

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report Update

August 2022

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified and approved by
Laurie Marriott Graduate consultant	Mark Fessey Associate	Nick Chisholm-Batten Associate

Revision History

Revision	Date	Details	Name	Position
1	August 2022	Draft	Jonathan Greenwood	Chairman of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group
2	August 2022	Final draft	As above	

Prepared for:

Tiptree Parish Council and on behalf of Locality

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
3rd Floor, Portwall Place
Portwall Lane
Bristol BS1 6NA
United Kingdom

T: +44 117 901 7000

aecom.com

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Non-Technical Summary

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) 2022 – 2033.

The TNP is being prepared by the community through the Tiptree Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the Colchester Local Plan. Once 'made' the TNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the Colchester Local Plan.

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. Central to the SEA process is publication of an Environmental Report alongside the draft plan that presents certain required information. The aim is to inform the consultation and, in turn, plan finalisation.

Preparing the Environmental Report essentially involves answering three questions:

1) What has plan-making / SEA involved **up to this point?**

- including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.

2) What are the SEA findings **at this stage?**

- i.e. in relation to the draft plan.

3) What happens **next**

This Environmental Report Update / NTS

This is the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the Environmental Report Update for the TNP. It is an update to the Environmental Report published for consultation alongside the draft plan in March 2022.

Both this NTS and the main report are structured so as to answer the three questions introduced above in turn. Firstly, there is a need to set the scene by answering: *What's the scope of the SEA?*

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of topics and objectives, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological 'framework' for assessment. The following topics form the core of the framework:

- Biodiversity
- Climate change
- Communities
- Economy
- Heritage
- Landscape
- Land, soil and water resources
- Transport

Plan making/SEA up to this point

An important element of the required SEA process involves assessing **reasonable alternatives** in time to inform development of the draft plan, and then publishing assessment findings in the Environmental Report.

As such, Part 1 of this report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches to allocating one or more sites through the TNP in order to meet the housing target assigned to the TNP by the emerging Colchester Local Plan Part 2, which is 400 homes. The decision was made to refer to these alternatives as **growth scenarios**.

The process of arriving at growth scenarios is set out in Section 5 of this report, including work to examine site options within four sub-areas in turn. The process led to the definition of four ‘reasonable’ growth scenarios for assessment – see below.

The reasonable growth scenarios

Site option	Growth scenarios			
	1	2	3	4
Highland Nursery (north-northwest)	200	200		200
Elms Farm (north)	200		200	200
Maldon Road (west)		250	250	250
Total homes 2022-2033	400	450	450	650



The table below presents the assessment findings. Presented subsequently is the Group’s response to the assessment / explanation of the preferred approach.

Assessment methodology:

Within each row (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand firstly rank the scenarios in order of preference and then, secondly, highlight instances of a predicted positive (**green**), minor positive (**light green**), minor negative (**amber**) or negative (**red**) significant effect on the baseline. Also, '=' is used to denote instances of scenarios performing broadly on a par.

Growth scenarios assessment findings

Topic	Scenario 1 Highland Elms Farm 400 homes	Scenario 2 Highland Maldon Rd 450 homes	Scenario 3 Elms Farm Maldon Rd 450 homes	Scenario 4 Highland Elms Farm Maldon Rd 650 homes
Biodiversity	=	=	=	=
Climate change	=	=	=	=
Communities	★1	2	2	2
Economy	★1	★1	2	★1
Heritage	2	★1	2	2
Landscape	★1	2	2	2
Land, soil, water	★1	★1	★1	2
Transport	★1	2	2	3

Discussion

It is not the aim of this assessment to arrive at a conclusion regarding which scenario is best performing, or 'most sustainable', overall, because the assessment is undertaken with no assumptions regarding the degree of importance, or 'weight', that should be assigned to each of the eight topics that together comprise the SEA framework.

However, it is fair to highlight that Scenario 1 stands out as being associated with the largest number of predicted positive effects (i.e. green shading), and is found to be the preferable scenario (i.e. ranked number one) under the greatest number of topic headings.

Having made these initial points, the following bullets consider each topic in turn:

- **Biodiversity** – none of the three sites are associated with onsite priority habitat, with the most constrained site options around the village not featuring in the growth scenarios (see Section 5). However, as discussed in Section 5, land to the north of Tiptree rises to a notably wooded ridge, hence there is a need to carefully consider the long term expansion of Tiptree in this direction, seeking to avoid encroaching on valued assets and also secure targeted enhancements. The primary concentration of woodlands is to the northeast; however, the proposed scheme here (**Elms Farm**) would presumably leave a landscape buffer to the woodlands, and the potential for targeted habitat creation to improve functional ecological connectivity, and/or the potential for improved recreational access to the wooded landscape, can be envisaged. Moving west, **Highland Nursery** would be near adjacent to a small ancient woodland patch (Perry's Wood), but is otherwise relatively unconstrained, and it might be possible to explore the potential to make Perry's Wood accessible (although this is a small woodland, likely with a low recreational capacity). Moving south, **Maldon Road** benefits from comprising a single field, such that there would presumably be little or no need for impacts to historic hedgerows. The site is within walking distance of Tiptree Heath SSSI (unfavourable recovering condition), but this is considered unlikely to be a significant concern. Residents would benefit from good access to the public footpath network to the north, which is associated with the large LWS west of the village, now proposed as Local Green Space (LGS). However, on the other hand, it is not clear that a scheme here would contribute towards long term objectives to extend and improve accessible green and blue infrastructure to the west of the village, potentially taking the form of a country park.

In **conclusion**, there are some notable tensions and opportunities, but overall it is not possible to differentiate between the scenarios with any confidence. There is an argument against piecemeal expansion / in favour of coordinated growth to the north of the village, such that there is an argument in favour of Scenario 1, but the strength of this argument is not clear at this stage in the process, ahead of further work.

N.B. a further consideration is Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) for the internationally designated wetland and coastal habitats along the Essex Coast. However, there is little reason to suggest that a higher growth strategy (Scenario 4) would give rise to any tensions. Natural England did not raise any 'quantum' concerns with the previously submitted TNP,¹ or with the pre-submission TNP (March 2022; N.B. no comments were made on the Environmental Report), although it is recognised that Scenario 4 under consideration at the current time would involve a higher growth strategy (by circa 180 homes) than the equivalent scenario in the Environmental Report.

- **Climate change** – beginning with the matter of climate change adaptation / resilience to anticipated effects of climate change, **flood risk** is typically a primary consideration, but none of the sites / scenarios are significantly constrained in terms of flood risk, either fluvial or surface water, reflecting the topography and presumably also underlying geology. Focusing on surface water flood risk, the primary channel in the north of Tiptree appears to follow the B1023 (Church Road), but it is not possible to suggest that growth to the north (upstream) would lead to any notable increased risk, given the potential to deliver sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) onsite.

¹ At the Regulation 16 Stage Natural England stated: "As per our previous advice "NE agree with the broad conclusions in that an adverse effect on the integrity of the identified designated sites can be avoided through appropriate mitigation measures. Additionally we noted that, the Appropriate Assessment suggests that where on-site Green Infrastructure measures are not/cannot be provided, in such cases an additional financial contribution will be sought towards the creation and improvement of an existing area at Inworth Grange Pits. As a Local Wildlife Site, the use of Inworth Grange Pits will need to be carefully considered to be further utilised as a 'SANG' as described in the Appropriate Assessment and therefore further detail is needed to ensure that the important flora and fauna of this area are maintained and improved. This should include a suitable site management plan to ensure an appropriate balance between the mitigation requirements and the conservation management of the existing species and associated diverse flora. We would advise that this is drafted in co-ordination with local environment bodies, such as the Essex Wildlife Trust". We note this has been taken on board and that the HRA states "This would be subject to successful negotiations with the current owners and the agreement of Natural England. To further develop this idea further work will be required to establish ownership and responsibility for the maintenance and management of the site." Therefore our previous comments remain the same."

Moving onto climate change mitigation / decarbonisation, the primary consideration is minimising per capita **greenhouse gas emissions from transport**, which primarily means minimising the need to travel and supporting a modal shift away from the private car (also supporting electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure). In this respect, the proposed strategy of growth to the north of Tiptree potentially gives rise to a degree of tension, first and foremost because of the proposal to deliver new strategic new road infrastructure, although arguments are not clear-cut, given the transition to EVs, and because new roads will support connectivity to rail stations and potentially also improved bus services, plus reduced traffic will serve to encourage cycling. Secondly, it is important to note that land to the north of Tiptree is beyond easy walking distance of the village centre. However, there are important destinations in close proximity, including the secondary school and a primary school, and this part of the village is understood to be relatively well linked to the main pedestrian routes through the village, plus the proposal is to deliver new employment and a new health centre / possible community hub. A third consideration is bus connectivity, with Elms Farm and Maldon Road benefiting from being located on the main Maldon to Colchester bus route. A final consideration is the long term aspiration to deliver new strategic green/blue infrastructure to the west of the village, potentially in the form of a country park, which could potentially serve to reduce car trips to the Essex coast. Scenario 4 from the Environmental Report (March 2022) was potentially supportive of this objective, but at the current time it is difficult to suggest that any of the scenarios lead to a particular opportunity.

Finally, with regards to the objective of minimising per capita **greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment**, growth at scale can give rise to opportunities, over-and-above piecemeal growth, e.g. in respect of achieving regulated operational emissions that exceed the requirements of Building Regulations, and perhaps also unregulated emissions (e.g. embodied carbon in building materials and other 'non-operational' emissions). However, even under Scenarios 1 and 4 (which would involve a concentration of growth to the north of the village), it is not clear that any significant opportunities would arise, including due to the configuration of growth (i.e. wrapping around the edge of the village, as opposed to concentrated), and different land ownership interests. It is noted that Policy DM25 (Renewable Energy, Water, Waste and Recycling) of the Colchester Borough Local Plan (2022) does not require larger development schemes to exceed the requirements of Building Regulations, or realise an increased level of ambition in any other respect relating to built environment emissions.

In **conclusion**, it is not possible to differentiate between the scenarios with any confidence, and significant effects are not predicted. It is noted that there is no clear commitment in the [Colchester Climate Strategy](#) to achieve net zero locally ahead of 2050 (the national net zero target date), in contrast with many other authorities nationally.

- **Communities** – there are a range of considerations, including those introduced in Section 5, above.

Firstly, there is a need to deliver new **housing** in order to meet locally arising needs, including affordable housing. In this respect, there is potentially an argument for higher growth (Scenario 4), and it is noted that Maldon Road is a slightly larger site, but a primary consideration is potentially supporting both the Highland Nursery and Elms Farm, with a view to achieving economies of scale / a level of development viability that should help to ensure timely delivery and ensure that policy expectations in respect of affordable housing are met. Another related consideration is the potential for Scenario 1 (Highland Nursery and Elms Farm) to unlock further growth in the medium to longer term, namely 'infilling' and further growth to the north of Tiptree, between the two sites.

The next most significant consideration (N.B. matters relating to traffic congestion are discussed below, under ‘transport’) is delivering new **community infrastructure**. In this respect there is clear support for Scenarios 1 and 4, as the land owners have confirmed the potential to make land available for community and green infrastructure, likely to include a new health facility, and potentially a ‘community hub’. The ability to deliver ‘planning gain’ in this respect could well be compromised under a scenario whereby there is support for only one out of Highland Farm and Elms Farm – i.e. Scenarios 2 and 3.

With regards to Maldon Road, there is relatively limited potential to deliver ‘planning gain’ to the benefit of the local community. A previously proposed scheme, which was refused planning permission in 2020 (ref. [192025](#)) proposed parking for the adjacent primary school. However, the B1022 Maldon Road is considered to be a busy road, such that a new housing estate junction opposite (or close to) a primary school could create challenges for safe and efficient school pick up and drop off.

In **conclusion**, focusing matters of housing needs and community infrastructure, it is fair to highlight Scenario 1 as performing best. Arguments in support of delivering a new medical facility here are now quite strong, in light of the consultation response received from the CCG through the March 2022 pre-submission consultation.

There is also an argument for Scenario 4, e.g. given affordable housing needs. However, a high growth strategy could lead to challenges, and must support realisation of strategic opportunities, such that it should not be rushed (i.e. additional growth, over-and-above Scenario 1, should be carefully considered through a future TNP Review).

With regards to significant effects, there is a slight concern in respect of a possible housing over-supply under Scenario 1 and, in turn, the other three scenarios to a greater extent (according to total quantum of homes). This reflects the recently permitted Marden Homes scheme (130 homes). However, it will be for the Borough Council, County Council and other key stakeholder organisations (including the CCG) to comment in detail through the forthcoming consultation, e.g. in respect of school capacity.

- **Economy** – there is an existing employment site at the northwest extent of Tiptree, and the adopted Local Plan Policies Map anticipates expansion of this site into land that now has planning permission to deliver housing (namely the Marden Homes scheme discussed in Section 5). As such, there is a strong argument for supporting Highland Nursery (Scenarios 1, 2 and 4), because the landowner here has proposed to make land available for employment, and it seems likely that this location is also suitable for employment, from a perspective of wishing to support something of an employment ‘hub’ at the northwest extent of Tiptree. Furthermore, under Scenario 1, a new health and community hub might provide some local employment. In **conclusion**, it is only Scenario 3 that is predicted to give rise to a potentially significant tension.
- **Heritage** – first and foremost, it is important to note that **Historic England** did not respond to the most recent consultation (March 2022), and did not raise objections to the previously submitted TNP, stating the following at the Regulation 16 stage: *“Having now had a chance to review the SEA Report, as well as the R16 version of the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan, I can confirm that Historic England has no further comments to make at this time.”* However, there are certain factors that should inform the consideration of reasonable alternative growth scenarios.

Firstly, there is a notable cluster of four **listed buildings** at the northeast extent of the village, associated with Elms Farm and the crossroads of Messing Road and the Colchester Road, with the pre-WW1 OS map showing a cluster of housing in this area, complete with two public houses. There would be good potential to avoid impacts to the setting of these assets at the development management stage, through development layout and design measures, but there is nonetheless a concern with scenarios involving Elms Farm, namely Scenarios 1, 3 and 4. One such concern relates to views of the listed buildings on the approach to Tiptree from the northeast, along the Messing Road, as the buildings appear to be quite visible in an expansive agricultural setting.

The other potential historic environment concern is more general, and relates to the northern expansion of Tiptree uphill onto the aforementioned **ridge** of raised land that is associated not only with a high density of woodlands but also two historic settlements – namely Messing (with a designated conservation area) and Inworth (with a notable density of listed buildings including a grade 1 listed church) – and the historic parkland landscape (albeit not nationally designated) of Messing Park, complete with a grade 2* listed house dating from the early 18th Century. There is no reason to suggest any risk of impacts to the setting of these assets, but it will be important to ensure that expansion of the village is well contained within the landscape, with a long term perspective.

Furthermore, there is a need to consider **traffic** flows through Inworth (which, to reiterate, does not have designated conservation area but does have clear historic environment value). Matters are discussed further below, under ‘transport’; however, in summary, there is an aspiration to direct A12 southbound traffic away from the B1023, which passes through Inworth, but the potential to realise this aspiration is not clear, given the National Highways proposal to upgrade Junction 24 of the A12, namely the A12 / B1023 junction. As such, there is a need to consider the potential for growth to the north of Tiptree to result in increased traffic through Inworth. However, any increase in traffic could well be insignificant in the context of potential increases in traffic between an upgraded Junction 24 and settlements to the east of Tiptree, e.g. Mersea.

Finally, with regards to **Maldon Road**, this appears to be quite unconstrained in most respects, although there is a need to consider the issues of coalescence between Tiptree and the historic hamlet of Tiptree Heath, as discussed below, under ‘landscape’.

In **conclusion**, there are a number of factors at play, but the overriding consideration is judged to be the risk of impacts to the setting of the cluster of grade 2 listed buildings to the northeast of Tiptree, particularly the cluster of three listed buildings at the Elms. On this basis, it is fair to highlight scenarios involving Elms Farm as less preferable, but it is not possible to predict the likelihood or risk of significant negative effects. Historic England may wish to comment further through the current consultation.

- **Landscape** – as has been discussed, it will be important to ensure that any expansion of Tiptree to the **north**, involving Highland Nursery, Elms Farm and/or the intervening land in Messing Parish, is well contained in the landscape, with a long term perspective, avoiding any risk of breaking over the ridge line and/or ‘sprawl’ along the B1023 towards Inworth. The potential to achieve this is not helped by relatively limited ability to draw upon existing field boundaries, or other landscape features, but it should be possible through careful masterplanning, landscaping, green infrastructure planning etc. A further clear consideration, with regards to expansion of the village directly to the north, is the public footpath that passes through the centre of this area, seemingly following the route of a historic track and field boundary, and passing via a high point in the landscape.

However, a potentially more significant consideration is maintaining the gap between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath, to the west, mindful that an application for a 255 home scheme (plus other uses) at the Maldon Road site was refused at appeal in 2020 (ref. [192025](#)) including due to “*coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.*” It is also noted that the Borough Council’s 2022 consultation response suggested that the TNP spatial strategy “*could be updated to consider coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.*”

It is recognised that the scheme could potentially be reduced in scale so as to allow for a narrow landscape gap within the site boundary; however, the site promoter has not proposed this to date, and there could be trade-offs, e.g. in terms of affordable housing. Other considerations relate to the adjacent public footpaths and the adjacent LWS / proposed LGS, where there is a long term aspiration to deliver a new country park.

In **conclusion**, there are some notable tensions under all scenarios, but the primary concern is in respect of coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.

- **Land, soil, water** – a primary consideration here is loss of productive **agricultural land**, particularly that which is likely to be of best and most versatile (BMV) quality. The nationally available low resolution dataset appears to show Tiptree strongly associated with an area of better quality - 'grade 2' - agricultural land (which is BMV), within a wider landscape, associated with extensive 'grade 3' quality land (which may or may not be BMV), and none of the land in question is known to have been surveyed in detail. This being the case, there is no potential to differentiate between the site options in question in respect of the quality of agricultural land. Highland Nursery is potentially shown by the nationally available dataset to intersect grade 2 quality land to the least extent, but there is a need to recall that this dataset is very low resolution / accuracy.

Another important consideration, is in respect of water resources and water quality. Focusing on water quality, it is appropriate to flag a potential concern with Scenario 4, given the following consultation response received from Anglian Water through the pre-submission TNP consultation (March 2022): *"I can confirm that from a water recycling capacity perspective, Tiptree is a Sustainable Settlement within which to accommodate the 726 new homes as the existing Water Recycling Centre would have capacity to cater for circa 900 homes based on its current permit."*

In **conclusion**, all scenarios would likely lead to the loss of significant best and most versatile agricultural land, and it is appropriate to flag a particular concern with Scenario 4, given a possible concern with capacity at the local Water Recycling Centre.

- **Transport** – a key objective for the TNP is to avoid worsening traffic, and potentially address existing traffic issues, in known hotspot locations. In this light, there is broad support for growth to the north of the village (in the direction of the A12 and Colchester), plus there is an identified opportunity for growth here to deliver or facilitate a new strategic link road across the north of the village, in line with the local plan, as has been discussed.

In this light, there is a clear transport argument in support of a coordinated scheme to the north of the village, and against allocation of Maldon Road. The Maldon Road site would gain access onto a busy B-road adjacent (or close to) a primary school, and a high proportion of A12 / Colchester bound traffic would likely pass through the village. There is seemingly no potential for the Maldon Road site to deliver notable transport upgrades (see discussion above regarding school parking), and the effect could potentially be to foreclose possible options for a new strategic link/relief road to the west of the village, which was a possible strategic opportunity discussed in the Environmental Report (March 2022), albeit the potential to achieve such an opportunity is now greatly reduced following the Marden homes site (in the Tower End area, to the northwest of the village recently gaining planning permission at appeal).

In **conclusion**, positive effects are predicted for Scenario 1, albeit it is recognised that the strategic role of the new link road is potentially fairly limited, in terms of addressing fundamental traffic challenges faced by the village, and there is also a need to bear in mind uncertainties around traffic flows following A12 upgrades. Negative effects are predicted for the other scenarios, which would involve Maldon Road, and a significant negative effect is predicted for Scenario 4 on account of the quantum of growth.

The Steering group responded to the growth scenarios assessment is as follows (N.B. the following text does not comprise an assessment):

"Scenario 1 is preferred in light of the assessment, and support for Scenario 1 is considered to align well with the TNP objectives and the findings of our site selection process, as set out in the Site Selection Topic Paper."

The assessment shows Scenario 1 to perform well insofar as it provides for the housing need, it allows connections to the main routes without significantly exacerbating traffic conditions on the B1022 and B1023 through Tiptree, it provides new employment land and provides the gift of land for a new health and well-being hub. It also provides the opportunity to build portions of a northern link road (as referenced in CLP S2 Policy SS14 (Tiptree)) that will ensure future development in the area is sustainable.

As with any scenario, there are certain challenges with Scenario 1, most notably in terms of heritage, landscape and loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Loss of agricultural land is likely to be unavoidable, but there will be good potential to address heritage and landscape issues through the development management process, guided by policy set out in the TNP.”

Assessment findings at this stage

Part 2 of this report presents an assessment of the TNP as a whole, as it stands at the current time (consultation on the pre-submission plan).

Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the SEA framework. The assessment reaches the following overall conclusions:

The assessment predicts significant positive effects in terms of **communities** objectives, given that the proposed allocations will act together deliver significant ‘planning gain’, and more modest positive effects are also predicted in respect of **transport** and **employment** objectives, including as the proposed allocations will support the first phases of a new strategic link road, and enable delivery of a 1.1 ha new commercial area. No significant negative effects are predicted, although there are potentially significant tensions with objectives relating to protection of best and most versatile **agricultural land**, and also certain tensions with biodiversity, decarbonisation, heritage and landscape objectives. The assessment has not led to any firm recommendations, but it is noted that a number of areas for potential further work identified at the previous ‘pre-submission’ stage (March 2022) have now been actioned. Also, the plan has been strengthened, since the pre-submission stage, with the addition of two new thematic policies.

Next steps

This Environmental Report Update is published for consultation alongside the ‘submission’ version of the TNP under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. Representations received will then be taken into account by an Independent Examiner, as part of an examination into whether the TNP meets with the nationally established Basic Conditions for neighbourhood plans, and is in general conformity with the adopted local plan.

If the outcome of the Independent Examination is favourable, the Revised TNP will then be subject to a referendum, and the plan will be ‘made’ if more than 50% of those who vote are in support.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan (TNP).
- 1.2 The TNP is being prepared by the community through the Tiptree Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, under the Neighbourhood Planning (NP) Regulations 2012 and in the context of the Colchester Local Plan. Once 'made' the TNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the Colchester Local Plan.
- 1.3 SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects.²

SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.5 In-line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that assesses "the plan, and reasonable alternatives".³ The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.6 More specifically, the Report must answer the following three questions:
 1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e. in relation to the draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report Update

- 1.7 This report is an update to the Environmental Report published for consultation alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the TNP in March 2022. The aim is to reflect changes to the context and evidence-base (including consultation responses), and changes to the TNP itself. This report is published alongside the 'submission' version of the TNP under Regulation 16 of the NP Regulations.
- 1.8 This report answers each of the three questions introduced above in turn.⁴ Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.9 Before answering question 1, there two further introductory sections.

² Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an environmental report; or, B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. The TNP has been subject to screening, through which it has been determined that SEA is a required. As such, there is a need to submit this Environmental Report (or an update).

³ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

⁴ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the report structure including its regulatory basis.

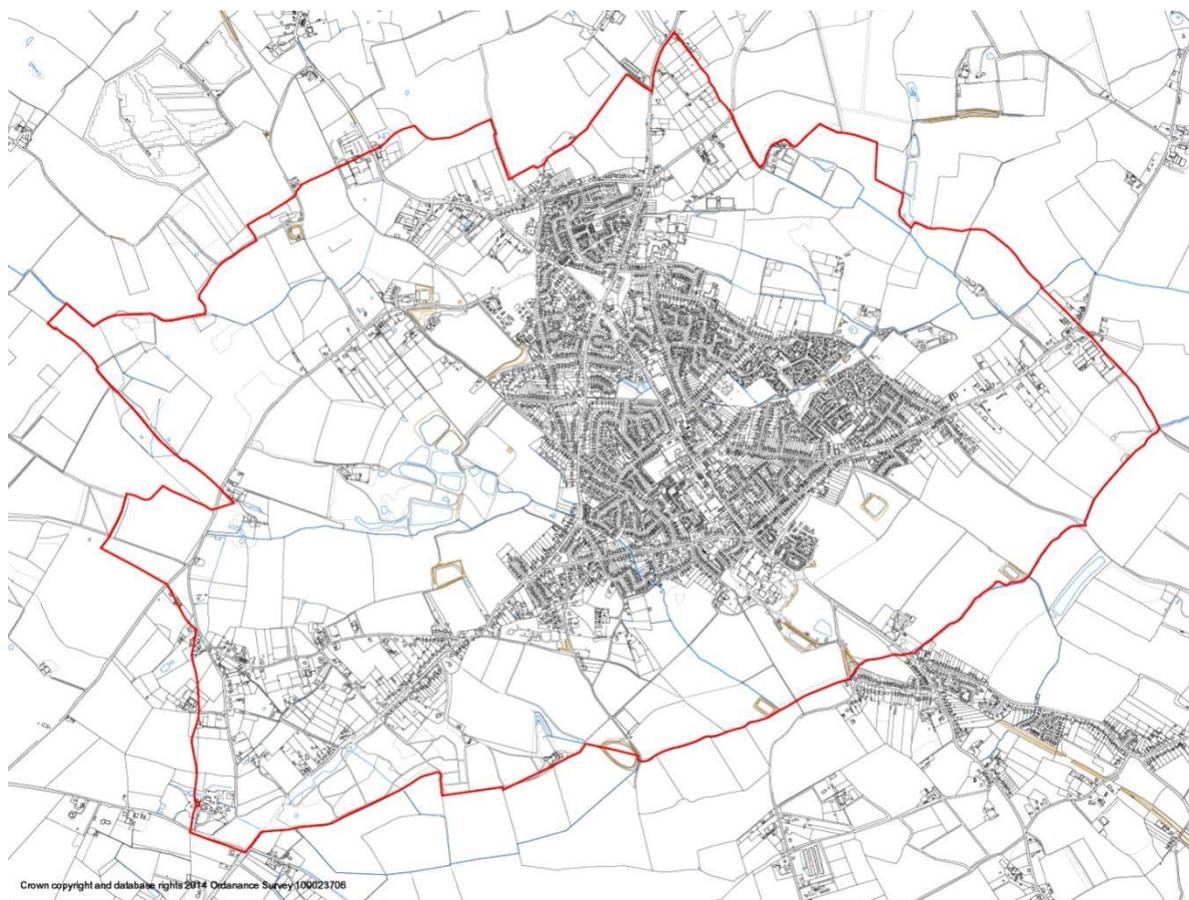
2. The scope of the TNP

Introduction

2.1 This section considers the context provided by the Colchester Local Plan before setting out the TNP vision and objectives.

2.2 The neighbourhood plan (Tiptree Parish) area is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The plan area (Tiptree Parish)



The Local Plan context

2.3 Key context is provided by the Colchester Local Plan Section 2 (LPS2), which was adopted in July 2022. However, there is also a need to be mindful of other adopted plans for Colchester, see colchester.gov.uk/local-plan.

2.4 As a 'larger village' in the Borough's settlement hierarchy there is a specific [section](#) in the LPS2 dealing with Tiptree, introducing some of the key issues and opportunities, for example explaining that there are "a high number of key services and community facilities" but also strategic constraints to growth, including Tiptree Jam Factory and a series of Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs).

2.5 Policy SS14 of the LPS2 deals specifically with Tiptree, explaining:

Within the preferred directions of growth shown on the Tiptree policies map... subject to existing constraints, the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan will:

- Define the extent of a new settlement boundary for Tiptree;

- Allocate specific sites for housing to deliver a minimum 400 dwellings;
- Set out any associated policies needed to support this housing delivery i.e. housing mix, type of housing and density for each site allocated for housing;
- Set out the policy framework within the parish to guide the delivery of any infrastructure/community facilities ... [including] with a view to confirming provision of the first phases of a road between the B1022 and B1023;
- Consider cross boundary issues;
- Identify other allocations, including employment and open space.

2.6 An important point to note is how the adopted version of LPS2 varies from the submission version (2017). Firstly, the housing requirement is reduced from 600 to 400, to reflect a new committed site to the east ('Barbrook Lane') which gained permission in 2020 for 200 homes, following an [appeal](#). Secondly, adopted LPS2 supports the first phases of a new link road between the B1022 and B1023 (Tiptree's two main roads) to the north of the village.

2.7 The LPS2 "preferred directions of growth" are shown in the figure below; specifically, see the three black arrows. The figure also notably shows: the district centre (blue), employment sites (purple), open space (green), local wildlife sites (dark green outline) and committed housing sites (beige).

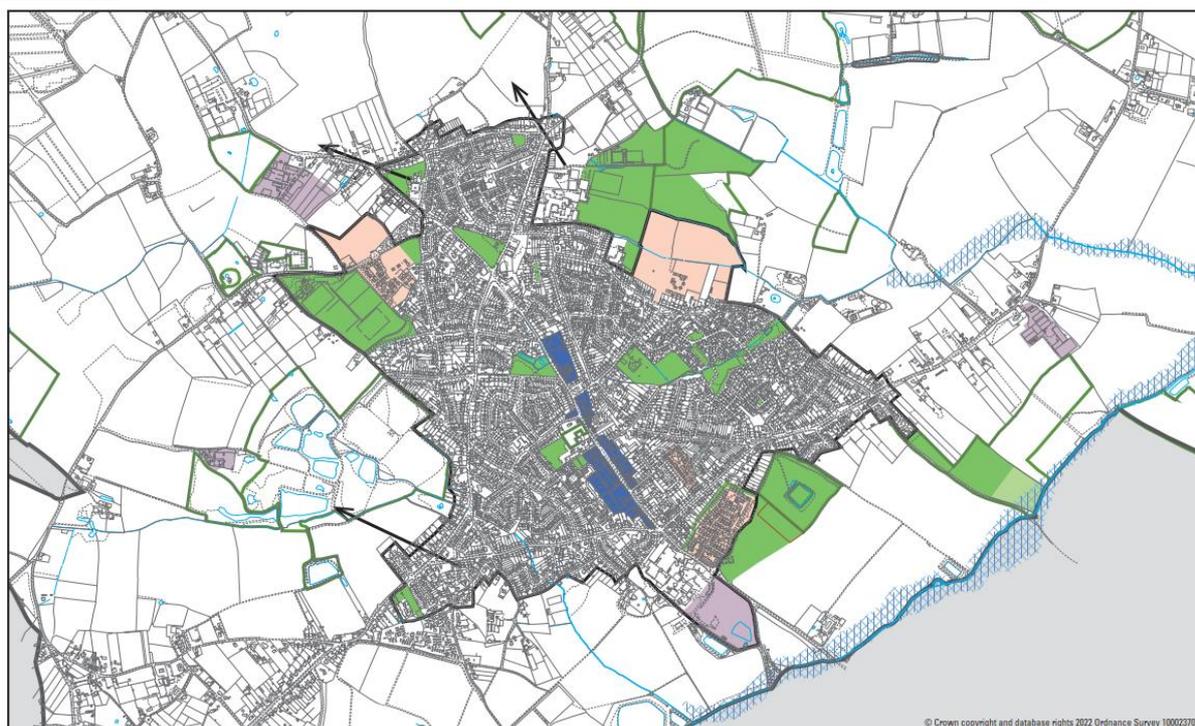
N.B. since this map was produced another site has gained permission at [appeal](#), namely the 'Marden Homes' site' (in the Tower End area, to the northwest of the village) for 130 homes. The implications are explored below.

Figure 2.2: The Local Plan Policies Map for Tiptree

TIPTREE

Policy SS14

Scale 1:17,000



TNP vision and objectives

2.8 The current plan document presents a list of key challenges before going on to present a vision for the Parish and a series of objectives for the TNP.

Key challenges

- 2.9 The following key challenges have been identified on the basis of evidence-gathering including a community questionnaire with over 1,000 responses:
- Village Identity - 84% of respondents to the community questionnaire wish Tiptree to continue to be known as a village.
 - Traffic Flow - Tiptree is sited on a busy crossroads and there is a strong desire to relieve traffic at certain 'pressure points'.
 - A12 access - two routes connect Tiptree to the A12, both with challenges; any A12 widening scheme will bring improvements but also fresh challenges.
 - Open space - 66% of respondents to the community questionnaire consider that there is insufficient publicly accessible open space around Tiptree.
 - Village centre - issues include retail, restaurants and the evening economy, parking, traffic (especially HGVs) and environmental improvements.
 - Essential services - for example, 47% have found it difficult to get an urgent appointment at the Health Centre, and bus connectivity is another key issue.

Vision for Tiptree

2.10 In consultation with the community, the following vision was established: *“Our vision is to retain an attractive village feel to Tiptree with a close relationship to its heritage and surrounding countryside. We want to strengthen the supportive community at the heart of Tiptree through sympathetic development whilst at the same time developing a thriving rural centre with a sustainable economy and a robust infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.”*

TNP objectives

- 2.11 The following objectives have been established to guide plan-making:
- Deliver development prioritising local distinctiveness in keeping with the village feel, rural surroundings and heritage of Tiptree.
 - Meet the housing, infrastructure and service requirements and needs of Tiptree and its residents in a sustainable manner.
 - Improve movement through Tiptree, for vehicular traffic but also for walking and cycling and to improve access to the countryside, main routes and railway stations whilst minimising impact on the village centre.
 - Protect and enable Tiptree's green environment, wildlife and biodiversity to thrive and grow. To protect local, national and international designated sites and habitats, and integrate green corridors into new developments.
 - Enable Tiptree village centre to thrive as a safe location for people to spend leisure time and access community facilities.
 - Ensure that Tiptree is an attractive location for a range of businesses so that its local economy can thrive.

3. The SEA scope

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e. the environmental and wider sustainability topics and objectives that should be a focus of work to assess the plan and reasonable alternatives.

Consultation

- 3.2 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 the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. As such these authorities were consulted on the SEA Scope in 2019.
- 3.3 The Scoping Report is available at www.tiptreeparishcouncil.gov.uk/supporting-documents, and updated information on the SEA scope was also presented in the Environmental Report published and submitted alongside the previous version of the TNP in 2019 / 20, which is available on CBC website [here](#).

The SEA framework

- 3.4 Table 3.1 presents a list of topics and objectives that together form the backbone of the SEA scope. Together they comprise a ‘framework’ under which to undertake assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives.

Adjustments to the framework in 2021

- 3.5 The framework established through consultation in 2019 comprised just six objectives. Subsequently, when AECOM was engaged to lead the SEA process in 2021, the decision was taken to supplement the framework, by adding five further objectives, which are highlighted with an asterisk (*) in Table 3.1. Comments on the SEA scope were invited through the consultation held in early 2020, but no comments were received.

Table 3.1: The SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity	Support the achievement of national and local objectives*
Climate change	Support the achievement of national and local objectives, relating to both mitigation / decarbonisation and adaptation / resilience*
Communities	Deliver well designed new homes in keeping with the village feel and identity of Tiptree to meet Tiptree’s housing needs up to 2033
	Maintain and improve a safe, welcoming and attractive village centre to service the needs of the community
	Support the achievement of wider communities focused objectives*

SEA topic	SEA objective
Economy	Strengthen and support economic activity and specific areas, supporting small businesses and accessible business parks
Heritage	Value and protect our heritage
Landscape	Protect and where possible, enhance open spaces, biodiversity and landscape character
Land, soil and water	Ensure efficient and effective use of land, including agricultural land*
	Support the achievement of water resources and quality objectives*
Transport	Avoid increased congestion on roads and junctions in and around Tiptree and promote the provision of cycleways and footways from new development to existing village amenities including the centre

The village sign and the Fruit Picker



Two recent housing schemes



Part 1: What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Plan-making has been going since 2013, and a version of the plan notably progressed to the 'examination' stage in 2020, before the decision was taken that the plan should not proceed to referendum. A key issue was the evidence base underpinning the spatial strategy, including via the SEA process.⁵
- 4.2 This is important context; however, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation, or audit trail, of work to date. Rather, the aim is to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise **reasonable alternatives** in **summer 2022**, namely at the time of updating the TNP following consultation earlier in 2022, and making the decision to submit the TNP to CBC.
- 4.3 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the plan, namely the allocation of land for housing. The decision was taken to refer to '**growth scenarios**'.

N.B. it is important to be clear that the information presented in this part of the report has been **updated** since the Environmental Report (March 2022).

Why focus on growth scenarios?

- 4.4 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of housing growth in light of the TNP objectives (in line with Regulation 12(2) of the SEA Regulations), and due to the likelihood of being able to differentiate between the merits of alternatives/scenarios in respect of 'significant effects' (in line with national guidance).

N.B. **individual site options** are not reasonable alternatives, where the objective of the plan is not to allocate an individual site option. However, individual site options are clearly important, and are considered in detail in Section 5, as part of the process of arriving at reasonable growth scenarios.

Who's responsibility?

- 4.5 It is important to be clear that:
- **Defining scenarios** - is ultimately the responsibility of the plan-maker, although the SEA consultant (AECOM) is well placed to advise.
 - **Assessing scenarios** - is the responsibility of the SEA consultant.
 - **Deciding a preferred approach** - is the responsibility of the plan-maker.

Structure of this part of the report

- 4.6 This part of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 5** - explains the process of defining scenarios;
 - **Chapter 6** - presents the outcomes of assessing scenarios;
 - **Chapter 7** - explains reasons for supporting the preferred approach.

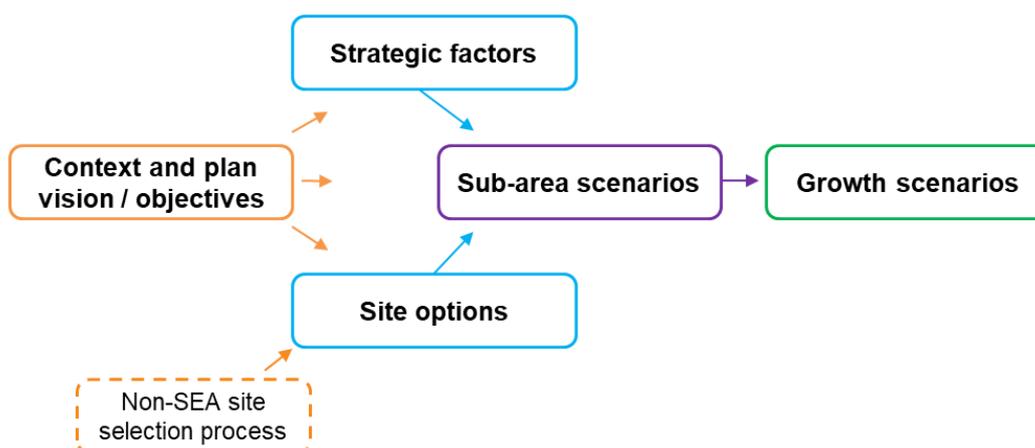
⁵ See <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=neighbourhood-planning&id=KA-03325>

5. Defining growth scenarios

Introduction

5.1 The aim here is to explain a *process* that led to the definition of growth scenarios for assessment, as summarised in Figure 5.1.⁶

Figure 5.1: Defining growth scenarios



Structure of this section

5.2 This section is structured so as to:

- discuss key aspects of the **context** to preparing growth scenarios
- explore **strategic factors** with a bearing on growth scenarios;
- consider individual **site options** in contention for allocation;
- explore growth scenarios for three **sub-areas**;
- draw upon the preceding sections to define **growth scenarios**.

Context to preparing growth scenarios

5.3 Much of the context to preparing growth scenarios is unchanged from the time of exploring growth scenarios and preparing the Environmental Report (March 2022). This includes the local plan context. However, there is a need to briefly introduce certain changes to the context.

5.4 Firstly, a site referred to here as the ‘Marden Homes’ site (aka ‘the Gables’), located in the Tower End area of northwest Tiptree, recently gained permission at appeal for 130 homes. The implication is that, whilst this site was considered as an option for allocation through the assessment of reasonable growth scenarios in the Environmental Report (March 2020), it is no longer considered appropriate to consider the possibility of allocating the site through the TNP. There are also wider planning implications besides, which are discussed below.

⁶ The aim is to meet the legal requirement (Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations) to present “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with” within the Environmental Report.

5.5 Secondly, there is a need to take into account consultation responses received through the consultation earlier in 2022, considering implications for the definition of reasonable growth scenarios. Key responses include those from:

- Organisations with a strategic interest – a number responded to the consultation, but none has specific comments to make on the SEA process / environmental report. Relevant issues raised are discussed below.
- Omission site promoters – several commented in detail on the SEA process, generally raising procedural concerns relating to: A) a focus on growth scenarios, as opposed to site options (see Section 4); B) the growth scenarios selected for assessment; and C) the reasons given by the Tiptree Parish Council NP Steering Group for supporting the preferred scenario / rejecting alternatives in light assessment. One repeated suggestion is that the consideration of reasonable growth scenarios was not suitably open-minded in respect of broad strategy; however, this is not accepted (see Section 5 of the Environmental Report). A specific suggestion was that the strategy was unduly predicated on a desire to deliver new strategic road infrastructure, but this was not the case. The potential benefits of new strategic road infrastructure was one consideration amongst many.

Strategic issues and options

5.6 This section explores:

- Context provided by the Colchester Local Plan; and
- Local-level strategic issues and opportunities.

The Local Plan

5.7 The context provided by the recently adopted Local Plan Section 2 (LPS2) has already been introduced above, in Section 2. The aim here is to recap and elaborate, setting out the implications for reasonable growth scenarios.

5.8 With regards to growth quantum, the headline requirement is to allocate sites so as to ensure delivery of 400 homes in the plan period (2022 to 2033). To recap, the submission version of the local plan set a requirement of 600 homes, but this was reduced to 400 following a site for 200 homes at the eastern edge of the village gaining permission (via a recovered appeal) in 2020.

5.9 However, there is also a need to account for the recent successful Marden Homes appeal, which leads to 130 additional homes not accounted for by the local plan, when setting the requirement for 400 homes.

5.10 With regards to **distribution**, the two headline considerations, as understood from the local plan, are a need to

- focus attention on the three “preferred directions of growth” shown in Figure 2.2; and
- set out a policy framework to guide delivery of infrastructure/community facilities, to include “*a strategic transport appraisal with a view to confirming provision of the first phases of a road between the B1022 and B1023.*”

Local-level factors

5.11 Key challenges locally and plan objectives have already been introduced above, in Section 2. For the purposes of arriving at reasonable growth scenarios, the primary considerations include:

- **Traffic and road infrastructure** – Tiptree is associated with the cross-roads of two B-roads that link to Colchester and the A12, which is a major route linking London to the east of England. Other than the A12, there are no other A-roads in the vicinity of the village. As such, traffic to and from Colchester and the A12, both arising from Tiptree and passing through, creates traffic challenges, including through the village centre (B1023; Church Road). Furthermore, the situation could potentially worsen if Junction 24 of the A12 is moved and becomes a four-ways junction, as part of National Highways' [A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme](#).

As such, the Parish Council is focused on growth scenarios that would avoid worsening traffic in 'hot spot' locations and/or deliver, facilitate or enable road infrastructure upgrades to relieve traffic pressure on hot spot locations. It is not easy to envisage 'village bypass' options; however, the potential for new 'relief roads' to ease the situation can be envisaged, including a road linking the B1022 and B1023 to the north of the village, as supported by the local plan. In the long term, new relief/link roads delivered alongside new development could potentially deliver significant benefits, in terms of traffic through the village (also supporting local bus services).

- **Community infrastructure** – the village has a good range of services and facilities, but there is nonetheless a strong desire to deliver new community infrastructure alongside new housing, in order to minimise strain on existing capacity. The previous version of the TNP, as submitted in 2020, did not seek to deliver significant new community infrastructure alongside housing (although it did propose a new commercial area), but this approach was revised through the pre-submission TNP. The implication is that growth scenarios should be identified mindful that the willingness of land-owners to make land available for community infrastructure, and other non-housing uses, will tend to be a factor of the number of homes supported on their land. In turn, there can be merit in larger schemes rather than piecemeal growth.

Importantly, the consultation response received from the NHS North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in early 2022 welcomed the TNP's ambition to deliver a "health and wellbeing hub" alongside strategic housing (but could not confirm that such a scheme is required), and notably stated that *"smaller developments make it more difficult to gain mitigation through Section 106 for healthcare than larger developments, with this in mind the relatively large scale of the developments proposed in the NP should allow for substantial amounts of mitigation to be requested (along with that already accrued previously) which go towards the capital costs of any future health project in the area."*

- **Green and blue infrastructure** – in addition to delivering new greenspace, associated infrastructure (e.g. footpaths, play facilities) and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within development sites, there is an aspiration to take a strategic and long term approach to green and blue infrastructure within the parish (also looking more widely, i.e. beyond the Parish).

Green and blue infrastructure assets are *very broadly* concentrated: to the north of the village, where a ridge of raised land, stretching west to Wickham Bishops, is associated with valued woodlands; and to the south of the village, where the valley of the Layer Brook links to the internationally important Abberton Reservoir, and the estuaries beyond. However, it is land immediately to the west of the village that is considered to represent the most significant growth-related opportunity. Specifically, there may be an opportunity to enhance and increase access to a series of flooded former sand and gravel pits, which are designated LWSs. In the long term, the potential for an accessible / well-integrated country park can be envisaged.

- **Settlement form and separation** – the 20th Century saw Tiptree forming from a loose collection of historic built form, such the village is not strongly nucleated, albeit there is a defined village centre. The risk is that the village could continue to expand along road corridors without due strategic thought given to character and sense of place (as well as matters relating to infrastructure planning, as discussed above). Expansion must take account of Tiptree’s position in the landscape, in particular its relationship to the aforementioned ridge (with its high density of assets, including heritage assets) and valley (which is valued including for its association with the jam factory and fruit growing, with this considered a heritage matter). A specific consideration is the risk of coalescence with Tiptree Heath to the west, which is a historic hamlet, albeit with few listed buildings. Amongst other things, the hamlet is valued for its close association with a large area of open access heathland (Tiptree Heath), which is nationally designated as a SSSI.

Summary

5.12 In summary, in light of the above discussion, growth scenarios should be defined particularly mindful of the following strategic considerations:

- There is a need for the TNP to ensure that the local plan housing requirement is met (plus potentially also provide for a ‘buffer’ as a contingency for unforeseen delivery issues).
- Additionally, it could be reasonable to explore possibility of providing for higher growth if the effect would be to deliver additional ‘planning gain’, e.g. in the form of added investment in road, community or green infrastructure.
- The adopted Local Plan suggests a need to focus on expansion options to the **north** and **west** of the village, and the discussion of ‘local-level factors’, as presented above, broadly serves to support this strategy.
 - With regards to the **east**, it is difficult to see the potential to deliver on transport objectives, including noting limited or no potential to deliver a new relief road (given Barbrook Lane and woodlands), plus Barbrook Lane amounts to a significant expansion for this part of the village.
 - With regards to land to **south**, there is a strong traffic/transport argument against growth here, as many car trips would pass through the village centre, plus there are sensitivities including the valley and jam factory.
- There is a need to focus on sites and site combinations that would deliver on plan objectives and key issues/opportunities, including in respect of the four matters discussed at para 5.11, and with an eye on the long term / next plan.

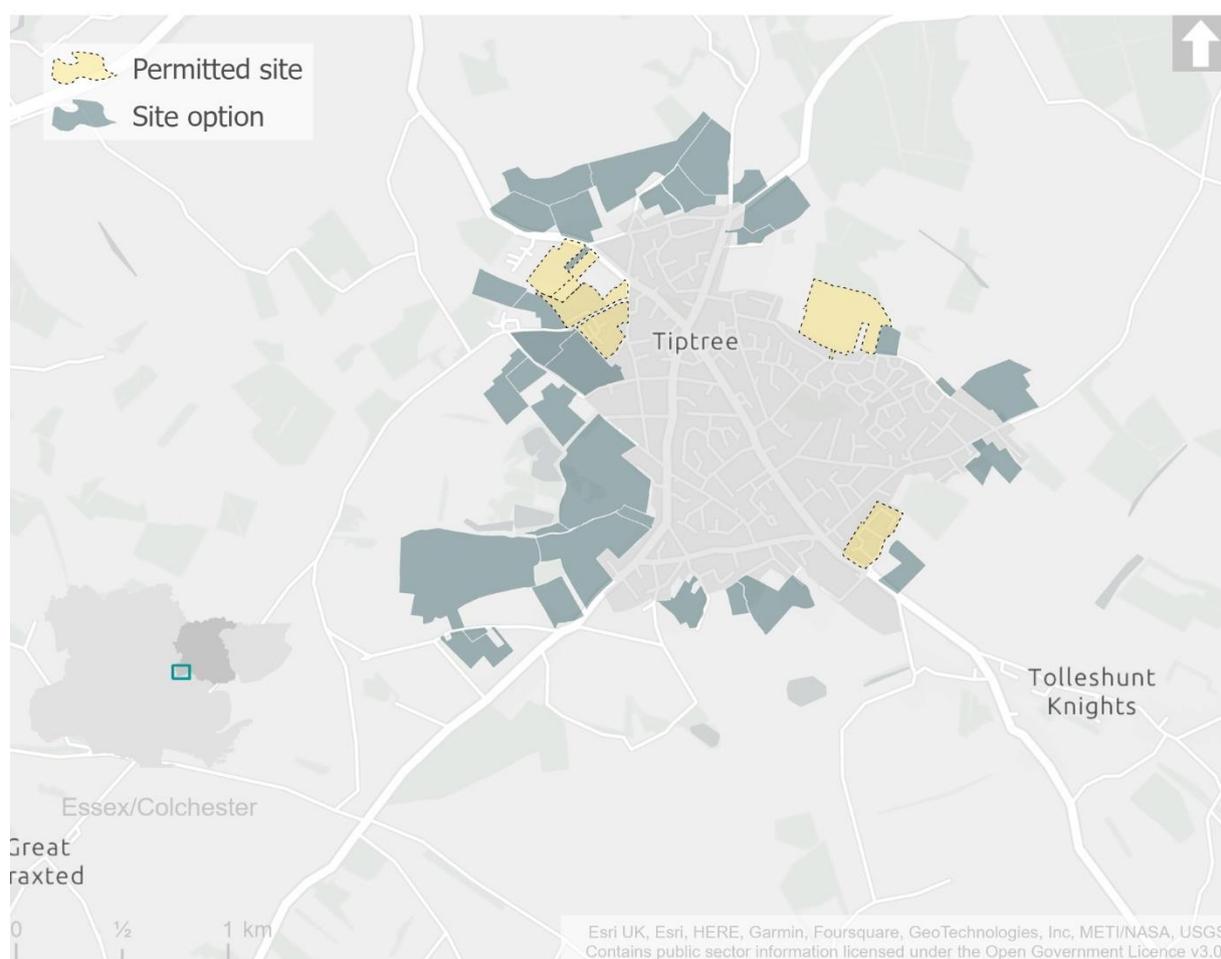
Site options

5.13 Following on from discussion of strategic / top down factors with a bearing on defining growth scenarios, the next step is to consider the pool of site options in contention for allocation, and so the ‘building blocks’ for growth scenarios.⁷

5.14 Work to identify and assess site options has been led by the Steering Group. Specifically, the Site Selection Topic Paper (March 2022) explains that, from a long list of 71 site options, a shortlist of 39 was taken forward for detailed assessment. This assessment involved scoring performance against circa 40 criteria, with the Paper reporting the total combined score for each of the shortlisted sites (where a higher score indicates stronger performance).

5.15 Figure 5.2 shows the 39 shortlisted site options (with several adjacent sites merged for simplicity). These sites are all discussed further below.

Figure 5.2: The long list and initial shortlist of site options



⁷ Site options should not be considered reasonable alternatives in and of themselves, except where a single site option is able to deliver c.400 homes and so meet the plan objectives, which is not the case in practice.

Sub areas

5.16 Discussion has so far focused on A) ‘top down’ considerations in respect of quantum and broad distribution; and B) ‘bottom-up’ consideration of site options. The next step is to consider the four points-of-the compass around Tiptree village in turn, exploring how sites might be allocated in combination.

North

5.17 This sub-area is defined as the arc of land north of the village stretching from Grange Road in the west to the B1022 in the east. Key points to note are:

- There is clear strategic support for a focus of growth here in light of the local plan policy for Tiptree (see para 5.10, above).
- This was the preferred direction of growth in the Pre-submission TNP (March 2022), with limited concerns raised, and notable support received from the Borough Council and the CCG (specifically, the CCG support the aspiration for a new health and community hub, which could be delivered to the north).
- An earlier version of the TNP (which did not proceed to referendum) directed all 600 homes to this sub-area, informed by detailed evidence gathering, including a site selection process completed over the period 2017 to 2018, formal consultation and ongoing engagement with the local community, infrastructure providers, site promoters and the Borough Council. The Examiner’s Report raised concerns with the strategy, such that the plan could not proceed to referendum, but certain concerns have now been allayed, including given support within the adopted local plan for the initial stages of a B1022-B1023 link road. There is now less call for the full 600 homes, but many of the previously identified reasons for supporting a focus of growth to the north of Tiptree continue to hold true at the current time.

5.18 Figure 5.3 shows the shortlisted site options, and places them into clusters. Table 5.1 then discusses each site cluster in turn, from west to east.

Figure 5.3: Shortlisted site options to the north of the village, placed into clusters

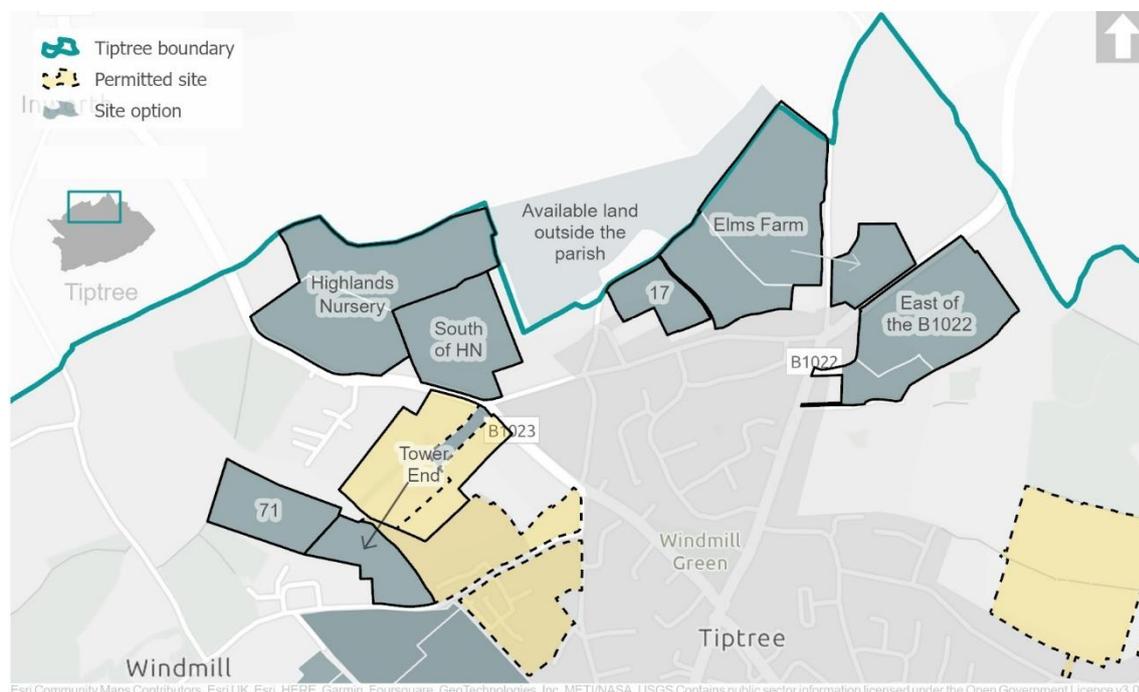


Table 5.1: Shortlisted site options in the north, placed into clusters

Sites / clusters	Comments	Progress?
8, 15, 16, 48 & 70, 71 "Tower End"	<p>Formed part of a previous strategy in 2020.</p> <p>Subsequently, in early 2022 the option of ~200 homes here, alongside a new strategic road link (also potentially strategic green infrastructure), was considered through the assessment of reasonable growth scenarios (Section 6 of the Environmental Report, March 2022), before a decision was taken not to support growth here within the Pre-submission TNP (March 2022), including for the reasons set out within Section 7 of the Env Report.</p> <p>The current situation is that a key part of the site cluster now has planning permission for 130 homes, specifically the 'Marden Homes' part of the site.</p> <p>Three parcels of land that remain 'uncommitted', with the main bulk of land (to the south, including Site 71) owned by Essex and Suffolk Water, who are actively promoting the site for development). However, allocation through the TNP would (in short) amount to piecemeal expansion that is not supported given better performing strategic options.</p>	No
	The remaining parcel of land between Kelvedon Road and Grange Road (other than the site under construction) comprises a traveller site.	No
49 & 51 "Highland Nursery (HN)"	Formed part of the previous strategy (2020) and the March 2022 strategy. Could contribute to a strategic road link and enable delivery of a new commercial area.	Yes
35, 44 & 68 "South of HN"	Formed part of the proposed strategy in 2020, but are now understood to be subject to availability issues.	No
Site 17	<p>The Environmental Report (March 2022; see para 5.17) recognised the merits of this site, but did not progress it to reasonable growth scenarios on balance, including as it had not been actively considered for its potential to come forward alongside adjacent Elms Farm. Subsequently, the site was actively promoted through the March 2022 consultation, with it being reported that work has been undertaken in collaboration with the Elms Farm promoter in respect of a possible joint access road.</p> <p>At the current time, the site is again not progressed to the reasonable growth scenarios on balance. There is more evidence that the site could contribute positively to comprehensive strategic growth to the north of the village, but still little evidence regarding exactly what would be delivered and what benefits would or could be achieved. The site clearly warrants further consideration, but there is no 'strategic' choice that warrants being explored through the assessment of reasonable growth scenarios here.</p>	No (on balance)

4 & 50 "Elms Farm"	Formed part of the previous strategy (2020) and the March 2022 strategy. Could contribute to a strategic road link and enable delivery of a new community facility/hub.	Yes
Site 69 ("Elms Farm (east)")	Formed part of the previous strategy. Necessary for the strategic road link.	Yes
19, 37, 40, 67 "East of the B1022"	Well linked to the B1022, bus services, the secondary school and leisure centre, and relatively well linked to the village centre, but would not deliver a strategic road. Numerous land parcels and none being actively promoted.	No

5.19 In conclusion, two sites are progressed to the reasonable growth scenarios:

- **Highland Nursery** – the site is being promoted - primarily by Mersea Homes - for **200 homes** plus a commercial area, link road and green space.

It is unfortunate that sites 35, 44 and 68, to the south, cannot be included, to ensure a strategic approach to growth. However, as discussed, availability issues preclude taking these sites forward through the TNP.

- **Elms Farm** – the site is being promoted - including by Mersea Homes - for **200 homes** plus community infrastructure, a link road and green space.

It is unfortunate that Site 17 was not actively promoted earlier alongside Elms Farm, with a view to ensuring a strategic approach to growth (including from a link road and access / traffic perspective). At the current time there is little in the way of additional evidence regarding the issues or benefits associated with a possible joint scheme. In turn, as per the equivalent discussion in the Environmental Report (March 2022): *"... whilst the site might ideally be given further detailed consideration at this stage of the plan-making process, this would lead to delay and would not necessarily lead to significant benefits."*

5.20 These two sites could potentially come forward individually or in combination.

5.21 Delivery of both sites in combination for ~400 homes, which was the preferred approach within the Pre-submission TNP (March 2022), would deliver a total quantum of homes over-and-above what is required, after having accounted for supply of 130 homes from the permitted Marden Homes site. However, there is clear potential for in-combination benefits that warrant being explored further.

East

5.22 As discussed, there are relatively few strategic arguments in support of expansion to the east, including on the basis of: A) environmental constraints, primarily in the form of locally designated woodlands, but also a stream valley, which limit or preclude strategic road link options; and B) the committed Barbrook Lane site, which is set to deliver 200 homes, and give rise to increased traffic on local roads, including in the vicinity of a primary school.

5.23 Land here is close to schools, and slightly closer to the village centre than is the case for land to the north of Tiptree, but this is marginal, and direct footpath links are somewhat limited, relative to land to the north of Tiptree.

5.24 Figure 5.4 shows the shortlisted site options. Table 5.2 then discusses each site cluster in turn, from north to south.

Figure 5.4: Shortlisted site options to the east of the village

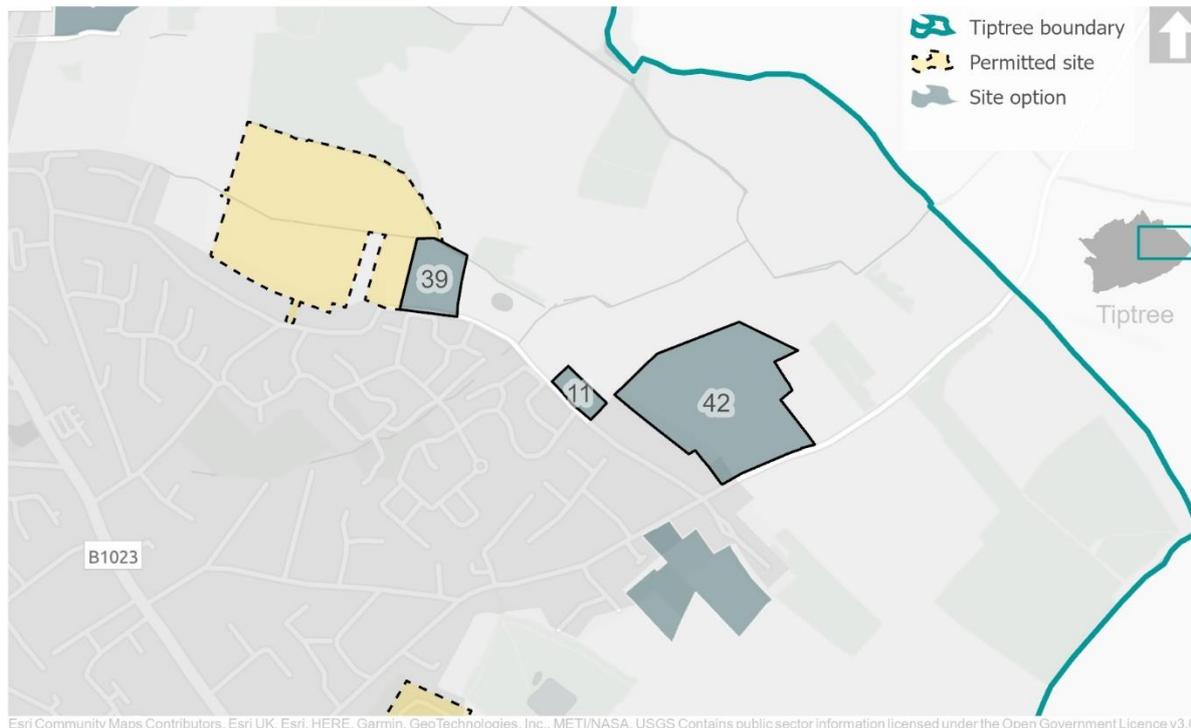


Table 5.2: Shortlisted site options in the east

Sites	Comments	Progress?
Site 39	Located adjacent to Barkbrook Lane, hence would add to traffic pressures. Access would likely be from Grove Road – a single track lane on the National Cycle Network (NCN), which serves to bound the eastwards expansion of Tiptree completed in the early 2000s, and which links to a stream valley / surface flood risk channel associated with a footpath.	No
Site 11	Access could potentially avoid Grove Road, but would still be on the NCN, and on a sharp bend. Appears to be an attractive area of village/rural transition, and also transition between older and newer housing. Would amount to a small, piecemeal scheme, not likely to deliver any significant planning gain. Was promoted through a consultation response received in 2022, along with land to the east, with the proposal for proposal for up to 30 homes on ~1ha plus a larger area of planted woodland.	No
Site 42	Poorly linked to the settlement edge - would risk 'sprawl'. Relatively distant from the village centre and schools. Traffic would pass through the village and along Newbridge Rd, which is on the NCN. No potential to deliver a strategic road link, and A12-bound traffic would likely be via Church Road.	No

5.25 In conclusion, there are no reasonable growth scenarios for the east of the village that warrant being taken forward for further consideration.

South

5.26 As discussed, there are relatively few strategic arguments in support of expansion to the south, including on the basis of: A) traffic and road infrastructure considerations; and B) the jam factory and associated river valley / fruit growing. A further consideration is that the final phases of a scheme for a total of 126 homes is currently under construction (construction having commenced in 2016). Land here does benefit from good proximity to the village centre, although the secondary school is relatively distant.

5.27 Figure 5.5 shows the shortlisted site options. Table 5.3 then discusses each site cluster in turn, from east to west.

Figure 5.5: Shortlisted site options to the south of the village

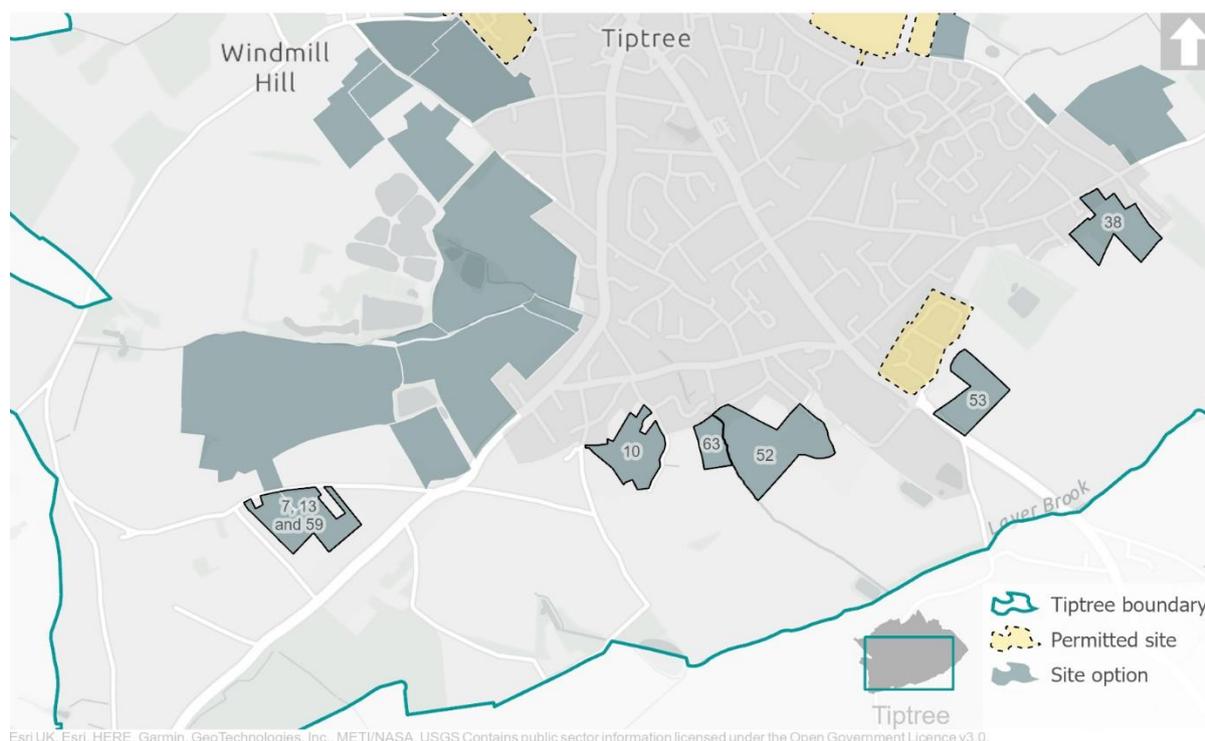


Table 5.3: Shortlisted site options in the South

Sites	Comments	Progress?
Site 38	Benefits from relatively good containment in the landscape, and relationship to current built form, although this is primarily on account of a recent scheme (Park Drive), which was constructed on previously developed land in circa 2005. Access for the proposed scheme would seemingly require demolition (although there could be access from Birchwood Way, were the scheme to be extended to the west). Potentially sensitive in biodiversity terms, located between two ancient woodlands, and with onsite vegetation. The adjacent bridleway follows a historic lane and links to a nature reserve.	No

Sites	Comments	Progress?
Site 53	Would extend the recent / under construction 'Nine Acres' scheme in a direction that takes it way from the village, and would significantly impact the gap to Tolleshunt Knights, the northern extent of which is associated with grade 2 listed Brook Hall. Would also extend Tiptree into the river valley and, correspondingly, the site is affected by surface water flood risk.	No
Site 52	There is a patchwork of small fields in the broad sector of land, to the south of Tiptree, west of the jam factory and northeast of Tiptree Hall, including the site in question at the eastern extent. Any growth would need to be carefully considered, mindful of factors including access, heritage (including within the site in question), fruit growing and flood risk. Access would likely limit the number of homes achievable at the site in question.	No
Site 63	The factors discussed above apply to this site, and access to this site would appear to be particularly problematic.	No
Site 10	There would appear to be <i>relatively</i> good access to this site, but access could still limit the number of homes achievable. A representation was received through the early 2022 consultation suggesting this land should be included within the settlement boundary, with a view to supporting limited infill.	No
Sites, 7, 13 & 59	Perform poorly on account of being associated with Tiptree Heath, which performs poorly as a potential growth location.	No

5.28 In conclusion, there are no reasonable growth scenarios for the south of the village that warrant being taken forward for further consideration. Two or three sites can be identified that possibly have a degree of development potential, but would amount to relatively piecemeal growth, unlikely to deliver significant planning gain, plus growth to the south of the village is not supported in strategic terms, as discussed, most notably due to traffic considerations.

West

5.29 As discussed, there are strategic arguments for giving close consideration to the option of growth to the west of Tiptree, including in respect of strategic road infrastructure and/or biodiversity (potentially country park) opportunities. However, it is important to note that the potential to achieve strategic aspirations is now potentially somewhat limited, relative to the position at the time of preparing the Pre-submission TNP and Environmental Report in early 2022, following the successful Marden Homes appeal for 130 homes.

5.30 Figure 5.6 shows the shortlisted site options. Table 5.4 then discusses each site cluster in turn, from south to north.

N.B. sites 18 and 34 are not discussed in any detail, for brevity, as they clearly perform poorly on account of being distant from the settlement boundary.

Figure 5.6: Shortlisted site options to the west of the village

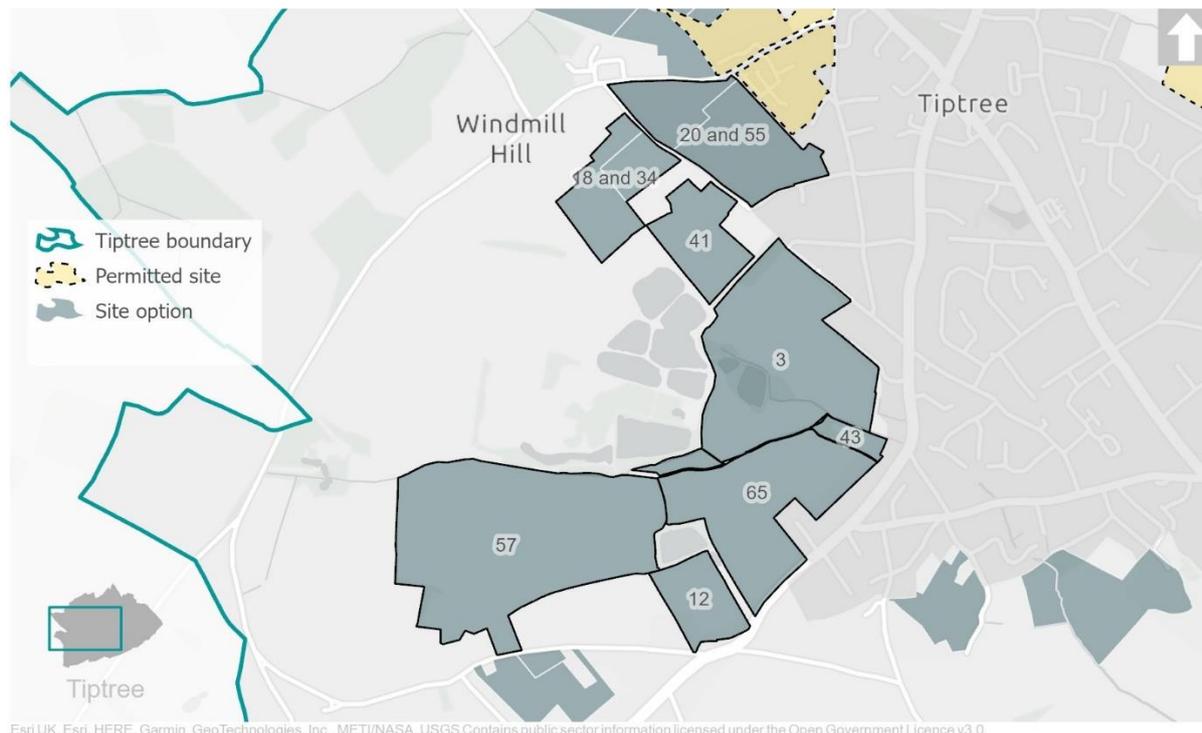


Table 5.4: Shortlisted site options in the West

Sites	Comments	Progress?
Site 12	Strongly associated with the landscape gap to Tiptree Heath. Access potentially problematic, given junctions, a bend in the B1022 and traffic from a pub/restaurant and fruit-growing.	No
Site 65	This site was given close consideration by the Steering Group, when preparing the previous version of the TNP (2020), and (accordingly) the adopted local plan indicates that this is a potential direction of growth. An application for a 255 home scheme (plus other uses) was then refused at appeal in 2020 (ref. 192025) including due to “ <i>coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.</i> ” In early 2022 close consideration was given to this site, but it was ultimately determined that it did not warrant being progressed to the reasonable growth scenarios (see Section 5 of the Environmental Report, March 2022). However, at the current time, mindful of there no longer being a reasonable need to progress the option of allocating land at Tower End (as discussed above), and also mindful of the detailed representation received from the promoters of Site 65 through the March 2022 consultation, it is now considered reasonable to progress this site to the growth scenarios.	Yes
Site 57	Relates poorly to current built form. Could feasibly come into contention as part of a wider strategy for growth west of Tiptree.	No
Site 43	A small site comprising a rear garden associated with a stream / surface water flood channel and a footpath linking to the LWS to the west. Could come into contention as part of a strategy seeking to deliver a new strategic road close to the current village edge, but any such road would likely impact on the LWS.	No

Sites	Comments	Progress?
Site 3	<p>Entirely intersects the LWS. This part of the LWS - namely that part to the east of the flooded sand and gravel pits - is not shown by the nationally available dataset to comprise priority habitat, but is understood to have high biodiversity value, having been added to the LWS in 2015. There are also public rights of way around the entire perimeter of the site, and the Parish Council considers it to be of upmost importance as green space. Indeed, the latest proposal – following encouragement received from CBC through the March 2022 consultation, is to designate this land as a Local Green Space.</p> <p>A planning application for a 221 home scheme (ref. 202604) was recently refused (with the Decision Notice here) and an appeal is currently ongoing. It is also noted that the site promoters submitted a detailed response to the March 2022 consultation, criticising the SEA process and the site selection process (see Section 5.3). However, the criticisms are not accepted, and no substantive points were raised that serve as an argument for progressing this site to the reasonable growth scenarios. It was suggested that the local plan preferred direction of growth to the southwest (Figure 2.2) “includes” this site, but it is clear that this is not the case.</p> <p>In conclusion, and as per the equivalent conclusion within the Environmental Report (March 2022), this site would only come into contention for allocation through the neighbourhood plan as part of a strategy that seeks to realise strategic road infrastructure and/or accessibility/ biodiversity (potentially country park) aspirations.</p>	No
Site 41	<p>Would not represent a logical extension to Tiptree on its own, but could potentially be considered in combination with adjacent land, as part of a strategy that aims to deliver on strategic aspirations. There are public rights of way along two sides, including Pennsylvania Way, which is a historic lane and a bridleway.</p>	No
Sites 20, 55	<p>These sites currently comprise the Colchester United training ground and, for a number of years, the aim has been to develop the land for housing, plus new facilities for the village, in order to fund the relocation of the training ground, with a view to achieving ‘category 1’ status as a football training academy. A detailed representation was received through the March 2022 consultation putting forward these arguments, which clearly have weight.</p> <p>However, as per the decision in early 2022, as reported in Section 5 of the Environmental Report (March 2022), there is not considered to be a reasonable need to progress this site to the reasonable growth scenarios. This is first and foremost because there are preferable locations for growth that align with the local plan’s preferred directions of growth for Tiptree. Also, the adjacent site under construction (nearing completion) serves as a reason not to rush further expansion of the village in this direction (e.g. to enable traffic flows to be understood). Furthermore, Pennsylvania Lane, along the southern edge of the site, is a historic bridleway on NCN1.</p> <p>Finally, it is noted that, whilst the Environmental Report discussed the potential for Site 55 to deliver a western village link/relief road, in conjunction with land to the north and south, the potential for any such road link is now reduced following the Marden homes appeal.</p>	No

5.31 In conclusion, it is only Site 65 (henceforth ‘Maldon Road’) that warrants being taken forward for further consideration through the assessment of reasonable growth scenarios. There are also arguments in favour of the Colchester United proposals, but preferable directions for growth are those that align with the local plan, and there is a need to consider the limited total number of homes needed.

The reasonable growth scenarios

5.32 In light of the discussion above, three site options must feature in the growth scenarios, with a need for any ‘reasonable’ scenario to involve allocation of at least two. For completeness, a scenario involving all three is also assessed.

5.33 Many other scenarios can be envisaged, including the sites discussed above as having a degree of merit, perhaps most notably Site 17. However, other scenarios are ruled out as unreasonable on balance, in light of the discussion presented above, and mindful of the need to limit the number of scenarios, with a view to supporting effective consultation and wider engagement on the TNP.

Table 5.5: The reasonable growth scenarios (August 2022)

Site option	Growth scenarios			
	1	2	3	4
Highland Nursery (north-northwest)	200	200		200
Elms Farm (north)	200		200	200
Maldon Road (west)		250	250	250
Total homes 2022-2033	400	450	450	650

Figure 5.7: The reasonable growth scenarios (August 2022)



6. Growth scenarios assessment

Introduction

6.1 The aim of this section is to present assessment findings in relation to the four reasonable alternative growth scenarios introduced above.

Assessment findings

6.2 Table 6.1 presents the assessment. With regards to methodology

Within each row (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand firstly rank the scenarios in order of preference and then, secondly, highlight instances of a predicted positive (**green**), minor positive (**light green**), minor negative (**amber**) or negative (**red**) significant effect on the baseline. Also, ' = ' is used to denote performance on a par.

The assessment matrix is followed by a discussion, setting out reasons for the assessment conclusions reached, with reference to available evidence.

Table 6.1: Growth scenarios assessment findings

Topic	Scenario 1 Highland Elms Farm 400 homes	Scenario 2 Highland Maldon Rd 450 homes	Scenario 3 Elms Farm Maldon Rd 450 homes	Scenario 4 Highland Elms Farm Maldon Rd 650 homes
Biodiversity	=	=	=	=
Climate change	=	=	=	=
Communities	1	2	2	2
Economy	1	1	2	1
Heritage	2	1	2	2
Landscape	1	2	2	2
Land, soil, water	1	1	1	2
Transport	1	2	2	3

Discussion

It is not the aim of this assessment to arrive at a conclusion regarding which scenario is best performing, or ‘most sustainable’, overall, because the assessment is undertaken with no assumptions regarding the degree of importance, or ‘weight’, that should be assigned to each of the eight topics that together comprise the SEA framework.

However, it is fair to highlight that Scenario 1 stands out as being associated with the largest number of predicted positive effects (i.e. green shading), and is found to be the preferable scenario (i.e. ranked number one) under the greatest number of topic headings. Having made these initial points, the following bullets consider each topic in turn:

- **Biodiversity** – none of the three sites are associated with onsite priority habitat, with the most constrained site options around the village not featuring in the growth scenarios (see Section 5). However, as discussed in Section 5, land to the north of Tiptree rises to a notably wooded ridge, hence there is a need to carefully consider the long term expansion of Tiptree in this direction, seeking to avoid encroaching on valued assets and also secure targeted enhancements. The primary concentration of woodlands is to the northeast; however, the proposed scheme here (**Elms Farm**) would presumably leave a landscape buffer to the woodlands, and the potential for targeted habitat creation to improve functional ecological connectivity, and/or the potential for improved recreational access to the wooded landscape, can be envisaged. Moving west, **Highland Nursery** would be near adjacent to a small ancient woodland patch (Perry’s Wood), but is otherwise relatively unconstrained, and it might be possible to explore the potential to make Perry’s Wood accessible (although this is a small woodland, likely with a low recreational capacity). Moving south, **Maldon Road** benefits from comprising a single field, such that there would presumably be little or no need for impacts to historic hedgerows. The site is within walking distance of Tiptree Heath SSSI (unfavourable recovering condition), but this is considered unlikely to be a significant concern. Residents would benefit from good access to the public footpath network to the north, which is associated with the large LWS west of the village, now proposed as Local Green Space (LGS). However, on the other hand, it is not clear that a scheme here would contribute towards long term objectives to extend and improve accessible green and blue infrastructure to the west of the village, potentially taking the form of a country park.

In **conclusion**, there are some notable tensions and opportunities, but overall it is not possible to differentiate between the scenarios with any confidence. There is an argument against piecemeal expansion / in favour of coordinated growth to the north of the village, such that there is an argument in favour of Scenario 1, but the strength of this argument is not clear at this stage in the process, ahead of further work.

N.B. a further consideration is Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) for the internationally designated wetland and coastal habitats along the Essex Coast. However, there is little reason to suggest that a higher growth strategy (Scenario 4) would give rise to any tensions. Natural England did not raise any ‘quantum’ concerns with the previously submitted TNP,⁸ or with the pre-submission TNP (March 2022; N.B. no comments were made on the Environmental Report), although it is recognised that Scenario 4 under consideration at the current time would involve a higher growth strategy (by circa 180 homes) than the equivalent scenario in the Environmental Report.

⁸ At the Regulation 16 Stage Natural England stated: “As per our previous advice “NE agree with the broad conclusions in that an adverse effect on the integrity of the identified designated sites can be avoided through appropriate mitigation measures. Additionally we noted that, the Appropriate Assessment suggests that where on-site Green Infrastructure measures are not/cannot be provided, in such cases an additional financial contribution will be sought towards the creation and improvement of an existing area at Inworth Grange Pits. As a Local Wildlife Site, the use of Inworth Grange Pits will need to be carefully considered to be further utilised as a ‘SANG’ as described in the Appropriate Assessment and therefore further detail is needed to ensure that the important flora and fauna of this area are maintained and improved. This should include a suitable site management plan to ensure an appropriate balance between the mitigation requirements and the conservation management of the existing species and associated diverse flora. We would advise that this is drafted in co-ordination with local environment bodies, such as the Essex Wildlife Trust”. We note this has been taken on board and that the HRA states “This would be subject to successful negotiations with the current owners and the agreement of Natural England. To further develop this idea further work will be required to establish ownership and responsibility for the maintenance and management of the site.” Therefore our previous comments remain the same.”

- **Climate change** – beginning with the matter of climate change adaptation / resilience to anticipated effects of climate change, **flood risk** is typically a primary consideration, but none of the sites / scenarios are significantly constrained in terms of flood risk, either fluvial or surface water, reflecting the topography and presumably also underlying geology. Focusing on surface water flood risk, the primary channel in the north of Tiptree appears to follow the B1023 (Church Road), but it is not possible to suggest that growth to the north (upstream) would lead to any notable increased risk, given the potential to deliver sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) onsite.

Moving onto climate change mitigation / decarbonisation, the primary consideration is minimising per capita **greenhouse gas emissions from transport**, which primarily means minimising the need to travel and supporting a modal shift away from the private car (also supporting electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure). In this respect, the proposed strategy of growth to the north of Tiptree potentially gives rise to a degree of tension, first and foremost because of the proposal to deliver new strategic new road infrastructure, although arguments are not clear-cut, given the transition to EVs, and because new roads will support connectivity to rail stations and potentially also improved bus services, plus reduced traffic will serve to encourage cycling. Secondly, it is important to note that land to the north of Tiptree is beyond easy walking distance of the village centre. However, there are important destinations in close proximity, including the secondary school and a primary school, and this part of the village is understood to be relatively well linked to the main pedestrian routes through the village, plus the proposal is to deliver new employment and a new health centre / possible community hub. A third consideration is bus connectivity, with Elms Farm and Maldon Road benefiting from being located on the main Maldon to Colchester bus route. A final consideration is the long term aspiration to deliver new strategic green/blue infrastructure to the west of the village, potentially in the form of a country park, which could potentially serve to reduce car trips to the Essex coast. Scenario 4 from the Environmental Report (March 2022) was potentially supportive of this objective, but at the current time it is difficult to suggest that any of the scenarios lead to a particular opportunity.

Finally, with regards to the objective of minimising per capita **greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment**, growth at scale can give rise to opportunities, over-and-above piecemeal growth, e.g. in respect of achieving regulated operational emissions that exceed the requirements of Building Regulations, and perhaps also unregulated emissions (e.g. embodied carbon in building materials and other 'non-operational' emissions). However, even under Scenarios 1 and 4 (which would involve a concentration of growth to the north of the village), it is not clear that any significant opportunities would arise, including due to the configuration of growth (i.e. wrapping around the edge of the village, as opposed to concentrated), and different land ownership interests. It is noted that Policy DM25 (Renewable Energy, Water, Waste and Recycling) of the Colchester Borough Local Plan (2022) does not require larger development schemes to exceed the requirements of Building Regulations, or realise an increased level of ambition in any other respect relating to built environment emissions.

In **conclusion**, it is not possible to differentiate between the scenarios with any confidence, and significant effects are not predicted. It is noted that there is no clear commitment in the [Colchester Climate Strategy](#) to achieve net zero locally ahead of 2050 (the national net zero target date), in contrast with many other authorities nationally.

- **Communities** – there are a range of considerations, including those introduced in Section 5, above.

Firstly, there is a need to deliver new **housing** in order to meet locally arising needs, including affordable housing. In this respect, there is potentially an argument for higher growth (Scenario 4), and it is noted that Maldon Road is a slightly larger site, but a primary consideration is potentially supporting both the Highland Nursery and Elms Farm, with a view to achieving economies of scale / a level of development viability that should help to ensure timely delivery and ensure that policy expectations in respect of affordable housing are met. Another related consideration is the potential for Scenario 1 (Highland Nursery and Elms Farm) to unlock further growth in the medium to longer term, namely 'infilling' and further growth to the north of Tiptree, between the two sites.

The next most significant consideration (N.B. matters relating to traffic congestion are discussed below, under 'transport') is delivering new **community infrastructure**. In this respect there is clear support for Scenarios 1 and 4, as the land owners have confirmed the potential to make land available for community and green infrastructure, likely to include a new health facility, and potentially a 'community hub'. The ability to deliver 'planning gain' in this respect could well be compromised under a scenario whereby there is support for only one out of Highland Farm and Elms Farm – i.e. Scenarios 2 and 3.

With regards to Maldon Road, there is relatively limited potential to deliver 'planning gain' to the benefit of the local community. A previously proposed scheme, which was refused planning permission in 2020 (ref. [192025](#)) proposed parking for the adjacent primary school. However, the B1022 Maldon Road is considered to be a busy road, such that a new housing estate junction opposite (or close to) a primary school could create challenges for safe and efficient school pick up and drop off.

In **conclusion**, focusing matters of housing needs and community infrastructure, it is fair to highlight Scenario 1 as performing best. Arguments in support of delivering a new medical facility here are now quite strong, in light of the consultation response received from the CCG through the March 2022 pre-submission consultation.

There is also an argument for Scenario 4, e.g. given affordable housing needs. However, a high growth strategy could lead to challenges, and must support realisation of strategic opportunities, such that it should not be rushed (i.e. additional growth, over-and-above Scenario 1, should be carefully considered through a future TNP Review).

With regards to significant effects, there is a slight concern in respect of a possible housing over-supply under Scenario 1 and, in turn, the other three scenarios to a greater extent (according to total quantum of homes). This reflects the recently permitted Marden Homes scheme (130 homes). However, it will be for the Borough Council, County Council and other key stakeholder organisations (including the CCG) to comment in detail through the forthcoming consultation, e.g. in respect of school capacity.

- **Economy** – there is an existing employment site at the northwest extent of Tiptree, and the adopted Local Plan Policies Map anticipates expansion of this site into land that now has planning permission to deliver housing (namely the Marden Homes scheme discussed in Section 5). As such, there is a strong argument for supporting Highland Nursery (Scenarios 1, 2 and 4), because the landowner here has proposed to make land available for employment, and it seems likely that this location is also suitable for employment, from a perspective of wishing to support something of an employment 'hub' at the northwest extent of Tiptree. Furthermore, under Scenario 1, a new health and community hub might provide some local employment. In **conclusion**, it is only Scenario 3 that is predicted to give rise to a potentially significant tension.
- **Heritage** – first and foremost, it is important to note that **Historic England** did not respond to the most recent consultation (March 2022), and did not raise objections to the previously submitted TNP, stating the following at the Regulation 16 stage: *"Having now had a chance to review the SEA Report, as well as the R16 version of the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan, I can confirm that Historic England has no further comments to make at this time."* However, there are certain factors that should inform the consideration of reasonable alternative growth scenarios.

Firstly, there is a notable cluster of four **listed buildings** at the northeast extent of the village, associated with Elms Farm and the crossroads of Messing Road and the Colchester Road, with the pre-WW1 OS map showing a cluster of housing in this area, complete with two public houses. There would be good potential to avoid impacts to the setting of these assets at the development management stage, through development layout and design measures, but there is nonetheless a concern with scenarios involving Elms Farm, namely Scenarios 1, 3 and 4. One such concern relates to views of the listed buildings on the approach to Tiptree from the northeast, along the Messing Road, as the buildings appear to be quite visible in an expansive agricultural setting.

The other potential historic environment concern is more general, and relates to the northern expansion of Tiptree uphill onto the aforementioned **ridge** of raised land that is associated not only with a high density of woodlands but also two historic settlements – namely Messing (with a designated conservation area) and Inworth (with a notable density of listed buildings including a grade 1 listed church) – and the historic parkland landscape (albeit not nationally designated) of Messing Park, complete with a grade 2* listed house dating from the early 18th Century. There is no reason to suggest any risk of impacts to the setting of these assets, but it will be important to ensure that expansion of the village is well contained within the landscape, with a long term perspective.

Furthermore, there is a need to consider **traffic** flows through Inworth (which, to reiterate, does not have designated conservation area but does have clear historic environment value). Matters are discussed further below, under ‘transport’; however, in summary, there is an aspiration to direct A12 southbound traffic away from the B1023, which passes through Inworth, but the potential to realise this aspiration is not clear, given the National Highways proposal to upgrade Junction 24 of the A12, namely the A12 / B1023 junction. As such, there is a need to consider the potential for growth to the north of Tiptree to result in increased traffic through Inworth. However, any increase in traffic could well be insignificant in the context of potential increases in traffic between an upgraded Junction 24 and settlements to the east of Tiptree, e.g. Mersea.

Finally, with regards to **Maldon Road**, this appears to be quite unconstrained in most respects, although there is a need to consider the issues of coalescence between Tiptree and the historic hamlet of Tiptree Heath, as discussed below, under ‘landscape’.

In **conclusion**, there are a number of factors at play, but the overriding consideration is judged to be the risk of impacts to the setting of the cluster of grade 2 listed buildings to the northeast of Tiptree, particularly the cluster of three listed buildings at the Elms. On this basis, it is fair to highlight scenarios involving Elms Farm as less preferable, but it is not possible to predict the likelihood or risk of significant negative effects. Historic England may wish to comment further through the current consultation.

- **Landscape** – as has been discussed, it will be important to ensure that any expansion of Tiptree to the **north**, involving Highland Nursery, Elms Farm and/or the intervening land in Messing Parish, is well contained in the landscape, with a long term perspective, avoiding any risk of breaking over the ridge line and/or ‘sprawl’ along the B1023 towards Inworth. The potential to achieve this is not helped by relatively limited ability to draw upon existing field boundaries, or other landscape features, but it should be possible through careful masterplanning, landscaping, green infrastructure planning etc. A further clear consideration, with regards to expansion of the village directly to the north, is the public footpath that passes through the centre of this area, seemingly following the route of a historic track and field boundary, and passing via a high point in the landscape.

However, a potentially more significant consideration is maintaining the gap between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath, to the west, mindful that an application for a 255 home scheme (plus other uses) at the Maldon Road site was refused at appeal in 2020 (ref. [192025](#)) including due to “*coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.*” It is also noted that the Borough Council’s 2022 consultation response suggested that the TNP spatial strategy “*could be updated to consider coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.*”

It is recognised that the scheme could potentially be reduced in scale so as to allow for a narrow landscape gap within the site boundary; however, the site promoter has not proposed this to date, and there could be trade-offs, e.g. in terms of affordable housing. Other considerations relate to the adjacent public footpaths and the adjacent LWS / proposed LGS, where there is a long term aspiration to deliver a new country park.

In **conclusion**, there are some notable tensions under all scenarios, but the primary concern is in respect of coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.

- **Land, soil, water** – a primary consideration here is loss of productive **agricultural land**, particularly that which is likely to be of best and most versatile (BMV) quality. The nationally available low resolution dataset appears to show Tiptree strongly associated with an area of better quality - 'grade 2' - agricultural land (which is BMV), within a wider landscape, associated with extensive 'grade 3' quality land (which may or may not be BMV), and none of the land in question is known to have been surveyed in detail. This being the case, there is no potential to differentiate between the site options in question in respect of the quality of agricultural land. Highland Nursery is potentially shown by the nationally available dataset to intersect grade 2 quality land to the least extent, but there is a need to recall that this dataset is very low resolution / accuracy.

Another important consideration is in respect of water resources and water quality. Focusing on water quality, it is appropriate to flag a potential concern with Scenario 4, given the following consultation response received from Anglian Water through the pre-submission TNP consultation (March 2022): *"I can confirm that from a water recycling capacity perspective, Tiptree is a Sustainable Settlement within which to accommodate the 726 new homes as the existing Water Recycling Centre would have capacity to cater for circa 900 homes based on its current permit."*

In **conclusion**, all scenarios would likely lead to the loss of significant best and most versatile agricultural land, and it is appropriate to flag a particular concern with Scenario 4, given a possible concern with capacity at the local Water Recycling Centre.

- **Transport** – a key objective for the TNP is to avoid worsening traffic, and potentially address existing traffic issues, in known hotspot locations. In this light, there is broad support for growth to the north of the village (in the direction of the A12 and Colchester), plus there is an identified opportunity for growth here to deliver or facilitate a new strategic link road across the north of the village, in line with the local plan, as has been discussed.

In this light, there is a clear transport argument in support of a coordinated scheme to the north of the village, and against allocation of Maldon Road. The Maldon Road site would gain access onto a busy B-road adjacent (or close to) a primary school, and a high proportion of A12 / Colchester bound traffic would likely pass through the village. There is seemingly no potential for the Maldon Road site to deliver notable transport upgrades (see discussion above regarding school parking), and the effect could potentially be to foreclose possible options for a new strategic link/relief road to the west of the village, which was a possible strategic opportunity discussed in the Environmental Report (March 2022), albeit the potential to achieve such an opportunity is now greatly reduced following the Marden homes site (in the Tower End area, to the northwest of the village recently gaining planning permission at appeal).

In **conclusion**, positive effects are predicted for Scenario 1, albeit it is recognised that the strategic role of the new link road is potentially fairly limited, in terms of addressing fundamental traffic challenges faced by the village, and there is also a need to bear in mind uncertainties around traffic flows following A12 upgrades. Negative effects are predicted for the other scenarios, which would involve Maldon Road, and a significant negative effect is predicted for Scenario 4 on account of the quantum of growth.

7. The preferred option

Introduction

- 7.1 The aim of this section is to present the Steering Group's reasons for supporting the preferred option, in light of the scenarios assessment presented above.

Reasons for supporting the preferred approach

- 7.2 The Steering Group provided the following text:

“Scenario 1 is preferred in light of the assessment, and support for Scenario 1 is considered to align well with the TNP objectives and the findings of our site selection process, as set out in the Site Selection Topic Paper.

The assessment shows Scenario 1 to perform well insofar as it provides for the housing need, it allows connections to the main routes without significantly exacerbating traffic conditions on the B1022 and B1023 through Tiptree, it provides new employment land and provides the gift of land for a new health and well-being hub. It also provides the opportunity to build portions of a northern link road (as referenced in CLP S2 Policy SS14 (Tiptree)) that will ensure future development in the area is sustainable.

As with any scenario, there are certain challenges with Scenario 1, most notably in terms of heritage, landscape and loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Loss of agricultural land is likely to be unavoidable, but there will be good potential to address heritage and landscape issues through the development management process, guided by policy set out in the TNP.”

Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 The aim here is to present assessment findings and recommendations in relation to the current 'submission' version of the TNP.

Overview of the TNP

8.2 The centrally important policy is Policy TIP01: Tiptree Spatial Strategy. The merits of the proposed strategy have already been explored in Section 6 (see discussion of Growth Scenario 1), but are also set out below.

8.3 Additionally (i.e. unlike the assessment of reasonable alternative growth scenarios presented in Section 6), the assessment below covers the proposed site specific and parish-wide development management policies:

- TIP02: Good Quality Design
- TIP03: Residential Car Parking
- TIP04: Building for a Healthy Life
- TIP05: First Homes
- TIP06: Cycling, Walking and Disability Access Routes
- TIP07: Mitigating the Impact of Vehicular Traffic through Tiptree Village
- TIP08: Tiptree Village Centre
- TIP09: Small-scale Commercial Workspaces
- TIP10: Provision of Community Infrastructure
- TIP11: Green Infrastructure
- TIP12: Landscaping and Biodiversity
- TIP13: Local Green Spaces
- TIP14: Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation
- TIP15: Highland Nursery
- TIP16: Elms Farm

Assessment methodology

8.4 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) as a methodological framework.

8.5 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g. in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text as far as possible (given a need for conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.

8.6 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. As part of this consideration is given to cumulative effects, i.e. effects in combination with other plans, programmes and projects.

9. Assessment of the TNP

9.1 A discussion is presented under each of the thematic headings that together comprise the core of the SEA framework (see Section 3).

Biodiversity

- 9.2 Neither of the proposed **allocations** are associated with onsite priority habitat, and it is important to note that they are relatively unconstrained in the context of some of the other site options that have been considered through the site selection process (particularly those to the west of the village) – see Sections 5. However, as discussed in Section 5, land to the north of Tiptree rises to a notable ridge associated with valued woodlands, hence there is a need to carefully consider the long term expansion of Tiptree in this direction, seeking to avoid encroaching on valued assets and also secure targeted enhancements (it is anticipated that the parish boundary will assist in this respect). The primary concentration of woodlands is to the northeast; however, the proposed scheme here (Elms Farm) would presumably leave a landscape buffer to the woodlands, and the potential for targeted habitat creation to improve functional ecological connectivity, and/or the potential for improved recreational access to the wooded landscape, can be envisaged. Moving west, Highland Nursery would be near adjacent (separated by the B1023) to a small ancient woodland patch (Perry’s Wood), but is otherwise relatively unconstrained, and it might be possible to explore the potential to make Perry’s Wood accessible (although this is a small woodland, likely with a low recreational capacity).
- 9.3 With regards to **site specific policy**, at both sites there is a requirement that: *“Development should deliver biodiversity gains, in addition to protecting existing habitats and species. Any negative impacts on biodiversity, including flora and fauna, and local wildlife must be adequately mitigated and/or offset.”* The discussion of biodiversity net gain aligns with the forthcoming national requirement under the Environment Act, with a national methodology currently under [consultation](#). It is also noted that the equivalent policy at the pre-submission stage additionally required “environmental” gains, which the Environmental Report (March 2022) questioned as being open to interpretation.
- 9.4 The Environmental Report (March 2022) also recommended: *“Focusing on biodiversity, there could be merit to setting out spatial principles, through site specific policy (e.g. akin to the spatially specific requirements that are proposed in respect of pedestrian and cycle links), to guide work on planning for net gain, in order to provide certainty in respect of what can and will be achieved. However, it is recognised that there is a need to avoid being overly prescriptive, with a view to ensuring flexibility at the subsequent planning application / DM stage.”* This recommendation has now been actioned.
- 9.5 The following **thematic policies** are of note:
- TIP02 (Good Quality Design) – requires: *“Retention of existing landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows which contribute to local landscape character and ecological diversity.”*

- TIP11 (Green Infrastructure) – is broadly supported, although there will be a need to ensure that the points on interventions that should be prioritised as part of work to deliver biodiversity net gain(s) aligns with the emerging national methodology (discussed above). The key benefit likely comes from defining key aspects of, and ‘ecosystem services’ delivered by, the local green (and blue) infrastructure network. This is important in the Tiptree context, given clear strategic growth-related risks and opportunities.
- TIP12 (Landscaping and Biodiversity) – notably requires that development schemes “*maximise opportunities to retain existing trees and hedgerows.*”
- TIP13 (Local Green Spaces) – three of the proposed LGSs have clear biodiversity value, and the others may also be associated with some.
- TIP14 (Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation) – deals with the Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) for the internationally designated wetland and coastal habitats along the Essex Coast, and aligns with the Local Plan. There is no reason to suggest that the spatial strategy gives rise to any tensions, noting that Natural England did not raise concerns with the previously submitted TNP,⁸ although Natural England may wish to comment further through the current consultation.

9.6 In **conclusion**, the spatial strategy does give rise to a degree of tension with biodiversity objectives, i.e. there is a degree of risk of it proving challenging to deliver sufficient, or suitably ambitious, biodiversity net gain in practice, but concerns are allayed by the proposed site specific and thematic policies. Broadly **neutral effects** are predicted overall.

Climate change

Adaptation / resilience

- 9.7 Flood risk is typically a primary consideration, but neither of the proposed **allocations** are significantly constrained, either in terms of fluvial or surface water flood risk, reflecting the topography and presumably also underlying geology. Focusing on surface water flood risk, the primary channel in the north of Tiptree appears to follow the B1023 (Church Road), but it is not possible to suggest that growth to the north (upstream) would lead to any notable increased risk, given the potential to deliver sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) onsite.
- 9.8 With regards to **site specific policy**, at both sites there are proposed requirements in respect of SuDS and further flood risk assessment.

Mitigation / decarbonisation

- 9.9 The primary consideration is minimising per capita greenhouse gas emissions from transport, which primarily means minimising the need to travel and supporting a modal shift away from the private car (also supporting electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure). In this respect, the proposed **allocations** to the north of Tiptree potentially gives rise to a degree of tension, first and foremost due to the proposal to deliver new strategic road infrastructure, although arguments are not clear-cut, given the transition to EVs, and because a new road will support connectivity to rail stations and potentially also improved bus services, plus reduced traffic will serve to encourage cycling.

- 9.10 Secondly, it is important to note that land to the north of Tiptree is beyond easy walking distance of the village centre; however, there are important destinations in close proximity, including the secondary school and a primary school, and this part of the village is understood to be relatively well linked to the main pedestrian routes through the village.
- 9.11 Thirdly, it is noted that the Elms Farm site (including any future Health Centre here) will be on the main Maldon-Colchester bus route.
- 9.12 Finally, with regards to the objective of minimising per capita greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment, growth at scale can give rise to opportunities, over-and-above piecemeal growth, e.g. in respect of achieving regulated operational emissions that exceed the requirements of Building Regulations, and perhaps also unregulated emissions (e.g. embodied carbon in building materials and other 'non-operational' emissions). However, even once account is taken of the future possibility of adjacent growth in Messing Parish, it is not clear that there is any particular significant opportunity.
- 9.13 With regards to **site specific policy**, the key point to note is that both site specific policies specify the pedestrian and cycle links that must be achieved.
- 9.14 The following **thematic policies** are of note:
- TIP02 (Good Quality Design) – requires: *“Properties to be designed so they incorporate appropriate infrastructure, including electric car charging points, and can be retro-fitted for new electricity and digital technology... Designs that incorporate new technology to increase energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint will be encouraged.”*
 - TIP06 (Cycling, Walking and Disability Access Routes) – is of considerable importance, setting out a range of requirements, including the following, which is particularly supported on account of its spatial specificity:
“... all new developments should ensure safe pedestrian access to link up, where possible, with existing footways. This is particularly important where these footways directly serve the main pedestrian routes shown on the Policies Map.”
 - TIP13 (Local Green Spaces) – seeks to protect important green spaces that provide recreational space within walking distance of the community, thereby potentially avoiding a need to drive to locations further afield.

Conclusion

- 9.15 In **conclusion**, whilst there is a need to question the decision to direct growth so as to enable delivery of a new strategic road link, broadly neutral effects are predicted on balance, including mindful of the proposed site specific and area wide thematic policies. It is noted that there is no clear commitment in the [Colchester Climate Strategy](#) to achieve net zero locally ahead of 2050 (the national net zero target date), in contrast with many other authorities nationally.

Communities

9.16 The proposed **allocations** give rise to a range of considerations, including those introduced in Section 5, above. Firstly, there is a need to deliver new housing in order to meet locally arising needs, including affordable housing. In this respect, there is support for the proposed approach, given that there is a shared land ownership interest across the two sites (plus a second land owner, that is working closely with the first), leading to economies of scale / a level of development viability that should help to ensure timely delivery and ensure that policy expectations in respect of affordable housing delivery are achieved in practice. The effect of the two proposed allocations, in combination with the recently permitted Marden Homes site (discussed in Section 5), will be to deliver a total quantum of homes over-and-above the requirement set out in the local plan, but there are ‘communities’ arguments for boosting housing supply, recognising that setting housing requirements is not an exact science, and it is established good practice to provide for a ‘supply buffer’ over-and-above requirements. Another related consideration is the potential to unlock further growth in the medium to longer term, namely ‘infilling’ and further growth to the north of Tiptree, between the two sites, in Messing Parish.

9.17 Other than meeting housing needs, the next most significant consideration is delivering new community infrastructure. In this respect there is support for the two proposed allocations, as the land owners have confirmed the potential to make land available for community and green infrastructure, likely to include a new health facility, potentially in the form of a new health and community hub.

9.18 With regards to **site specific policy**, these set out a range of requirements, most notably in respect of the required land that must be made available for, and financial contributes that should be made towards delivery of, community and green infrastructure.

9.19 The following **thematic policies** are of *particular* note:

- TIP02 (Good Quality Design) – sets out a number of important requirements, for example the following is particularly supported from a perspective of supporting health and wellbeing: *“In order to ensure a high quality and well managed streetscape, developments must ensure that sufficient external amenity space is provided, as well as space for refuse and recycling storage and car and bicycle parking (including on-street parking).”*
- TIP04 (Building for a Healthy Life) – encourages meeting the Building for a Healthy Life standards.
- TIP05 (First Homes) – sets out a requirement for a specific type of affordable housing, namely First Homes, which is a specific type of discounted market housing. This would be at the expense of other affordable housing tenures, including social and affordable rented housing, but is understood to be supported by the available evidence.
- TIP06 (Cycling, Walking and Disability Access Routes) – presents important points regarding access for those with limited mobility.
- TIP10 (Provision of Community Infrastructure) – has been notably bolstered since the pre-submission stage, with clear requirements set out for the two proposed allocations, as well as setting out wider priority areas for community infrastructure ‘planning gain’.

- TIP13 (Local Green Spaces) – is a new policy, since the pre-submission stage, and is strongly supported from a ‘communities’ perspective. In particular, there is support for the proposed LGS to the west of the village, recognising the long term aspiration to deliver strategic green and blue infrastructure in this area, as a major recreational resource for the village.
- 9.20 TIP08 (Tiptree Village Centre) is also of note, as a spatially specific policy setting out development management policy to guide any future windfall planning applications. It presents support for retail, services/facilities, office space and also older persons accommodation.
- 9.21 In **conclusion**, it is possible to predict **significant positive effects**, particularly given the proposal to meet housing needs in full and also deliver new community infrastructure alongside housing, but also taking into account proactive development management policy.

Economy

- 9.22 The proposed **allocation** at Highland Nursery is expected to involve land being made available for employment, which is strongly supported. It seems likely that this location is also suitable for employment, from a perspective of wishing to support something of an employment ‘hub’ at the northwest extent of Tiptree, with the adopted Local Plan Policies map identifying adjacent land as a Local Economic Area with the potential for expansion.
- 9.23 With regards to **site specific policy**, the policy for Highland Nursery requires: *“A minimum of 1.1 hectares of land for a commercial area that provides commercial workspace (a mix of serviced land and units and unserviced land) that meets the requirements of Policy TIP09.”*
- 9.24 Also, at Elms Farm, the combined medical centre and health & well-being hub will make a contribution to the economy. This point comes through in TIP10 as well as TIP16.
- 9.25 The key **thematic policy** of note is TIP09 (Small-scale Commercial Workspaces) which sets out three broad locations where there is support for *“small-scale offices/workspaces on flexible terms that would encourage the creation and growth of start-up and micro-businesses...”*
- 9.26 In **conclusion**, in light of the proposal to deliver new employment land alongside housing it is fair to predict minor or moderate **positive effects**.

Historic environment

- 9.27 With regards to the proposed **allocations**, the first point to note is that there is a notable cluster of four listed buildings at the northeast extent of the village, associated with Elms Farm and the crossroads of the Messing and Colchester roads, with the pre-WW1 OS map showing a cluster of housing in this area, complete with two public houses. There will be good potential to avoid impacts to the setting of these assets at the development management stage, through development layout and design measures, but there is nonetheless a degree of concern. One such concern relates to views of the listed buildings on the approach to Tiptree from the northeast, along the Messing Road, as the buildings appear to be quite visible in an expansive agricultural setting.

- 9.28 The other potential historic environment concern is more general, and relates to the northern expansion of Tiptree uphill onto the aforementioned ridge of raised land that is associated not only with a high density of woodlands but also two historic settlements – namely Messing (with a designated conservation area) and Inworth (with a notable density of listed buildings including a grade 1 listed church) - and the historic parkland landscape (albeit not nationally designated) of Messing Park, complete with a grade 2* listed house dating from the early 18th Century. There is no reason to suggest any risk of impacts to the setting of these assets, but it will be important to ensure that expansion of the village is well contained within the landscape, with a long term perspective.
- 9.29 Finally, there is a need to consider traffic flows through Inworth (which, to reiterate, does not have designated conservation area but does have clear historic environment value). Matters are discussed further below, under ‘transport’; however, in summary, there is an aspiration to direct A12 southbound traffic away from the B1023, which passes through Inworth, but the potential to realise this aspiration is not clear, given the National Highways proposal to upgrade Junction 24 of the A12, namely the A12 / B1023 junction. As such, there is a need to consider the potential for growth to the north of Tiptree to result in increased traffic through Inworth. However, any increase in traffic could well be insignificant in the context of potential increases in traffic between an upgraded Junction 24 and settlements to the east of Tiptree.
- 9.30 With regards to **site specific policy**, both policies set out a need for a Heritage Assessment to be completed, particularly mindful of the grade 2 listed buildings that exist. There could be merit to confirming the ability to deliver open space / green infrastructure in the vicinity of the listed buildings, if it transpires that this is necessary in order to preserve their setting and significance.
- 9.31 The key **thematic policy** of note is TIP02 (Good Quality Design) which sets out a requirement around *“responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the existing built environment.”*
- 9.32 Also of note is TIP12(a), which requires: *“New developments must ensure that they minimise the visual and physical impact on the environment, maximise opportunities to retain existing trees and hedgerows....”*
- 9.33 In **conclusion**, there are certain historic environment sensitivities associated with the proposed allocations, and the potential for further development management policy might be envisaged to ensure that the sites can be delivered in such a way that ensures that impacts are avoided or sufficiently mitigated. However, it is important to note that Historic England did not raise objections to the previously submitted TNP, stating (Regulation 16 stage): *“... I can confirm that Historic England has no further comments to make at this time.”* In this light, broadly **neutral effects** are predicted.

Landscape

9.34 Beginning with the proposed **allocations**, as has been discussed, it will be important to ensure that any expansion of Tiptree to the north, involving Highland Nursery, Elms Farm and/or the intervening land in Messing Parish, is well contained in the landscape, with a long term perspective, avoiding any risk of breaking over the ridge line and/or 'sprawl' along the B1023 towards Inworth. The potential to achieve long term containment is not helped by relatively limited ability to draw upon existing field boundaries, or other landscape features, but it should be possible through careful masterplanning, landscaping, green infrastructure planning etc. Also, the parish boundary will assist in this respect (long term containment). A further clear consideration, with regards to expansion of the village directly to the north, is the public footpath that passes through the centre of this area, seemingly following the route of a historic track and field boundary, and passing via a high point in the landscape.

9.35 The key **thematic policy** of note is TIP02 (Good Quality Design) which sets out a requirements around *“responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the existing built environment.”* One particular criterion of note is:

“Development must minimise the visual impact of built development on existing green infrastructure networks such as footpaths, cycle paths, bridleways and leafy lanes.”

9.36 Another key policy is TIP12 (Landscaping and Biodiversity) which, amongst other things, sets out criteria for developments *“in or adjacent to the settlement boundary that face open countryside”*.

9.37 In **conclusion**, there are landscape sensitivities associated with the proposed allocations, and the potential for further work – e.g. preparation of a concept masterplan - might be envisaged to ensure that the sites can be delivered in such a way that ensures that impacts are avoided or sufficiently mitigated. However, on the other hand, it is recognised that there is merit to ensuring flexibility at the plan-making stage, in the knowledge that further work can be undertaken ahead of submitting a planning application. In this light, broadly **neutral effects** are predicted.

Land, soil and water resources

9.38 The key consideration here is the proposed **allocations** leading to loss of productive agricultural land, particularly that which is likely to be of best and most versatile (BMV) quality, with there not thought to be any major issues or sensitivities in respect of 'water' related objectives, nor minerals.

9.39 The nationally available low resolution dataset appears to show Tiptree strongly associated with an area of better quality - 'grade 2' - agricultural land (which is BMV), within a wider landscape, associated with extensive 'grade 3' quality land (which may or may not be BMV), and no land around the village is known to have been surveyed in detail. It is also apparent that the land is farmed relatively intensively, with several historic hedgerows (shown on the pre-WW1 OS map) having been removed in support of arable production.

9.40 In **conclusion**, the neighbourhood plan will give rise to the loss of BMV agricultural land, hence there is a need to flag a risk of **negative effects**. It is not entirely clear how much land will be lost, or taken out of productive use for arable, as a result of the development, but it could be in excess of 20 ha.⁹ However, it is recognised that the loss of BMV land is likely unavoidable, given the parameters within which the TNP must be prepared.

Transport

9.41 A key objective for the TNP is to avoid worsening traffic, and potentially address existing traffic issues, in known hotspot locations. In this light, there is broad support for growth to the north of the village (in the direction of the A12 and Colchester), plus there is an identified opportunity for growth here to deliver or facilitate delivery of a new strategic link road across the north of the village, in line with the local plan, as has been discussed. In this light, there is a clear transport argument in support of a coordinated scheme to the north of the village, albeit the strategic role of the new link road is potentially fairly limited, in terms of addressing the fundamental traffic challenges faced by the village. Also, there is a need to bear in mind uncertainties around traffic flows following A12 upgrades.

9.42 With regards to **site specific policy**, both policies set out a need to deliver their respective section of the link road, and also set out clear requirements in respect of walking and cycling links, as has been discussed above.

9.43 The following **thematic policies** are of *particular* note:

- TIP02 (Good Quality Design) – sets out a need to: *“Ensure safe access to routes for pedestrians, cyclists and road users, particularly towards the village centre, local schools and other amenities.”*
- TIP03 (Residential car parking) – sets out notable local guidance to supplement that which is available from the county and borough councils, dealing with support for car ports, drives and parking courts ahead of garages (which can tend to be used for uses other than parking) and support for on-street parking in lay-bys.
- TIP06 (Cycling, Walking and Disability Access Routes) – sets out a range of important requirements, for example: *“Proposals to enhance the quality and safety of the identified main pedestrian routes will be strongly supported. In particular this includes widening, surfacing, appropriate lighting and vegetation management.”*
- TIP07 (Mitigating the impact of vehicular traffic through the village) – is also a key policy. Amongst other things, it highlights that traffic through the centre of the village is a key issue, deals with access arrangements for the two proposed allocations and sets out detailed policy for a new strategic link road, including:

“The new link road will reflect the rural character of this edge-of-settlement location and will meet the necessary specifications as set out in the Essex Design Guide (2018), in particular ensuring it is sufficient to support a bus route and forecast levels of non-residential traffic.”

9.44 In **conclusion**, the TNP should lead to **positive effects**, given support for a new strategic road link across the north of the village, between the B1022

⁹ 20 ha is discussed by guidance (gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-development-proposals-on-agricultural-land) although the guidance does not discuss plan-making.

(Colchester Road) and B1023 (Kelvedon Road), and also taking account of the proposed framework of thematic and site specific policy.

Conclusions

9.45 The assessment predicts significant positive effects in terms of **communities** objectives, given that the proposed allocations will act together deliver significant 'planning gain', and more modest positive effects are also predicted in respect of **transport** and **employment** objectives, including as the proposed allocations will support the first phases of a new strategic link road, and enable delivery of a 1.1 ha new commercial area. No significant negative effects are predicted, although there are potentially significant tensions with objectives relating to protection of best and most versatile **agricultural land**, and also certain tensions with biodiversity, decarbonisation, heritage and landscape objectives. The assessment has not led to any firm recommendations, but it is noted that a number of areas for potential further work identified at the previous 'pre-submission' stage (March 2022) have now been actioned. Also, the plan has been strengthened, since the pre-submission stage, with the addition of two new thematic policies.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

10. Next steps

Plan finalisation

- 10.1 This Environmental Report Update is published for consultation alongside the submitted TNP, in order to inform the consultation and subsequent examination.
- 10.2 It will be for an Independent Examiner to consider consultation responses received through the consultation, as part of an examination process focused on testing whether the TNP meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans, and confirming that it is in general conformity with the local plan.
- 10.3 If the independent examination is favourable, the TNP will be subject to a referendum. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the TNP, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the TNP will become part of the Development Plan for Colchester Borough.

Monitoring

- 10.4 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report.
- 10.5 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the TNP will be undertaken by Colchester Borough Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The latest AMR is available at: www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=authority-monitoring-reports&id=KA-02232.
- 10.6 The SEA has not identified any potential for significant negative effects that would require closer monitoring, led by the Parish Council.

Appendices

Appendix I: Meeting the Regulations

As discussed in Chapter 1 above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. Table AI.1 links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst Table AI.2 explains this interpretation. Table AI.3 identifies how and where within this report the requirements have/ will be met.

Table AI.1: Questions answered by this report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

		Questions answered	As per regulations, the report must include...
Introduction		What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes
	What's the SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
		What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan ▪ The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be affected ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
		What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment
Part 1	What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach) ▪ The likely significant effects associated with alternatives ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan 	
Part 2	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan ▪ The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan 	
Part 3	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A description of the monitoring measures envisaged 	

Table AI.2: Interpretation of the regulations

<u>Schedule 2</u>	<u>Interpretation of Schedule 2</u>	
<i>The report must include...</i>	<i>The report must include...</i>	
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.	
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan	
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]

Table AI.3: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements are met

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
A) The Environmental Report must present certain information	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 (‘What is the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report, which is available on the Parish Council’s website. The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’).
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	Chapter 6 presents alternatives assessment findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area). Chapters 9 presents an assessment of the draft plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g. timescale.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions with environmental and wider sustainability objectives, which might potentially be actioned when finalising the plan. The Environmental Report (March 2022) made a small number of minor recommendations.
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Chapters 4 and 5 deal with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options ('scenarios'). Also, Chapter 7 explains the Steering Group's reasons for selecting the preferred option (in-light of alternatives).
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this report.
B) The Report must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan	
Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)	At the current time, this report is published for consultation alongside the 'submission' version of the TNP in order to inform the consultation.
C) The report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan	
The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.	This report, and consultation responses received, will be taken into account when finalising the plan.