church Hill.</p> <p>There are no features listed on the Historic Environment Record present on or adjacent to the site.</p>
Land, Soil and Water Resources	<p>A detailed Agricultural Land Classification for this site has not been undertaken and there is therefore a need to rely on the national 'Provisional Agricultural Land Quality' dataset. The Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset shows that the site is predominantly covered by Grade 3 agricultural land, 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.</p> <p>As the site is a greenfield location, development would not make the best use of previously developed land.</p> <p>The site is also located within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and a Total Catchment (Zone 3) of a Groundwater Source Protection Zone.</p>



SEA theme	Commentary, Site B: Land next to Crofters	
Population and Community	Allocation of the site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs, including through the delivery of affordable housing. Development at the site is also likely to contribute to the viability and vitality of Charing Heath. The site is located in good proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath (240m from the Red Lion pub, 90m from a recreation ground and 240m from Holy Trinity Church and Charing Heath and Lenham Heath Memorial Hall) which will limit the need for residents to travel for the amenities provided here. However, for most services and facilities, there will be a need to travel to Charing and further afield.	
Health and Wellbeing	Development of this site is not likely to directly impact the health and wellbeing of residents. The site is within walking distance to some services and facilities in Charing Heath and is accessible to the local public right of way network.	
Transportation	The site is located in good proximity to some amenities in Charing Heath. However, there will be a need to travel to most services and facilities. In this context the site is located approximately 240m to the nearest bus stop, with services to Maidstone and Ashford. Charing train station is also approximately 2.5km away.	
<b>Key</b>		
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect
Neutral/no effect		Uncertain effects

**Table 4.4: Site C, Land at Church Hill**

SEA theme	Commentary, Site C: Land at Church Hill	
Air quality	The location is not within an area at risk of exceedances of objectives for air quality. Development at this scale in this location is unlikely to lead to significant impacts on these low baseline levels of air pollutants.	
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	The site does not contain significant biodiversity constraints. There are no European or nationally designated biodiversity or geodiversity sites within or adjacent or close to the boundary of the site. The site is not within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the type of development proposed. There are no BAP Priority Habitats on or in the vicinity of the site, or Local Wildlife Sites. Whilst the site itself does not have significant biodiversity constraints, the site is bounded by mature field boundaries incorporating trees and hedgerows which form important components of local ecological networks. However, it is likely that the majority of these features can be kept in situ.	



SEA theme	Commentary, Site C: Land at Church Hill	
Climate Change	<p>Development of the site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of the village and an intensification of uses at this location, although these are unlikely to be significant given the size of the site and the scale of likely development.</p> <p>The site is in relative proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath. The site is approximately 300m from the Red Lion pub, opposite a recreation ground and 325m from Holy Trinity Church and Charing Heath and Lenham Heath Memorial Hall. However, there will be a need to travel by car to most services and facilities, with implications for greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>In relation to adapting to the effects of climate change, the eastern boundary of the site is located within a 'low' flood risk zone with a limited area of 'medium' flood risk zone for surface water flooding. This is unlikely to be a significant constraint to development at the site.</p>	
Landscape	<p>Development lies to the west of the site and would therefore contribute to a linear pattern of development. The site will be screened by vegetation from the caravan park which lies to the south as well as housing which lies to the west of the site. Whilst significant impacts on landscape character are not anticipated, the site is open in part to the open countryside to the north.</p> <p>Development of the site is unlikely to significantly affect views from the AONB.</p>	
Historic Environment	<p>The site is not within the setting of a Conservation Area.</p> <p>A Grade II listed building (Church Hill Cottage) lies approximately 45m west of the site. Church Hill Cottage, which is adjacent to the western boundary of the site has also been identified on the HER as a nursery garden of local interest. Although this is partly screened by vegetation along the site boundary, development which takes place on the site would be visible from the listed building and part of the garden and has the potential to impact on the historic setting of it.</p>	
Land, Soil and Water Resources	<p>A detailed Agricultural Land Classification for this site has not been undertaken and there is therefore a need to rely on the national 'Provisional Agricultural Land Quality' dataset. The Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset shows that the site is predominantly covered by Grade 3 agricultural land, 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.</p> <p>As the site is a greenfield location, development would not make the best use of previously developed land.</p> <p>The site is also located within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and a Total Catchment (Zone 3) of a Groundwater Source Protection Zone.</p>	
Population and Community	<p>Allocation of the site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs, including through the delivery of affordable housing. Development at the site is also likely to contribute to the viability and vitality of Charing Heath.</p> <p>The site is located in good proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath (240m from the Red Lion pub, 90m from a recreation ground and 240m from Holy Trinity Church and Charing Heath and Lenham Heath Memorial Hall) which will limit the need for residents to travel for the amenities provided here. However, for most services and facilities, there will be a need to travel to Charing and further afield.</p>	
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Development of this site is not likely to directly impact the health and wellbeing of residents. The site is accessible to the local public right of way network.</p>	



SEA theme	Commentary, Site C: Land at Church Hill		
Transportation	The site is located in good proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath. However, there will be a need to travel to most services and facilities The site is located approximately 325m to the nearest bus stop, with services to Maidstone and Ashford. Charing train station is also approximately 2.5km away.		
Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral/no effect		Uncertain effects	

## Summary of SEA site appraisal findings

4.25 The following table presents a summary of the findings of the site appraisal undertaken through the SEA process.

**Table 4.5: Summary of SEA site appraisal findings**

Site	Air quality	Biodiversity	Climate Change	Landscape	Historic Env	Land, Soil and Water Resources	Population and Community	Health and Wellbeing	Transport
Site A									
Site B									
Site C									

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral/no effect		Uncertain effects	



## Neighbourhood Plan policies

4.26 To support the implementation of the vision for the Neighbourhood Plan discussed in Section 2.5, the current Regulation 14 version of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan puts forward 47 policies to guide development in the Neighbourhood Plan area. These were developed following extensive community consultation and evidence gathering.

4.27 The policies presented in the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

**Table 4.6: Charing Neighbourhood Plan policies**

### Policies

Policy C1 Assets of Community Value

Policy C2 New Community Centre & Improved Sports Facilities

Policy C3 Infrastructure and Utilities

Policy C4 New Burial Ground

Policy C5 Communications Infrastructure

Policy C6 Shopping

Policy C7 Health and Health Care

Policy C8 Education

Policy C9 New Skate Park and Other Recreational Facilities for Older Children

Policy C10 Contributions to New Infrastructure and Facilities

Policy T1 Traffic Congestion

Policy T2 Traffic Management on The A20

Policy T3 Traffic Management Station Road/Pluckley Road

Policy T4 Traffic Management Charing Hill/A252

Policy T5 Pedestrian Footways

Policy T6 Residential Car Parking Spaces

Policy T7 Charing Village Parking

Policy EC1 Locations Allocated for New Business Units

Policy EC2 Mixed Use Developments

Policy EC3 Protection of Existing Commercial/Industrial Zones

Policy E1 Historic Environment

Policy E2 Listed Buildings & Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Policy E3 The Archbishop's Palace

Policy E4 Designation of Green Spaces in The Parish

Policy E5 Green Space Development

Policy E6 Development in the AONB

Policy E7 Landscape Strategy



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## Policies

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Policy E8 Ecological Impacts

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Policy E9 Views

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Policy H1 Allocation of Housing Sites in Charing Village

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Policy H2 Allocation of Housing Sites in Charing Heath

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Policy H3 Size of New Developments

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Policy H4 Affordable Housing

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Policy H5 Local-Needs Housing

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Policy H6 Local-Needs Housing on Exception Sites

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Policy H7 Size of Homes

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Policy H8 Lifetime-Home Standards

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Policy H9 Mixed Development

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Policy H10 Housing in Charing Heath

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Policy H11 Infill Development

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Policy H12 New Development, Including Extensions Outside Village Confines

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Policy H13 Development in Residential Gardens

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Policy H14 Development on Groundwater Protection Zones

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Policy D1 Good Design

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Policy D2 Imaginative and Innovative Design

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Policy D3 Street Furniture

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Policy D4 Dark Skies

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4.28 The next chapter presents the findings of the assessment of these policies.



## 5. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?

### Introduction

- 5.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current Regulation 14 consultation version of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan. This chapter presents:
- An appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan under the nine SEA theme headings; and
  - The overall conclusions at this current stage.

### Approach to this appraisal

- 5.2 The appraisal is structured under the nine SEA themes taken forward for the purposes of the SEA.
- 5.3 For each theme, 'significant effects' of the current version of the plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.
- 5.4 Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the plan. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects and ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

### Air Quality

- 5.5 Ashford Borough Council is required to monitor air quality across the borough to fulfil the requirements of the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act (1995). Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are declared when there is an exceedance or likely exceedance of an air quality objective. Whilst there are no AQMAs located in Charing, poor air quality linked to queuing traffic on Station Road as it meets the A20 is a concern amongst local people.
- 5.6 The allocations proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan are not located in areas at risk of exceedances for objectives for air quality. Development at these locations is also unlikely to lead to significant impacts on low baseline levels of air pollutants present locally; whilst the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow is located relatively close to the Station Road/A20 junction, traffic from the site is unlikely to see significant increases in traffic flows and congestion at the junction.
- 5.7 However, the policies which set out a range of provisions for encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling and public transport use, will support air quality in the Neighbourhood Plan area through promoting non-car use and encouraging lower emission forms of transport. These policies are discussed in more detail under the 'Transportation' SEA theme.
- 5.8 Air and noise quality will also be supported through Policy C3 'Infrastructure and Utilities' which states that new infrastructure services should not generate unacceptable noise, fumes, smell, or other disturbance to neighbouring residential properties.



- 5.9 The Neighbourhood Plan also has a close focus on protecting and enhancing open spaces and green infrastructure in the parish, demonstrated through Policy E4 'Designation of Green Spaces in the Parish', Policy E5 'Green Space Development' and Policy D2 'Imaginative and Innovative Design'. These policies will positively contribute to air quality enhancements through supporting the ability of natural processes to dissipate pollutants. This includes through the dispersion and the limiting of deposition of air pollutants such as oxides of nitrogen and particulates.

## Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 5.10 In terms of the allocations proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan, the site allocations in Charing Village and Charing Heath are not in locations with significant sensitivity for biodiversity.
- 5.11 The southern part of land next to the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site has an area of deciduous woodland BAP Priority Habitat adjacent to it. Whilst direct impacts on the woodland from landtake and fragmentation are not anticipated, disturbance may take place from new development at this location from noise, light pollution or trampling from enhanced access. However, given only a very limited part of the site is adjacent to this habitat, and development at the site is unlikely to readily increase access to the habitat (which is located on the railway embankment), negative effects are not anticipated. Development at this location also has the potential to enhance habitats and ecological connectivity.
- 5.12 In terms of the three allocations in Charing Heath, the sites do not contain significant biodiversity constraints beyond hedgerows and trees located on the site boundaries.
- 5.13 The key Neighbourhood Plan policy which seeks to support the integrity of biodiversity assets is Policy E8 (Ecological Impacts). This seeks to ensure that new development adequately addresses the potential for ecological impacts, and provides appropriate mitigation to protect designated species on all sites approved for development in the parish.
- 5.14 A number of further policies will also have direct and indirect positive effects for biodiversity networks. For example, Policy E4 'Designation of Green Spaces in the Parish' supports the protection and enhancement of key areas of open space, including through designating them as Local Green Spaces and Policy H1 (Allocation of Housing Sites in Charing Village) seeks to ensure that development protects specified trees and landscaping. Similarly, Policy H11 (Infill Development) highlights that infill development within the village will be supported providing that it would not result in significant harm to the landscape, heritage assets or biodiversity interests
- 5.15 Ecological networks within the Neighbourhood Plan area are further supported by Policy D4 'Dark Skies' which supports proposals that use low level lighting and that direct lighting downwards, with the potential to minimise impacts to nocturnal species. Furthermore, Policy E7 'Landscape Strategy' states that developments of more than five houses should, amongst other considerations:
- Incorporate tree and hedgerow surveys;
  - Incorporate measures to protect trees and hedgerows; and
  - Specify how open spaces will be managed in the future.
- 5.16 As such, the provision of these policies will ensure that ecological sensitivities are appropriately considered during the planning, construction and operational phases for new development proposals as well as effectively supporting national and Local Plan policy provisions with regards to biodiversity.

## Climate Change

- 5.17 The Charing Neighbourhood Plan presents a number of policies which have direct relevance to climate change considerations. The assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan's performance with



regard to climate change is outlined below, with discussions relating to climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation.

### Climate change mitigation

- 5.18 In terms of climate change contribution, per capita greenhouse gas emissions generated in the Neighbourhood Plan area may continue to decrease with the wider adoption of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies (including electric cars). However, increases in the built footprint of the Neighbourhood Plan area would contribute to increases in the absolute levels of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.19 Whilst the delivery of homes through the Neighbourhood Plan will increase greenhouse gas emissions either directly through construction, or indirectly through an increase in population, the built footprint of the area and associated travel and consumption behaviours, this level of housing would likely be mirrored by the approval of planning applications. As such the level of development proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions over and above that would be seen otherwise.
- 5.20 The allocated site at Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow is located in immediate vicinity to Charing village centre and is accessible to a range of shops and facilities and the railway station. This will help reduce the need for residents to travel for some day-to-day facilities and reduce car dependency, helping to limit emissions from road transport. This will be supported by a number of the policies seeking to explicitly encourage walking and cycling through enhanced pedestrian and cycle provision. This is discussed in more detail under the 'Transportation' SEA theme below. Furthermore, Policy C5 'Communications Infrastructure' is likely to encourage home working and running a business from home, which will reduce the need to travel to an office by supporting the expansion of electronic/digital communication networks and high-speed broadband, along with improvements to connectivity.
- 5.21 The three site allocations in Charing Heath are in relative proximity to some services and facilities in Charing Heath, as well as bus services. However, there will be a need to travel by car to many services and facilities, with implications for greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.22 The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to apply energy efficiency standards within new development. In this context the Code for Sustainable Homes was formally withdrawn in a Ministerial Statement published on 25th March 2015, which outlined the Government's new national planning policy on the setting of technical standards for new dwellings and Local Plan making. In addition to this, the Deregulation Act also brought in a clause which amended the Planning and Energy Act 2008 to prevent local authorities from requiring higher levels of energy efficiency than existing Building Regulations. On this basis, it would not be appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to set specific targets for energy efficiency as part of a design policy.

### Climate change adaptation

- 5.23 In relation to the sites allocated through the Neighbourhood Plan, they are not constrained by significant flood risk issues. However, the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site has a limited surface water pathway located in the north western part of the site and the eastern boundary of the Church Hill site is located within a 'low' flood risk zone with patches of 'medium' flood risk zones for surface water flooding. These are not significant constraints to development however.
- 5.24 As highlighted by the NPPF, well planned green infrastructure can help an area adapt to, and manage the risks of climate change (including extreme weather events). Enabling and providing for green infrastructure within the Neighbourhood Plan area is therefore a key way in which the Neighbourhood Plan can help to promote climate change adaptation measures. Responding to this, Policy E4 'Designation of Green Spaces in the Parish' designates a number of areas within the Neighbourhood Plan area as Local Green Space. Alongside, Policy E7 'Landscape Strategy' and Policy E8 'Ecological Impacts' seeks to protect and enhance landscape features which will help support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan area to the effects of climate change including extreme weather events. Key landscape features in this regard include trees and hedges.



- 5.25 As such, the Neighbourhood Plan sets out a range of provisions which will support positive gains with regard to climate change adaptation measures within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

## Landscape

- 5.26 The north eastern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area falls within Kent Downs AONB. As such development in Charing Parish has the potential to impact on the special qualities or distinctive landscape character of the AONB without appropriate design and layout. This includes directly through landtake, or indirectly through impacting on the setting of and views to and from the AONB.
- 5.27 None of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan allocations are within the AONB. Due to screening from the existing built up area of Charing and Charing Heath, the sites are not likely to be visible from the AONB. Providing further support for the protection of the special qualities of the AONB, Policy E6 'Development in the AONB' states that development in the AONB will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits of such development outweighs any harm.
- 5.28 Potential impacts on landscape character are also recognised by other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. A key Neighbourhood Plan policy in this regard is Policy E7 'Landscape Strategy'. The policy seeks to ensure that development of more than five houses include a landscape strategy which will incorporate hard and soft landscaping, tree and hedgerow surveys, and measures to protect trees and hedgerows, and demonstrate consideration of both near and distant views of the development from key public vantage points.
- 5.29 The views across the parish are an important consideration in the planning process, as the scale, height and mass of a development can ultimately impact important views if they are not considered and assessed through the process. Changes, such as development and landscape change, can see these views degraded over time. In this respect, Policy E9 'Views' states that developments will not be supported that significantly detract from the following views into, out of, and within the village, by failing to respect their distinctive characteristics:
- Views of the scarp ridge and southern slopes of the AONB to the west and north from: (i) Pluckley Road (ii) Station Road (iii) Hitherfield (iv) Charing Heath Road (v) Charing Heath Memorial Hall (vi) Tile Lodge Road;
  - Views of the scarp ridge and southern slopes of the AONB to the north and east from (i) The Moat (ii) Ashford Road (iii) Woodbrook (iv) The Hill (v) Pett Lane (vi) Arthur Baker playing field;
  - Views of the AONB from the village centre;
  - Views into Charing from the AONB, especially the Pilgrim's Way and to the western and eastern perimeters of the village;
  - Views to and from the Archbishop's Palace and Charing Church; and
  - Views to the centre of the village from west to east and east to west approaches on the A20.
- 5.30 Policy D1 'Good Design' further supports this by highlighting that all forms of new development must plan positively for the achievement of high quality design, at the same time demonstrating that they have sought to conserve local distinctiveness and the aesthetic qualities of traditional patterns of development. Policy D4 'Dark Skies' seeks to prevent night blight and support tranquillity by supporting proposals that use low level lighting and that direct lighting downwards.
- 5.31 These policies therefore take a proactive and positive approach to protecting and enhancing the character and visual amenity of the Neighbourhood Plan area.



## Historic Environment

- 5.32 The Neighbourhood Plan area has a rich historic environment resource, with much of the village of Charing being covered by the Charing Conservation Area.
- 5.33 In terms of the allocations proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parsons Mead/Burleigh Bungalow site comprises an open area within Charing Conservation Area. Whilst a Conservation Area Appraisal or Management Plan has not been prepared for Charing Conservation Area which evaluates the historic environment value of the site's location, the proposed allocation is within a less sensitive part of the conservation area.
- 5.34 In terms of key features which have the potential to be affected by development at the site, the Grade II listed 'The Firs' is located approximately 50m north west of the site and the Grade II\* listed 'The Old House' is located approximately 60m to the west of the site. These are however screened from the site by the existing row of trees on the north west boundary and the presence of The Grange. Further listed buildings are present on Station Road, located c.100m to the north west of the site. These include the Grade II\* listed 'The Old House', and the Grade II listed 'Clonmore' and 29-33 Station Road. Again, impacts on the settings of these features are limited by the flat topography of the location, and existing screening afforded by trees and existing development.
- 5.35 In terms of other features listed on the Historic Environment Record, none are present on or adjacent to the site. Development of the site would also not affect the setting of other key features of historic interest in the parish, including the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul or the Archbishop's Palace.
- 5.36 The three sites allocated in Charing Heath are in locations sensitive for the historic environment. The Land by Swan Street allocation is located 100m west of the Grade II listed Swan Street. Development at the site has the potential to be visible from this feature, although it is partly screened by vegetation. In terms of the Land at Church Hill allocation, a Grade II listed building (Church Hill Cottage) lies approximately 45m west of the site. Church Hill Cottage, which is adjacent to the western boundary of the site, has also been identified on the HER as a nursery garden of local interest. Although this is partly screened by vegetation along the site boundary, development which takes place on the site would be visible from the listed building and part of the garden and has the potential to impact on the historic setting of it. With regard to the Land next to Crofters, there are three Grade II listed buildings located opposite the site on the northern side of Church Hill (approximately 50m away). These are: Fayre Acre; The Thatched Cottage; and Church Hill Cottage. Church Hill Cottage has also been identified on the HER as a nursery garden of local interest. However, these features, which are over 50m distant from the site, are largely screened from the site by existing trees and dense vegetation along the north site of Church Hill.
- 5.37 Recognising the potential for impacts on the fabric and setting of the parish's rich historic environment resource, the Neighbourhood Plan has a strong focus on conserving and enhancing the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings. Policy E1 'Historic Environment' states that any designated heritage assets in the parish and their settings, both above and below ground and including listed buildings, and any monuments that may be scheduled or conservation areas that may be created, will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their importance to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place. The policy also supports proposals which will reduce visual, audible, volume and other impacts of traffic in the conservation area, by re-routing HGVs, creating calming measures, and providing screening. Additionally, the policy highlights that proposals for development that affect non-designated historic assets will be considered taking account of any harm or loss, and the significance of the assets and their setting.
- 5.38 Policy E2 'Listed Buildings & Non-Designated Heritage Assets' will further support the setting of the historic environment in the parish, highlighting that development should ensure that listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets listed in this Plan (and other assets where



appropriate) will be appropriately maintained, or where necessary suitably restored, will be supported.

- 5.39 The Archbishop's Palace is a scheduled monument 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. Significantly, three separate features associated with the palace have been listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. Alongside, the remains of the palace itself have been categorised as Priority Category A, denoting "*Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed.*" This is recognised by Policy E3 'The Archbishop's Palace', which seeks to promote the full restoration of the palace. It also seeks to ensure that if the site becomes available, any proposals that incorporate public access and community use will be encouraged. This will help rejuvenate and secure the future of this significant area of cultural heritage interest. Otherwise, the proposed Neighbourhood Plan site allocations are not within the setting of the Archbishops Palace.
- 5.40 A Conservation Area Appraisal or Management Plan has not been prepared for the Charing Conservation Area, therefore it is not currently possible to gain an in-depth understanding of the special interest of the area. However, as well as Policy E1, Policy H1 'Allocation of Housing sites in Charing village' aims to protect the conservation area by ensuring that development is design sensitive to it. Similarly, Policy D3 'Street Furniture' seeks to ensure that materials for street furniture or railings should be suited to their site, particularly in the conservation area.
- 5.41 In this respect, the policy provisions of the Neighbourhood Plan will limit the significance of potential negative effects from new development on the parish's rich cultural heritage resource, and facilitate enhancements. This includes through supporting the integrity of the Charing Conservation Area, conserving and enhancing designated and non-designated heritage features, promoting the restoration and rejuvenation of the Archbishops Palace and introducing provisions relating to landscape/villagescape character.

## Land, Soil and Water Resources

- 5.42 The proposed site allocations will take place on undeveloped land. Recent land classification has not been undertaken at any of the allocated sites; as such there is a need to rely on the Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset. This indicates that the Parsons Mead/ Burleigh Bungalow site is potentially covered by areas of Grade 2 agricultural land, which is considered the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (although this is uncertain given detailed classification has not recently been undertaken). The three allocated sites in Charing Heath are located within Grade 3 agricultural land; however, without detailed classification establishing the subset grading (i.e. 3a or 3b), it is not possible to establish at this stage whether the agricultural land is considered to be the Best and Most Versatile.
- 5.43 In terms of water resources. 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. In this respect, the Land north-west of Swan Street allocation is within an Outer Protection (Zone 2) of a Groundwater Source Protection Zone and the Land Next to Crofters and Land at Church Hill allocations are within Total Catchments (Zone 3) of a Groundwater Source Protection Zone. In recognition of the importance of Groundwater Protection Zones, Policy C3 'Infrastructure and Utilities' seeks to ensure that foul water is safely evacuated through well-constructed sustainable drainage systems, and current fresh-water systems which provide Charing residents and others with drinking water are not put at risk through the provision of new development.
- 5.44 As previously discussed, a number of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan seek to protect key features of landscape and biodiversity interest, aim to protect designated sites, areas of landscape sensitivity and promote green space. While these policies do not specifically seek to



address land, soil and water resources, the policies will indirectly help promote and protect these resources, including through the promotion of high quality green networks in the Neighbourhood Plan area and the protection and enhancement of key landscape features. This will help further support the capacity of the landscape and villagescape to regulate soil and water quality.

## Population and Community

- 5.45 The Charing Neighbourhood Plan sets out a range of provisions which will support the quality of life of the parish's residents.
- 5.46 With regards to the period covered by the Local Plan (i.e. 2011 to 2030), 621 dwellings have been delivered in the parish to date. This comprises an increase of 47.8% in the number of dwellings in the Neighbourhood Plan area since 2011, resulting in a population increase of 62% in Charing Village and 53% in the parish as a whole.
- 5.47 A key hook for the Neighbourhood Plan is the proposed mixed-use allocation at Parsons Mead/Land at Burleigh Bungalow. This recognises that there is a perspective in the parish that the recent housing growth highlighted above has not been accompanied by appropriate infrastructure and service provision, and that community facilities and amenities are insufficient for the existing population. In this context the Neighbourhood Plan allocates the following at the Parsons Mead/Land at Burleigh Bungalow site: a new village hall/community centre including rooms to provide additional health services to residents, an educational unit and society meeting rooms; a small museum; six business units; and a new 40-space car park. These community facilities will be delivered through the provision of up to 48 open-market houses. Given existing deficits in community provision in the parish, the delivery of this new community infrastructure through the allocation has the potential to lead to significant positive effects for accessibility to facilities and the quality of life of residents.
- 5.48 In terms of additional housing provision, the Neighbourhood Plan focuses on smaller housing developments designed to meet local needs. For example, the provisions of Policy H3 'New Developments' does not support proposals for large housing sites (greater than 10 dwellings) additional to those specified in the Local Plan or allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan. Policy H6 'Local-needs Housing on Exception Sites' supports small-scale housing schemes in or around Charing village where housing would not normally be permitted, especially where they involve the development of brownfield land.
- 5.49 Residential development will also be expected to provide a sufficient amount of affordable housing (Policy H4 'Affordable Housing'). Supporting this further, Policy H5 'Local-Needs Housing' states that a minimum of 50% of all new affordable housing in Charing will initially be made available to those with a local connection and whose needs are not met by the open market. Policy H8 'Lifetime-Home Standards' recognises the needs of an ageing population in Charing and seeks to provide a minimum of 50% of housing on sites of nine dwellings or more which meet current Lifetime-Home standards, and stipulates that at least 10% of new houses on sites of nine dwellings or more should have full wheelchair accessibility or be capable of complying with 360° turnaround space throughout. Policy H7 'Size of Homes' also outlines that a mix of housing sizes will be provided and does not permit development of nine or more houses unless they provide a mix of 10% one bedrooms, 40% two bedrooms, 40% three bedrooms and 10% four or more bedroom units.
- 5.50 The premise of the Neighbourhood Plan delivering of small-scale housing appropriate for local needs is further reflected by three site allocations in Charing Heath. In this context, Policy H2 'Allocation of Housing Sites in Charing Heath' seeks to develop small houses on land north west of Swan Street, smaller flats and houses on land next to Crofters and five dwellings at Church Hill. Policy H10 'Charing Heath' further supports small-scale development of five or fewer properties on appropriate sites in the settlement.
- 5.51 Accessibility to services and facilities is a key influence on the quality of life of residents and community cohesion. As discussed above, the Parsons Mead/Land at Burleigh Bungalow site will deliver significant community infrastructure in an accessible location. It will also deliver



housing provisions which is located in excellent proximity to the services and facilities in Charing village centre (less than 200m). This will limit the need for residents to travel for the services and facilities provided here and promote accessibility. The allocation is also located in good proximity to Charing railway station, which will support accessibility to services, facilities and amenities located further afield, including in Ashford and Maidstone.

- 5.52 Further supporting accessibility, policies in the Community and Employment chapter of the Neighbourhood Plan support the delivery of new community facilities and infrastructure. This includes a new burial ground (Policy C4), additional retail services (Policy C6), an expansion of Charing Surgery (Policy C7), infrastructure which can meet educational needs (Policy C8) and a new skate park (Policy C9). Policy C3 'Infrastructure and Utilities' also encourages developers to ensure an appropriate improvement in community facilities and infrastructure 'to avoid a welfare deficit' as well as ensuring that additional needed facilities are in place early in the construction phase. This is with a view to avoiding impacts on prevailing and developing services such as health care, education, and general resident wellbeing. Accessibility will also be supported by Policy T5 'Pedestrian Footways' which encourages development proposals to have safe pedestrian access which connect to the wider movement network.
- 5.53 Further policies that will support the quality of life of residents are Policy D1 'Good Design' which seeks to ensure that new development is of high-quality and inclusive design, and Policy E4 'Designation of Green Spaces in the Parish' which designates ten Local Green Spaces in Charing.
- 5.54 In terms of employment and economic opportunities in the Neighbourhood Plan area, Policy EC1 'Locations Allocated for New Business Units' promotes new employment sites in the parish and Policy EC2 'Mixed Use Development' states that all proposals for developments of 20 or more dwellings should incorporate not less than 10% of total to commercial business use, unless it can be demonstrated that the site is unsuitable. Furthermore, Policy EC3 'Protection of existing commercial/industrial zones' facilitates the use of sites which comprise current or past commercial/ industrial activity and Policy H9 'Mixed Development' seeks to ensure that all developments of 20 dwellings or more to provide a mix of residential and commercial premises with commercial premises accounting for at least 15% of total individual units. These policies will support the economic vitality of the village and promote employment opportunities for local people.
- 5.55 Overall therefore, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to significant long-term positive effects for community vitality and the quality of life of residents in the parish.

## Health and Wellbeing

- 5.56 Supporting health and wellbeing, there is a strong focus on delivering suitable housing for the different age groups and housing needs represented in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Recognising the trend of an ageing population within the Neighbourhood Plan area, the quality and availability of housing for older people is an important contributor. Regarding this, Policy H8 'Lifetime-Home Standards' identifies that a minimum of 50% of housing on sites of nine dwellings or more which meet current Lifetime-Home standards and at least 10% of new houses on sites of nine dwellings or more should have full wheelchair accessibility or be capable of complying with 360°-turnaround space throughout.
- 5.57 In relation to the quality of life and the wellbeing of local residents, Policy C3 'Infrastructure and Utilities' aims to ensure that new development encourages appropriate improvement in community facilities and infrastructure to avoid a welfare deficit. Policy T1 'Traffic Congestion' states that improvements to the free flow of traffic and a reduction in HGVs travelling through Station Road and Pluckley Road will be supported. Policy T3 'Traffic Management Station Road/ Pluckley Road' aims to avoid generating traffic movements promoting road safety Policy T4 'Traffic Management Charing Hill/ A252' aim to avoid will not allow development with direct access to the A252 unless it can be demonstrated that safe access will be achieved. These policies are particularly important from a health and wellbeing perspective, in terms of enabling local residents to safely access local services and amenities, and supporting road safety.



- 5.58 The Neighbourhood Plan will support health and wellbeing through enabling enhancements to healthcare provision in Charing. This includes through Policy C7 'Health and Health Care' which seeks to expand Charing Surgery and Practice to meet local patient needs, and the delivery of additional healthcare provision at the allocated site at the Parsons Mead/Land at Burleigh Bungalow site.
- 5.59 In terms of healthy lifestyles, Policy T5 'Pedestrian Footways' seeks to ensure that new development is linked by safe and accessible pedestrian access. This includes through stipulating that large housing developments must provide safe pedestrian access to link up with existing or proposed footpaths as well as essential local facilities. The policy also aims to link Charing to Charing Heath with an all-weather pedestrian and cycle route linking with established public rights of way. These enhancements to walking and cycling routes will therefore promote the use of active modes of travel, positively supporting the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of local residents. Additionally, the provision of a new community centre and improved sports facilities as outlined in Policy C2 'New Community Centre & Improved Sports Facilities' and a new skate park (Policy C9) will support sports and recreation opportunities in the parish and promote healthier lifestyles.
- 5.60 There is now robust evidence that access to the natural environment improves people's health and wellbeing through encouraging healthy outdoor recreation and relaxation. The benefits to emotional wellbeing and mental health resulting from close contact with the natural environment are well-documented. Reflecting this, there is a drive to maintain and improve access to open spaces through the Neighbourhood Plan. In this context, Policy E4 'Designation of Green Spaces in the Parish' designates ten Local Green Spaces which will be safeguarded from development. This will promote recreational opportunities, with benefits for health and wellbeing.
- 5.61 Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan sets out a range of provisions which will enhance health and wellbeing within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

## Transportation

- 5.62 In terms of the proposed allocations taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parsons Mead/ Burleigh Bungalow site is accessible to the key services and facilities present in the village centre. This will help reduce the need to travel to key village amenities. The site is also accessible to key public transport links, including Charing train station and bus stops with services to Maidstone and Ashford. Although the three sites allocated in Charing Heath are less accessible to key services and facilities in the parish, there are some limited services and facilities within walking distance located in Charing Heath, as well as bus stops which have services to Maidstone and Ashford.
- 5.63 Accessibility will be further supported by the Neighbourhood Plan's focus on ensuring that new development can demonstrate how safe and accessible pedestrian access and movement routes will be delivered, and how they will connect to the wider movement network (Policy T5 'Pedestrian Footways'). The policy also states that new large housing developments north and south of the A20 must provide safe pedestrian access to link up with existing or proposed footpaths as well as essential local facilities, ensuring that residents can walk safely with children, prams and buggies to shops, the school, bus stops, the railway station, the surgery and other village facilities. Additionally, the policy seeks to provide infrastructure and facilities that link Charing to Charing Heath with an all-weather pedestrian and cycle route linking with established public rights of way. This is also outlined in Policy C10 'Contributions to New Infrastructure and Facilities', which states that a new all-weather footpath and cycle way connecting Charing to Charing Heath is a community priority in terms of additional local facilities. These provisions will help reduce the need to travel by the private car to access key services and facilities and encourage the use of alternative modes of transport.
- 5.64 The Neighbourhood Plan also includes policies which seek to reduce the impact on residents from the road network and improve road safety. For example, Policy H1 'Allocation of Housing Sites in Charing Village' seeks for development at sites in Charing village to be subject to safe access to the A20. Policy T2 'Traffic Management on the A20' also only supports developments



of more than 10 dwellings that contribute to the cost of appropriate pedestrian crossings on the A20. Similarly, Policy H11 'Infill Development' states that infill development will be supported providing that it is safely accessible from the local road network and that additional traffic generated can be accommodated on the road network as well as ensuring it has safe pedestrian access. Policy C3 'Infrastructure and Utilities' seeks to ensure that new development does not lead to traffic congestion or adversely affect the free flow of traffic onto adjoining highways or adversely affect pedestrian safety.

- 5.65 Further supporting this, Policy T1 'Traffic Congestion' only supports proposals which could exacerbate conditions of parking stress, avoid increased traffic congestion and reduce the number of HGVs on key roads. Policy T2 'Traffic Management Station Road/ Pluckley' indicates that proposals for six or more houses with direct access onto Pluckley Road and Charing Heath Road will not be permitted in order to avoid generating levels and types of traffic movements including HGVs. Similarly, Policy T4 'Traffic Management Charing Hill/A252' seeks to preclude development with direct access to the A252 unless it can be demonstrated that safe access can be achieved.
- 5.66 Policy T6 'Residential Car Parking Spaces' emphasises a requirement for a sufficient amount of park spaces for new residential developments depending on their size. The policy also seeks to provide a guest space for every two dwellings. Policy T7 'Charing Village Parking' also indicates a requirement for additional car parking for people visiting Charing village. This is reflected by the allocation at Parsons Mead, which seeks to deliver a new car park for 40 spaces. Policy C10 'Contributions to New Infrastructure and Facilities' also states that a car park at Parsons Mead is a priority in terms of additional community provision provided through new development. Similarly, Policy C6 'Shopping' seeks for proposals to improve village parking will be supported providing they do not lead to traffic congestion.
- 5.67 Overall, the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan relating to the 'Transportation' SEA theme are tailored towards accessibility by sustainable modes of transport, with a requirement for new development to provide suitable and safe road access along with an appropriate amount of parking space for privately owned vehicles. The Neighbourhood Plan also recognises the concern of traffic congestion along key routes in the village. As such the Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to have a range of positive effects in relation to this SEA theme.

## Conclusions at this current stage

- 5.68 The assessment has concluded that the current version of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to significant long-term positive effects in relation to the 'Population and Community' and 'Health and Wellbeing' SEA themes. These benefits largely relate to the Neighbourhood Plan's focus on providing significant new community and health infrastructure in Charing, the delivery of appropriate scale housing to meet local needs, support for the vitality and vibrancy of the parish, and the protection and enhancement of the quality of the public realm and neighbourhood distinctiveness.
- 5.69 The allocations proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to have impacts on the setting (but not the fabric) of features and areas nationally and locally designated for the historic environment in Charing and Charing Heath. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan however proactively respond to these constraints, including through having a close focus on conserving and enhancing the fabric and setting of the historic environment, and on protecting landscape and villagescape character. Taken together, the policies will help limit negative effects from new development on landscape/villagescape character and on the setting of the historic environment. The plan policies also seek to enhance a key heritage feature deemed to be 'at risk' in the parish, the Archbishop's Palace. Overall therefore, no significant effects have been identified in relation to the 'Historic Environment' theme, and positive effects are anticipated in relation to the 'Landscape' theme.
- 5.70 New development has the potential to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land in the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, given the lack of detailed land classification undertaken in the parish, it is unclear as to what extent this will lead to the loss of areas of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. The Neighbourhood Plan also recognizes the importance of



Groundwater Protection Zones within which some of the proposed allocations lie in, seeking to ensure that groundwater resources are protected through new development. As such, the overall significance of impacts in relation to the 'Land, Soil and Water Resources' SEA theme is uncertain.

- 5.71 In terms of the 'Air Quality', 'Biodiversity', 'Climate Change' and 'Transportation' themes, the Neighbourhood Plan will initiate a number of beneficial approaches. These are not though considered to be significant in the context of the SEA process given the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan and the scale of proposals.



## 6. What are the next steps?

- 6.1 This Environmental Report accompanies the Charing Neighbourhood Plan for Regulation 14 consultation.
- 6.2 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, and the Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Ashford Borough Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.
- 6.3 At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Ashford Local Plan.
- 6.4 If Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by Ashford Borough Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Charing Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the development plan for Charing Parish.



# Appendix A Context Review and Baseline

## A1 – Air Quality

### Context Review

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.

Published in January 2018 by the UK Government, ‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’<sup>6</sup> 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.

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 (NO<sub>2</sub>), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), benzene (C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>) and particulates (PM<sub>10</sub>). Where exceedances exist, areas are declared as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in the area.

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

### Summary of Current Baseline

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.<sup>7</sup>

There are no recent or anticipated exceedances of national air quality objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

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

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

<sup>6</sup> 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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf) [accessed 18/09/19]

<sup>7</sup> 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]



and associated levels of pollutants such as NO<sub>2</sub>. 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.

## A2 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

### Context Review

At the European level, the EU Biodiversity Strategy<sup>8</sup> 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'.

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'.

The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)<sup>9</sup> 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 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/EP_resolution_april2012.pdf) [accessed 18/09/19]

<sup>9</sup> 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]



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'*<sup>10</sup>.

The recently published 25 Year Environment Plan<sup>11</sup> 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.

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.

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.

## Summary of Current Baseline

### European and Nationally designated sites

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

#### Hart Hill SSSI

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 following<sup>12</sup>:

'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,

<sup>10</sup> 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 18/09/19]

<sup>11</sup> 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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf) [accessed 18/09/19]

<sup>12</sup> 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]



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.'

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*

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 following<sup>13</sup>:

'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 *Orobanchelabium 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*.

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*.'

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*

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.

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<sup>13</sup> 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]



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*

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*

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.

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

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.

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.







## A3 – Climate Change

### Context Review

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 below<sup>14</sup> :

- 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.

The UK Climate Change Act<sup>15</sup> 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.

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.
- 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 16.

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;

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<sup>14</sup> 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]

<sup>15</sup> GOV.UK (2008): 'Climate Change Act 2008', [online] available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>> [accessed 18/09/19]

<sup>16</sup> 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]



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.’

The Flood and Water Management Act<sup>17</sup> 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).<sup>18</sup>

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

## Summary of Current Baseline

### *Contribution to climate change*

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%).

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<sup>17</sup> Flood and Water Management Act (2010) [online] available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents>> [accessed 18/09/19]

<sup>18</sup> 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.



**Table 4.1: Carbon dioxide emissions and sources, plus emissions per capita, 2005-2016<sup>19</sup>**

	Industrial and Commercial (t CO <sub>2</sub> )	Domestic (t CO <sub>2</sub> )	Transport (t CO <sub>2</sub> )	Total (t CO <sub>2</sub> )
<b>Ashford</b>				
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
<b>South East</b>				
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
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
<b>England</b>				

<sup>19</sup> Department of Energy and Climate Change (2018) 2005 to 2016 UK local and regional CO<sub>2</sub> 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]



	<b>Industrial and Commercial (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	<b>Domestic (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	<b>Transport (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	<b>Total (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>
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*

Following the success of the UK Climate Projections released in 2009 (UKCP09), the Met Office recently released the UK Climate Projections for 2018 (UKCP18).<sup>20</sup> 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.

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 1.5-2.5oC, and mean winter temperature increases of 1-2oC; and;
- Decreases in mean summer precipitation of up to 30%, and increases in mean winter precipitation of up to 30%.

Resulting from these changes, a range of risks may exist for the Neighbourhood Plan area, including:

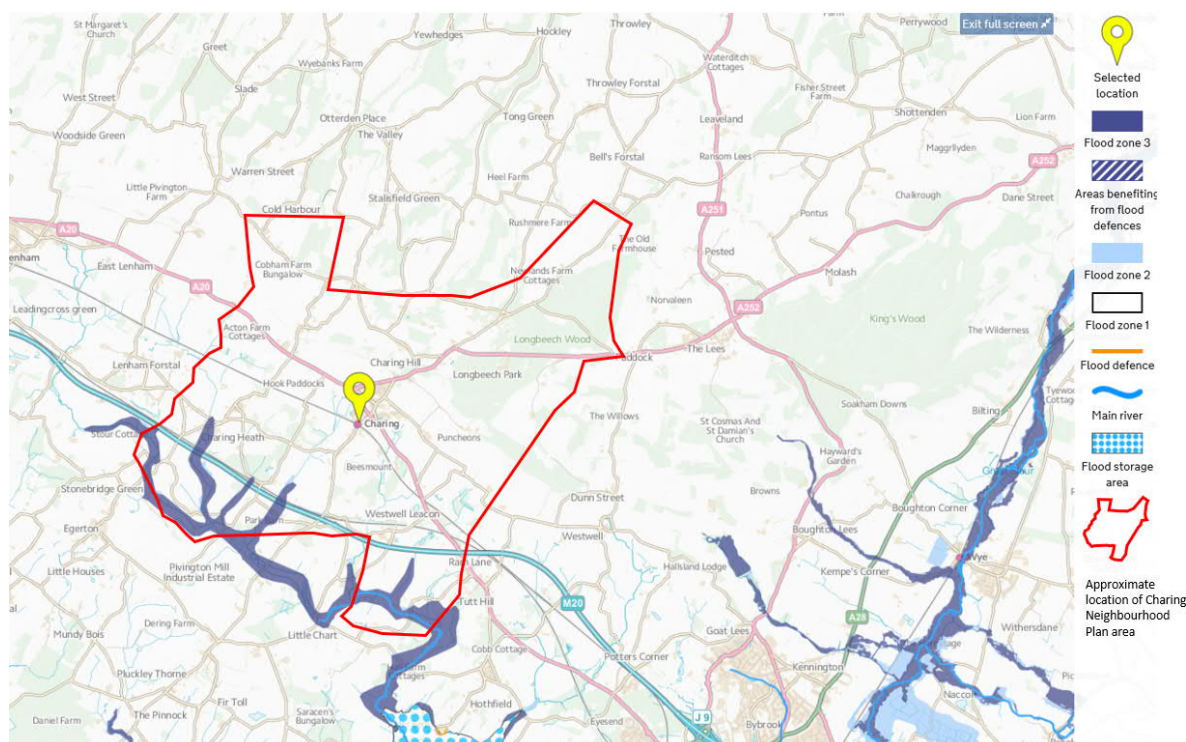
- Effects on water resources from climate change;
- Reduction in availability of groundwater for extraction;
- Adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain;
- Increased risk of flooding, including increased vulnerability to 1:100 year floods;
- A need 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.

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<sup>20</sup> Data released 26<sup>th</sup> 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 area<sup>21</sup>**

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.

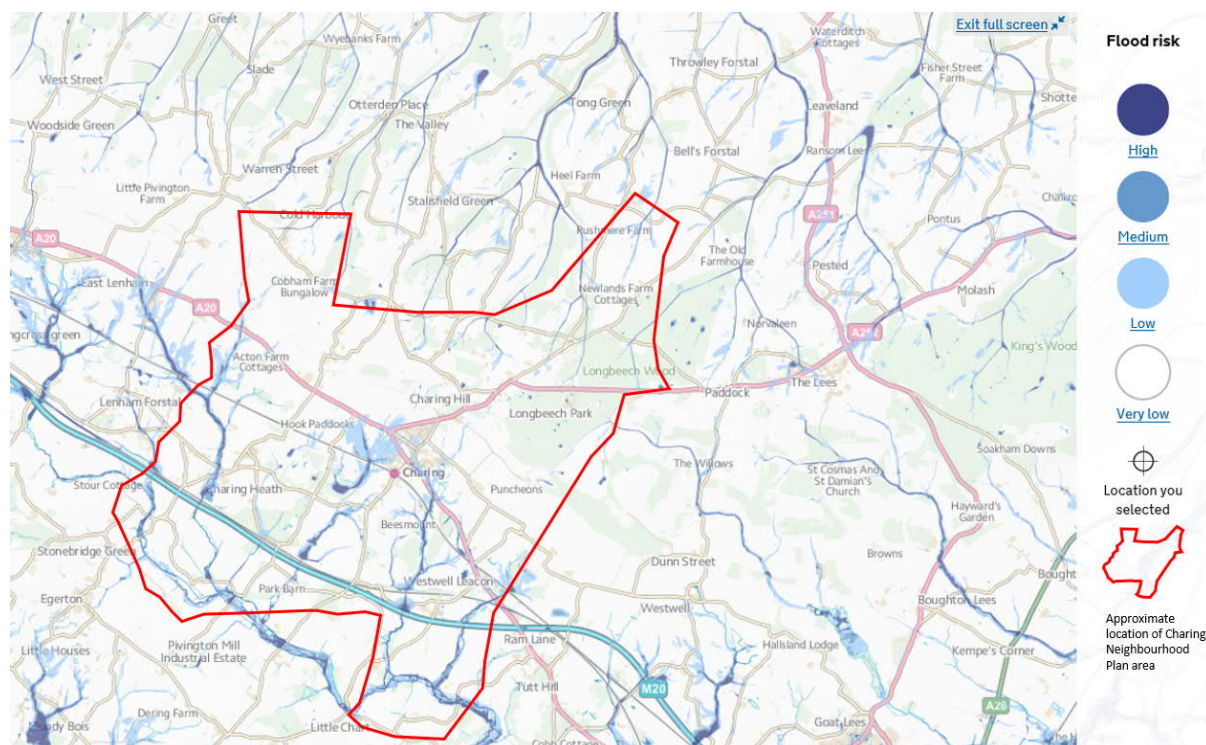
The Great Stour is a section of the River Stour and as a result of historic flooding, two flood storage reservoirs were constructed and became operational in 1989 to provide a level of flood alleviation around Ashford.<sup>22</sup>

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**.

<sup>21</sup> GOV UK (2019): 'Flood Map for Planning', [online] available at: <<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>> [accessed 18/09/19]

<sup>22</sup> 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 area<sup>23</sup>**

## Summary of Future Baseline

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.

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.

## A4 - Landscape

### Context Review

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).'

<sup>23</sup> 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]



- '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.'*

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.

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan<sup>24</sup> 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 grassland along with the ancient, remote and tranquil qualities, are valued, secured and strengthened.*'

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.

## Summary of Current Baseline

### *Kent Downs AONB*

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.

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<sup>24</sup> 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]



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.<sup>25</sup>

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.<sup>26</sup>

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.<sup>27</sup> The Neighbourhood Plan area lies within Hollingbourne Vale and Mid Kent Downs character areas.

The Hollingbourne Vale character area has the following key characteristics:

- 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).

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.

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.

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

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<sup>25</sup> 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]

<sup>26</sup> 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]

<sup>27</sup> Kent Downs AONB Unit (2019), Landscape character [online] available at: < <https://www.kentdowns.org.uk/landscape-management/landscape-character/> > [accessed 19/09/19]



- 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*

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' NCA<sup>28</sup> and the northern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area is within 'North Downs' NCA<sup>29</sup>.

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.

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

<sup>28</sup> 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]

<sup>29</sup> Natural England (2014): 'NCA Profile 119: North Downs (NE431)', [online] available at: <<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/7036466>> [accessed 19/09/19]



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*

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 2011<sup>30</sup>. The document draws on two Landscape Character Assessments which were carried out in 2005 and 2009.

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.

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<sup>30</sup> Ashford Borough Council (2011): 'Landscape Character SPD', [online] available at: <  
[https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/6150/landscapespd\\_adopted\\_april\\_2011.pdf](https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/6150/landscapespd_adopted_april_2011.pdf)> [accessed 19/09/19]

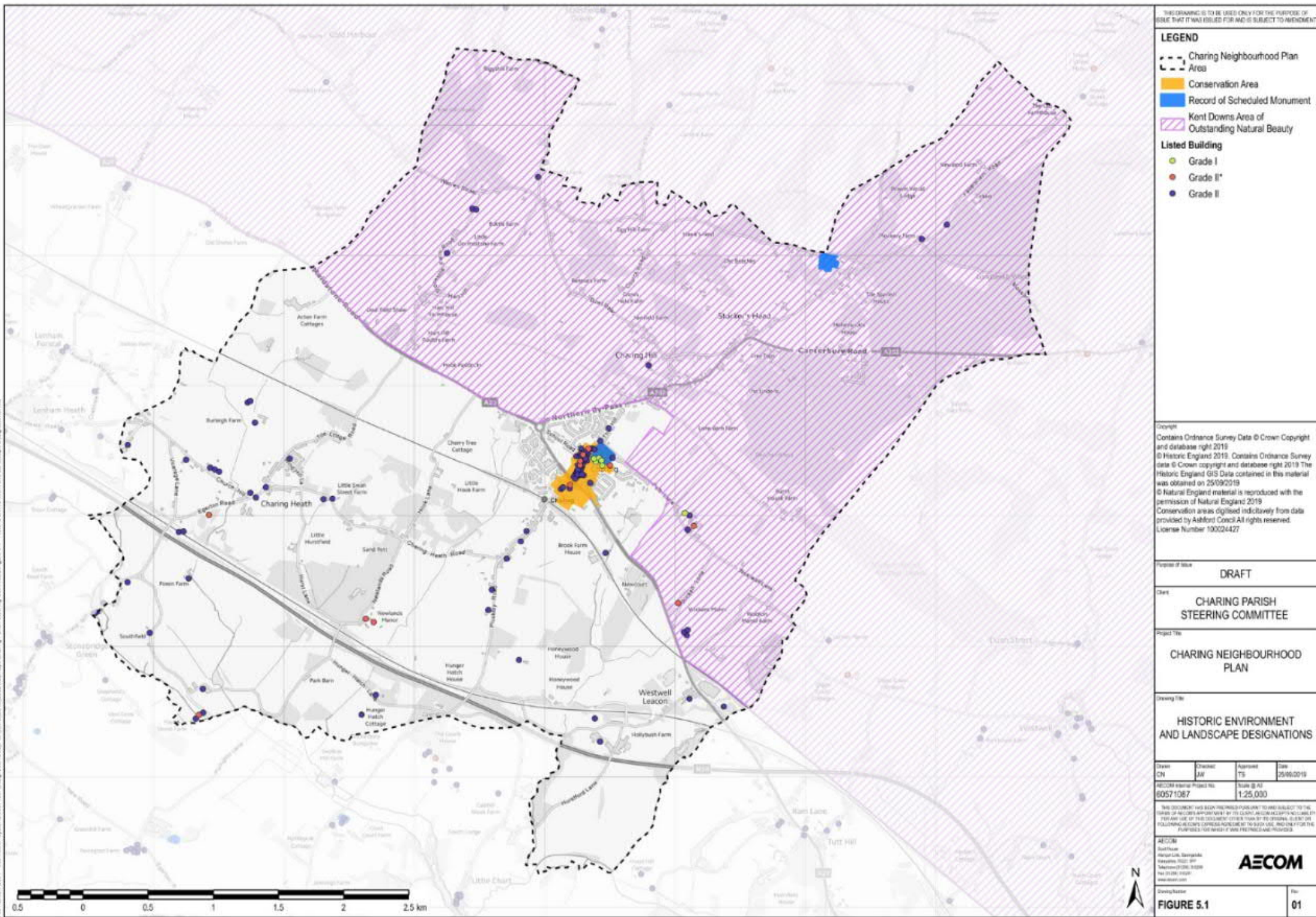


## Summary of Future Baseline

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.

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.







## A5 – Historic Environment

### Context Review

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.’

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.

The Government’s Statement on the Historic Environment for England<sup>31</sup> 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.

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.

Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1 (February 2019)<sup>32</sup> 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:

- 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.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA): Historic England Advice Note 8 (December 2016)<sup>33</sup> 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.

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<sup>31</sup> 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](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6763.aspx)> [accessed 19/09/19]

<sup>32</sup> Historic England (2019): ‘Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Advice Note 1’, [online] available at: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/heag-268-conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management/>> [accessed 05/12/19]

<sup>33</sup> 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]



Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (December 2017)<sup>34</sup> 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: Assess 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.

Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic England Advice Note 11 (October 2018)<sup>35</sup> outlines the importance of considering the historic environment whilst preparing the plan (section 1), which culminates in a checklist of relevant 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.

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.

## Summary of Current Baseline

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

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.

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'.

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.

<sup>34</sup> Historic England (2017): 'Setting of Heritage Assets: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition', [online] available to download via: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/> [accessed 19/09/19]

<sup>35</sup> 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]



- '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.

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 Register<sup>36</sup>. 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.

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 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.

Conservation areas are designated because of their special architectural and historic interest<sup>37</sup>. 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.

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

<sup>36</sup> 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]

<sup>37</sup> Historic England (2019): 'Conservation Areas', [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/local/conservation-areas/> [accessed 20/09/19]



are within Ashford borough.<sup>38</sup> A conservation area appraisal is being prepared for Charing but is not yet publicly available. This will be an important piece of data for the emerging neighbourhood plan and it is advised that the steering group works closely with the Council to ensure its findings are taken into account.

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.

Following a high-level review of the Historic Environmental Record (HER) for Kent (accessed via the Heritage Gateway)<sup>39</sup>, 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

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.

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.

## A6 – Land, Soil and Water Resources

### Context Review

The EU's Soil Thematic Strategy<sup>40</sup> 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.

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.

Key messages from the NPPF include:

- 'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

<sup>38</sup> 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]

<sup>39</sup> Heritage Gateway (2019): Historic Environmental Record for Kent', [online] available at: <<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results.aspx>> [accessed 20/09/19]

<sup>40</sup> European Commission (2006) Soil Thematic Policy [online] available at: <[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index_en.htm)> [accessed 19/09/19]



- i. protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils; and*
  - iv. 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.’
- ‘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.

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.

Other key documents at the national level include Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England<sup>41</sup>, which sets out a vision for soil use in England, and the Water White Paper<sup>42</sup>, 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 England<sup>43</sup> recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials.

In terms of waste management, the Government Review of Waste Policy in England<sup>44</sup> recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials.

The National Waste Management Plan<sup>45</sup> provides an analysis of the current waste management situation in England and evaluates how it will support the implementation of the objectives and

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<sup>41</sup> 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]

<sup>42</sup> 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]

<sup>43</sup> 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]

<sup>44</sup> 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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69401/pb13540-waste-policy-review110614.pdf) [accessed 19/09/19]

<sup>45</sup> 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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265810/pb14100-waste-management-plan-20131213.pdf) [accessed 19/09/19]



provisions of the revised Waste Framework Directive<sup>46</sup>. 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.

The South East River Basin Management Plan<sup>47</sup> focuses on the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment. The plan describes the river basin district, and the pressures that the water environment faces. It shows what this means for the current state of the water environment, and what actions will be taken to address the pressures. It sets out what improvements are possible by 2015 and how the actions will make a difference to the local environment – the catchments, estuaries, the coast and groundwater.

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.

## Summary of Current Baseline

### *Soil Resources*

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.

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.

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.

The Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset<sup>48</sup> 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*

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.

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.

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<sup>46</sup> Directive 2008/98/EC

<sup>47</sup> Environment Agency (2009) River Basin Management Plan South East River Basin District [online] available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/295841/geso0910bsta-e-e.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295841/geso0910bsta-e-e.pdf) [last accessed 26/11/2019]

<sup>48</sup> 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]



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

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).

Based on the most recently completed water quality assessments undertaken in 2016, the Environment Agency's Catchment Data Explorer<sup>49</sup> classifies Upper Great Stour<sup>50</sup> as having a 'good' chemical status and 'poor' ecological status. The overall classification for the waterbody in 2016 was 'poor'.

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

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.

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.

## A7 – Population and Community

### Context Review

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

<sup>49</sup> Environment Agency (2019): 'Catchment Data Explorer', [online] available to access via: <<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/>> [accessed 19/09/19]

<sup>50</sup> 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]



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'.

The 'Ready for Ageing?' report, published by the Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change<sup>51</sup> 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.

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.

## Summary of Current Baseline

### Population

**Table 8.1: Population growth 2001-2011<sup>52</sup>**

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%

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.

<sup>51</sup> 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]

<sup>52</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: Population Density 2011 (Table QS102EW); Population Density 2001 (Table UV02)



## Age Structure

**Table 8.2: Age Structure (2011)<sup>53</sup>**

	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%
<b>Total Population</b>	2,766	117,956	8,634,750	53,012,456

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**.

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%).

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

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.

**Table 8.3: Relative household deprivation dimensions<sup>54</sup>**

	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%

<sup>53</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: Age Structure 2011 (Table KS102EW)

<sup>54</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Households by Deprivation Dimensions 2011 (Table QS119EW)



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*

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:
  - 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.

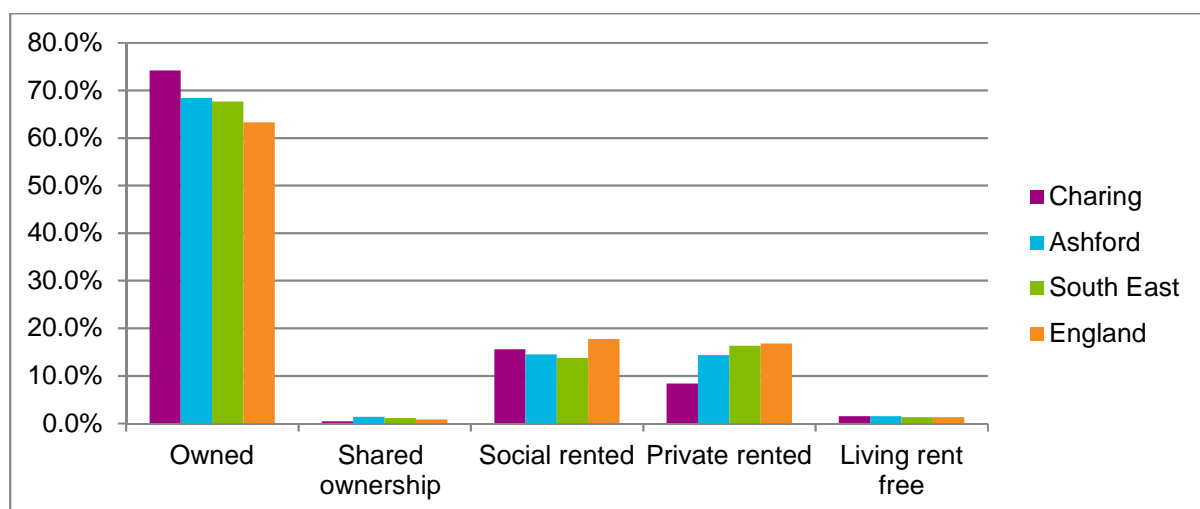
Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) <sup>55</sup> are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardized geographies designed to be as consistent in population as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. 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.

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.

<sup>55</sup> DCLG (2015): Indices of Deprivation Explorer', [online] available at: <<http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>> [accessed 18/09/19]



## Housing Tenure



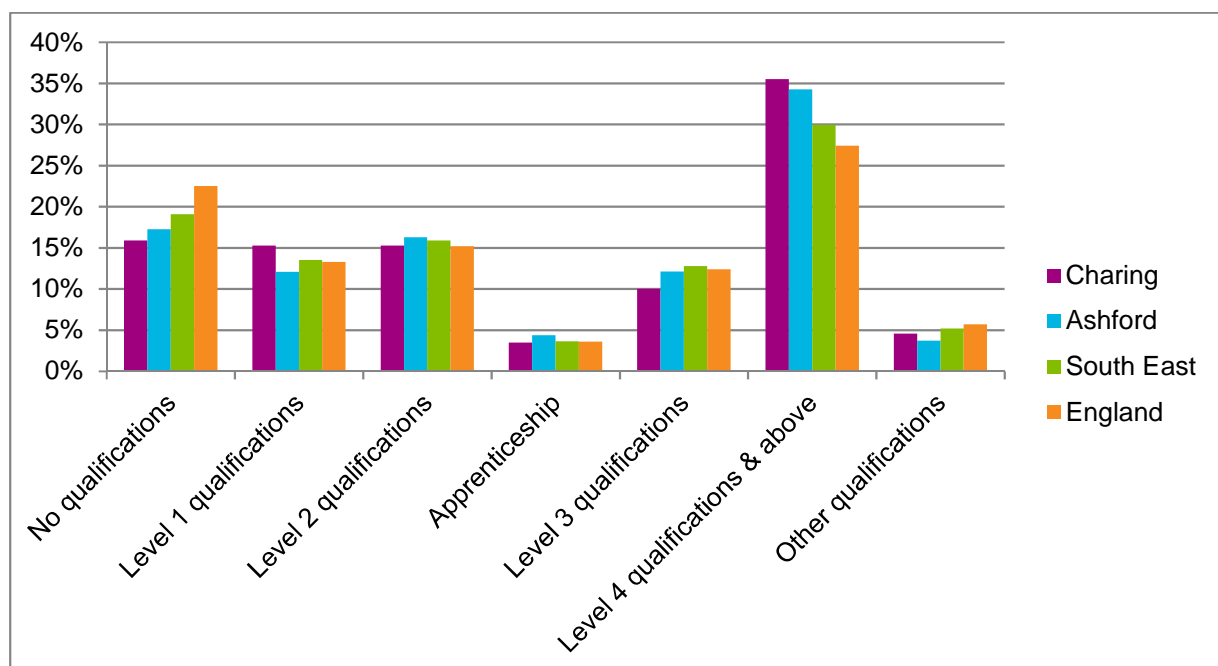
**Figure 8.1: 'Tenure by Household'** <sup>56</sup>

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%).

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.

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**.

## Education



**Figure 8.2: 'Highest level of Qualification'** <sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: Tenure-Households 2011 (Table QS405EW)

<sup>57</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: Highest Level of Qualification 2011 (Table QS501EW)



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%).

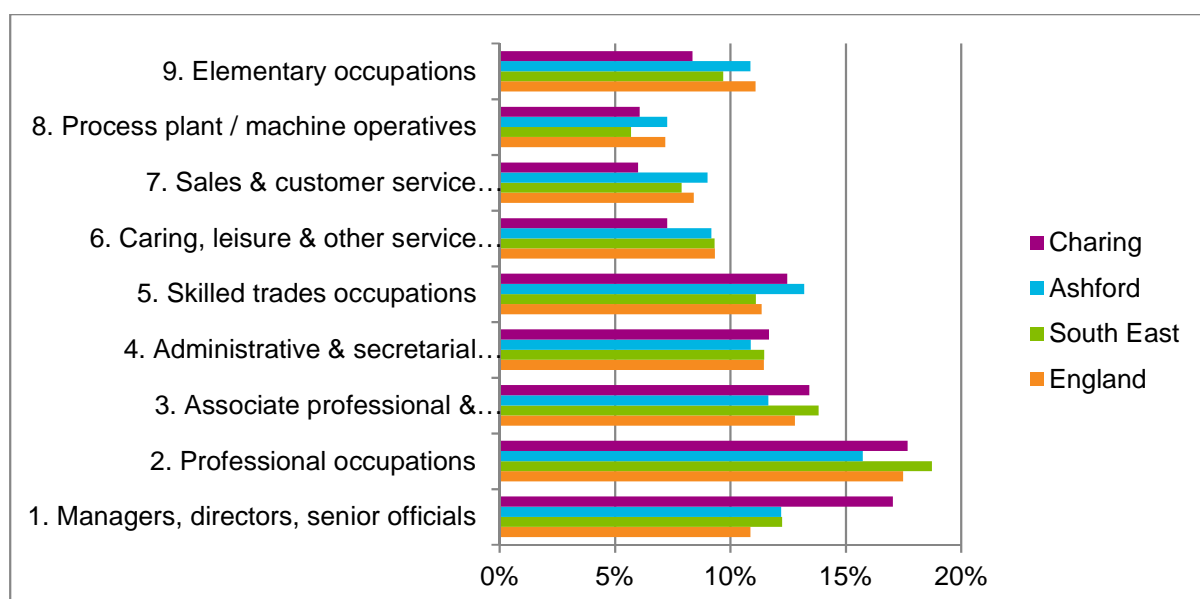
Comparatively, 35.5% of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area have a Level 4 qualification or above, which broadly aligns to the total for Ashford (34.3%) but is higher than the totals for the South East of England (29.9%) and England (27.4%).

### Employment

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%).

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.



**Figure 8.3: 'Occupation of usual residents aged 16 to 74 in employment'<sup>58</sup>**

### Community Assets

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.<sup>59</sup> 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.

<sup>58</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Occupation 2011' (Table KS608EW)

<sup>59</sup> 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]



## Summary of Future Baseline

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.

## A8 – Health and Wellbeing

### Context Review

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.

In relation to other key national messages in relation to health, Fair Society, Healthy Lives<sup>60</sup> (‘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”.

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.

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;
- COM2: Recreation, Sport, Play and Open Spaces; and

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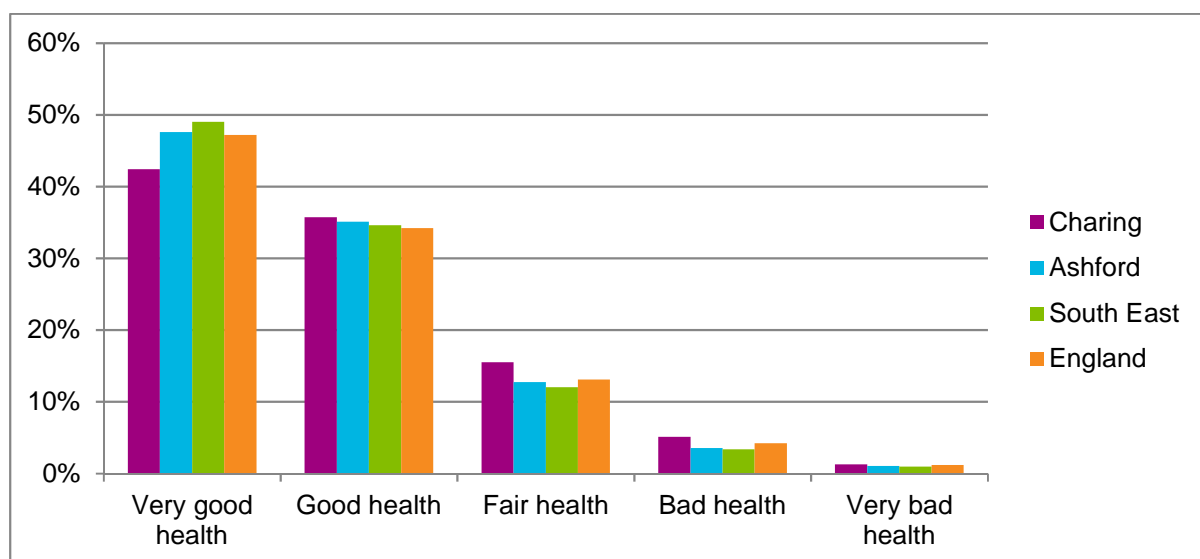
<sup>60</sup> The Marmot Review (2011) The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning [online] available to download from: < <https://www.nice.org.uk/media/default/About/what-we-do/NICE-guidance/NICE-guidelines/Public-health-guidelines/Additional-publications/Spatial-planning/the-marmot-review-implications-for-spatial-planning.pdf> > last accessed [24/09/18]



- IMP4: Governance of public community space and facilities.

## Summary of Current Baseline

### Health indicators and deprivation



**Figure 9.1: 'General Health'**<sup>61</sup>

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%).

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%).

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.

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%).

**Table 9.1: Disability**<sup>62</sup>

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

## Summary of Future Baseline

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.

<sup>61</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'General Health 2011' (Table QS302EW)

<sup>62</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Long-term Health Problem or Disability 2011' (Table QS303EW)



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.

## A9 – Transportation

### Context Review

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.

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*
  - v. *Opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised*
  - vi. *Opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued*
  - vii. *The environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account*
  - viii. *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.’*

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.<sup>63</sup> Kent’s Local Transport Plan 4<sup>64</sup> 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;
- 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.

<sup>63</sup> Local Transport Act 2008 [online] available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/26/contents> [accessed 15/02/19]

<sup>64</sup> 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](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/72668/Local-transport-plan-4.pdf)> [accessed 04/04/19]



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.

## Summary of Current Baseline

### *Rail network*

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*

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*

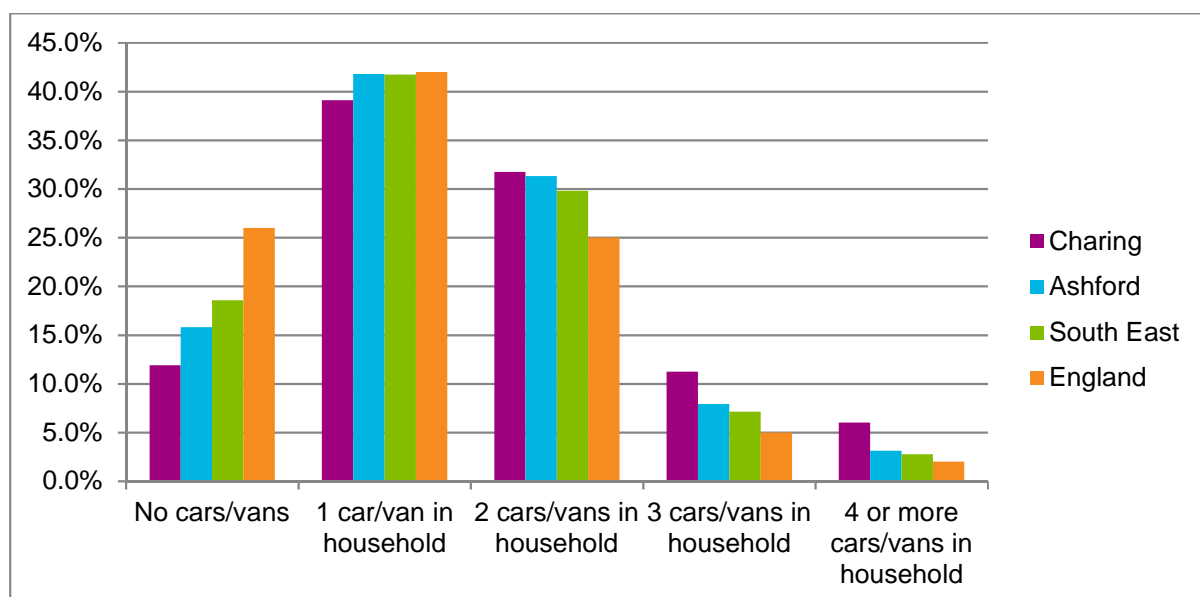
The Neighbourhood Plan area is relatively well connected to the road network. The A20 passes through the centre of Charing providing a route to the south to Ashford and to the north to Lenham. Additionally, a network of country roads are also present in the Neighbourhood Plan area, providing local access 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*

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*

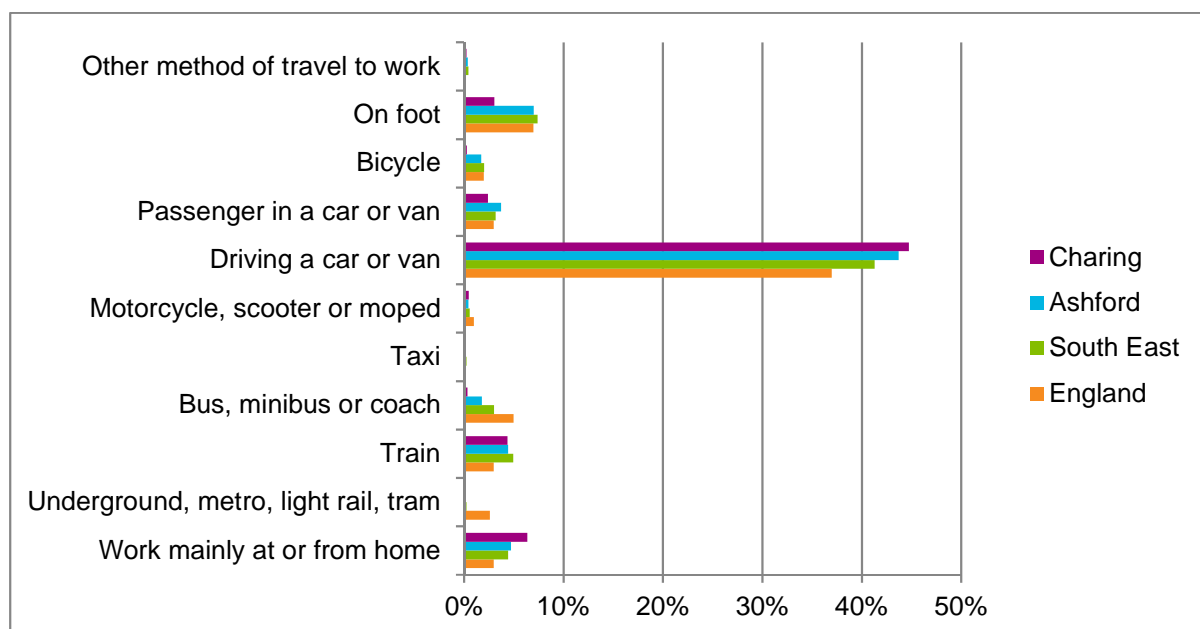




**Figure 10.2: 'Car and van ownership'**<sup>65</sup>

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'**<sup>66</sup>

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%).

<sup>65</sup> ONS (no date): 'Car or Van Availability 2011', (Table QS416EW)

<sup>66</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Method of Travel to Work 2011' (Table QS701EW)



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**

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

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



