

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

March 2022

Quality information

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Revision History

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|----------|----------|-------------|--------------------|--|
| 1 | Feb 22 | Draft | Jonathan Greenwood | Chairman of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group |
| 2 | March 22 | Final draft | As above | |

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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

This is the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the Environmental Report for the TNP, in which the three questions are answered in turn. Firstly, there is a need to set the scene further 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

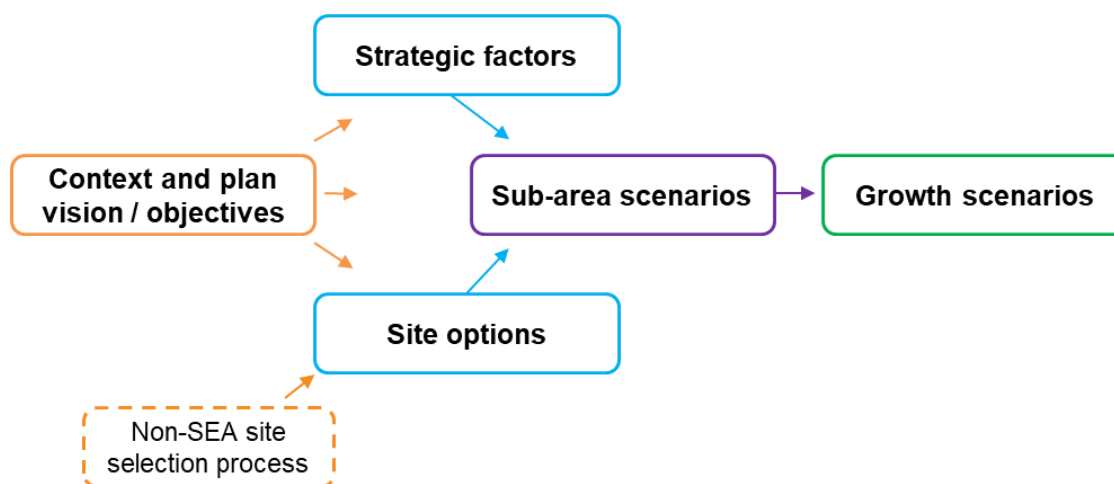
Plan making/SEA up to this point

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 is summarised in the figure below. A key step involved ‘sifting’ the site options that are available and in contention for allocation. This was done firstly at the scale of Tiptree as a whole, and then for four sub-areas.

Defining growth scenarios



Four growth scenarios were ultimately defined and subjected to assessment:

The reasonable growth scenarios

| Site cluster | Growth scenarios | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Tower End (northwest extension) | | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| Highland Nursery (north-northwest) | 200 | 200 | | 200 |
| Elms Farm (north) | 200 | | 200 | 200 |
| Total homes 2022-2033 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 600 |

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.

Table 6.1: Growth scenarios assessment findings

| Topic | Scenario 1 Highland Elms Farm 400 homes | Scenario 2 Tower End Highland 400 homes | Scenario 3 Tower End Elms Farm 400 homes | Scenario 4 Tower End Highland Elms Farm 600 homes |
|-------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Biodiversity | = | = | = | = |
| Climate change | = | = | = | = |
| Communities | ★1 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Economy | ★1 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Heritage | 3 | ★1 | 3 | 2 |
| Landscape | 2 | ★1 | ★1 | 2 |
| Land, soil, water | 2 | ★1 | ★1 | 3 |
| Transport | 2 | 3 | 3 | ★1 |

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), albeit Scenario 1 also has certain drawbacks relative to Scenarios 2, 3 and 4. Another headline finding is that Scenario 3 performs relatively poorly in terms of most objectives, which is a strong indication that it performs relatively poorly overall (and is arguably even 'unreasonable').

Please see Section 6 of this report for a commentary on the performance of the four alternatives in respect of each of the eight topics, both in absolute and relative terms.

The Parish Council responded to the growth scenarios assessment is as follows:

“Scenario 1 is preferred in light of the assessment, which is considered to align well with the findings of our site selection process, as set out in the Site Selection Topic Paper. Scenario 1 is considered to align strongly with the established neighbourhood plan objectives, and it is noted that the assessment presented above does not highlight any ‘significant negative effects’ in respect of the SEA objectives. Having said this, we recognise that Scenario 1 gives rise to certain tensions with environmental and wider sustainability objectives, and that there are potentially certain draw-backs relative to alternatives. The assessment serves to highlight a particular tension in respect of loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, which unfortunately is largely unavoidable, but other issues/tensions, including in respect of heritage and landscape objectives, can and will be addressed through stringent development management policy, developed in collaboration with the land-owners (to ensure that policy requirements are achievable). Briefly, taking the non-preferred scenarios in turn: Scenarios 2 and 3 are not supported primarily because the opportunity to deliver a new strategic link road across the north of the village, in line with the emerging Local Plan proposal/requirement, would not be realised; whilst Scenario 4 is not supported because it would involve support for too many homes in the plan period.”

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** and **transport** objectives, given that the proposed allocations will act together deliver significant ‘planning gain’ in these respects, and more modest positive effects are also predicted in respect of **employment** objectives, as the proposed allocations will 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.

Next steps

This Environmental Report is published alongside the pre-submission version of the TNP. Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, when finalising the plan for submission.

The ‘submission’ version of the plan will then be submitted to Colchester Borough Council. The plan and supporting evidence will be then published for further consultation, and then submitted for examination.

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 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.¹

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 "identifies, describes and evaluates" the likely significant effects of implementing "the plan, and reasonable alternatives".² 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

- 1.7 This report is the Environmental Report for the TNP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.8 This report answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn, to provide the required information.³ Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.9 Before answering Q1, two further introductory sections are presented.

¹ 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).

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

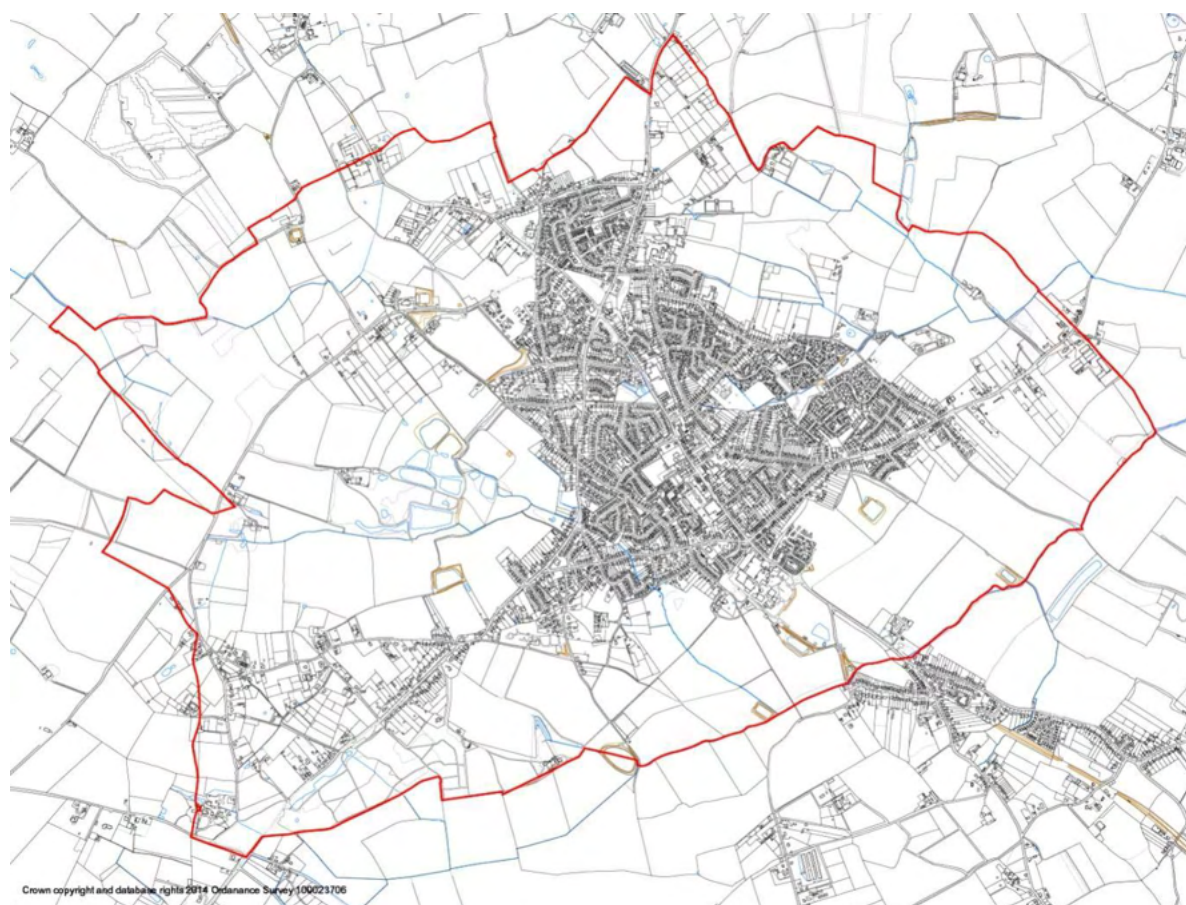
³ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the report structure including its regulatory basis.

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 emerging Colchester Local Plan Section 2 (LPS2), which is currently at an advanced stage of preparation. However, there is also a need to be mindful of adopted elements of the Local Plan, as explained at: www.colchester.gov.uk/local-plan.
- 2.4 The LPS2 was submitted in 2020 and then examination hearings were held in April 2021, followed by a consultation on 'Main Modifications' in late 2021. It is the Main Modifications version that now provides primary context.
- 2.5 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).

2.6 Policy SS14 of the LPP2 deals specifically with Tiptree, explaining:

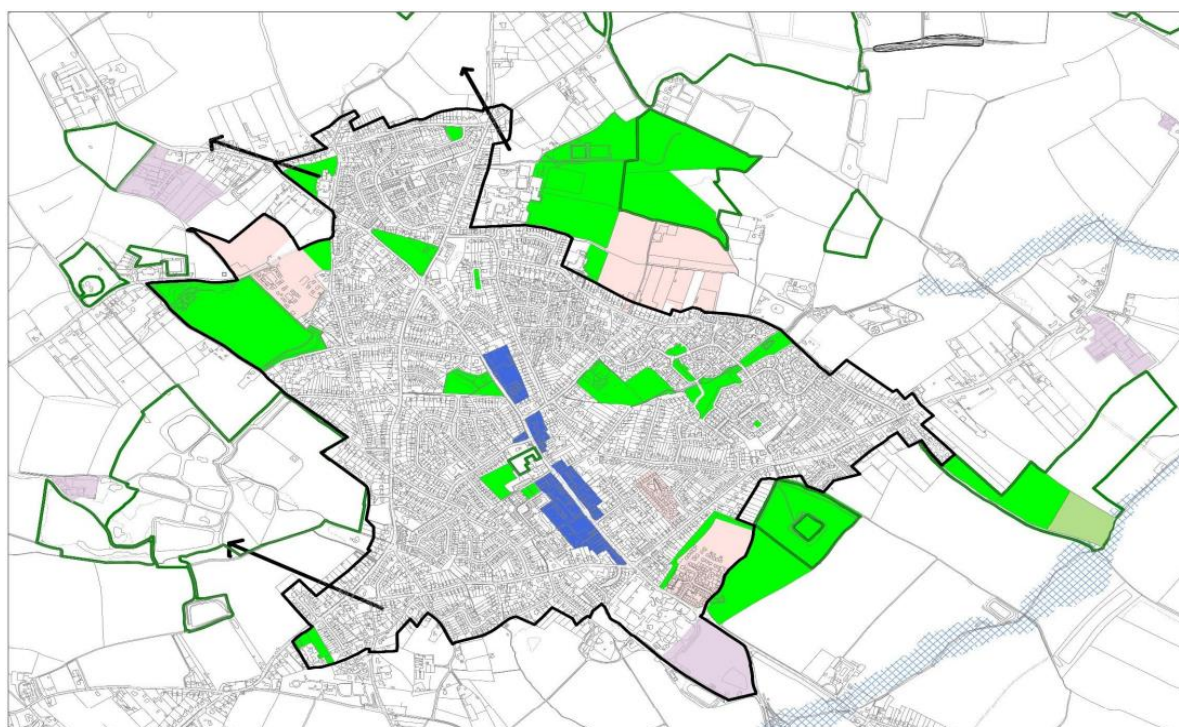
Within the preferred directions of growth shown on the Tiptree policies map... subject to existing constraints, the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan will:

- 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.

2.7 An important point to note is that Main Modifications version of the LPS2 introduced two key changes, relative to the submission version. Firstly, the housing requirement was reduced from 600 to 400, to reflect a new committed site, specifically a site to the east ('Barbrook Lane') which gained permission in 2020 for 200 homes, following a [recovered appeal](#). Secondly, there is now explicit support for delivering the first phases of a new link road between the B1022 and B1023 (Tiptree's two main roads) to the north of the village.

2.8 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), LWSs (dark green outline) and committed housing / mixed use sites (beige).

Figure 2.2: The emerging Local Plan Policies Map for Tiptree



TNP vision and objectives

2.9 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

2.10 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

2.11 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

2.12 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 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.
- 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 are welcomed at the current time.

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 The current plan consultation document presents a timeline of events, going back to 2013. Importantly, a version of the plan was formally published for consultation twice in 2019 and 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.⁴
- 4.2 This is important context; however, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date. Rather, the aim is to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise **reasonable alternatives** in early 2022.
- 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**'.

Why focus on growth scenarios?

- 4.4 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives ('scenarios') in relation to the matter of housing growth in light of the Plan objectives (see para 2.12), and because there is the likelihood of being able to differentiate between the merits of alternatives/scenarios in respect of 'significant effects'. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

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.

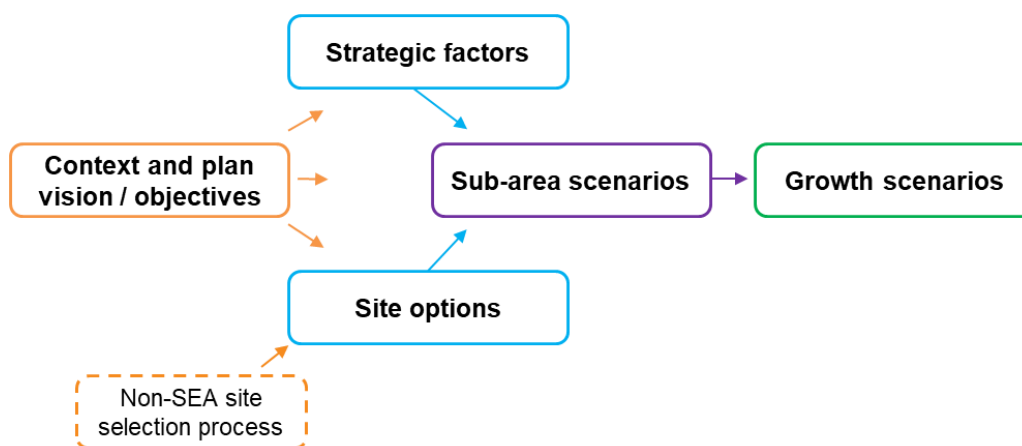
⁴ See <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=neighbourhood-planning&id=KA-03325>

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 5.1.⁵

Figure 5.1: Defining growth scenarios



Structure of this section

5.2 This section is structured so as to:

- 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**.

Strategic issues and options

5.3 This section explores:

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

The Local Plan

5.4 The context provided by the emerging 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.

5.5 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 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.

- 5.6 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 the delivery of infrastructure/community facilities, including with a view to confirming provision of the first phases of a road between the B1022 and B1023.

Local-level factors

- 5.7 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. Furthermore, there is a concern that the situation could worsen if Junction 24 of the A12 is moved and upgraded, to become a four-ways junction, as part of National Highways’ committed [A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme](#).

As such, the Parish Council is focused on growth scenarios that would deliver, enable or facilitate road infrastructure upgrades to relieve traffic pressure on ‘hot spot’ locations, most notably the stretch of the B1023 that passes through the village centre, known as Church Road. 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 serve to effectively bypass the village. As well as addressing traffic concerns, new road infrastructure could support 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 there is now a desire to focus on this matter with a view to securing local support for the plan. 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 short, there can be merit in larger schemes, as opposed to more piecemeal growth.
- **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

5.8 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 provide for 400 homes, which in practice could mean that it is appropriate to allocate land for more than 400 to ensure 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 emerging 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 land to the east, it is difficult to see the potential to deliver on relief road objectives, given Barbrook Lane and woodlands, plus Barbrook Lane amounts to a significant expansion for this part of the village, much of which is associated with minor residential roads.
 - 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 5.7, and with an eye on the long term / next plan.

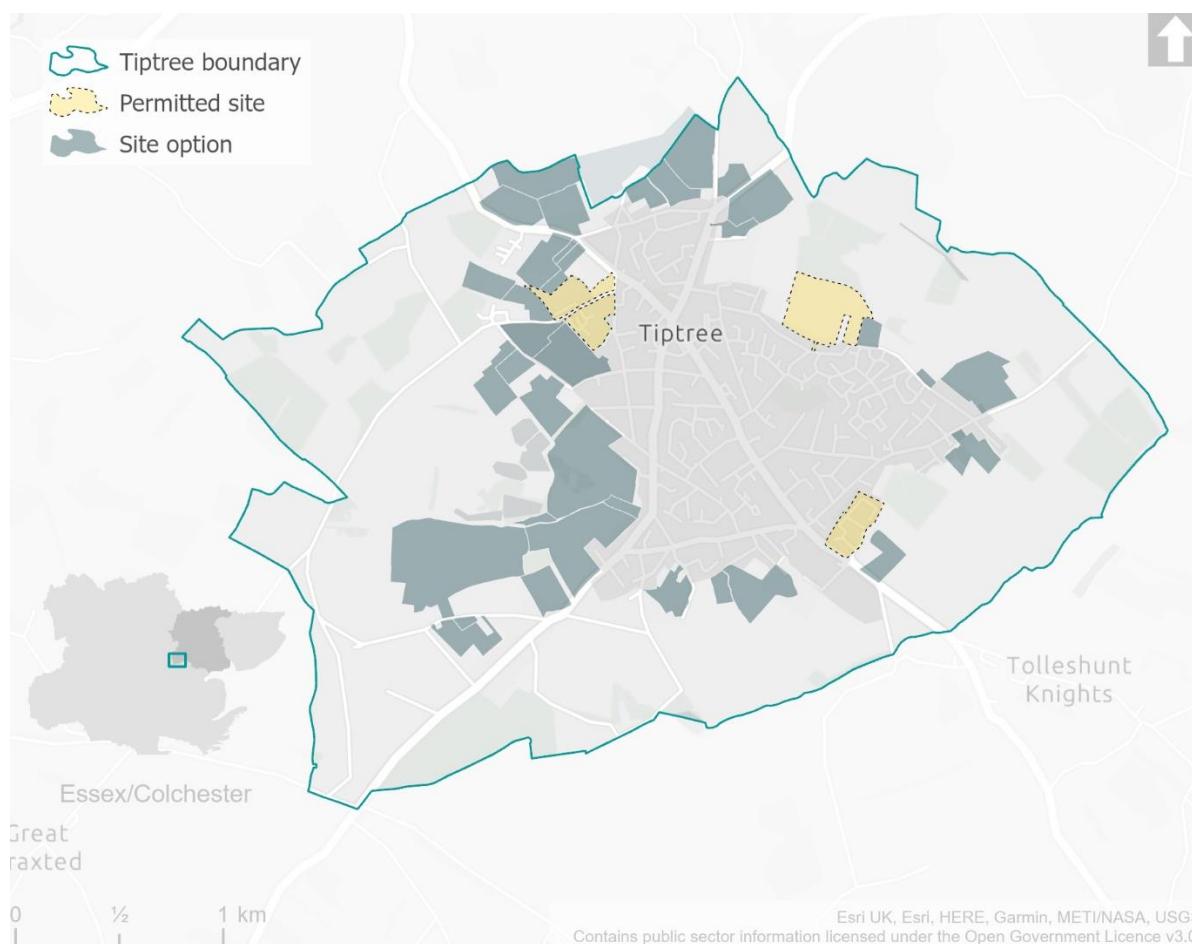
Site options

5.9 Having considered strategic / top down factors with a bearing on defining growth scenarios, the next step involved exploring the site options in contention for allocation. Site options are the ‘building blocks’ for growth scenarios.⁶

5.10 Work to identify and assess site options has been led by the Steering Group. Specifically, the current Site Selection Topic Paper 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 Site Selection Topic Paper reporting the total combined score for each of the shortlisted sites (where a higher score indicates stronger performance).

5.11 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



⁶ 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

5.12 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

5.13 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.

5.14 There is clear strategic support for a focus of growth here in light of the emerging Local Plan (see para 5.6, above).

5.15 Also, it is important to note that the version of the TNP submitted in 2020 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 then raised concerns with the strategy, such that the plan could not proceed to referendum, but certain concerns have now been allayed, most notably by support within the emerging Local Plan for the B1022 - B1023 link road. There is now less call for the full 600 homes, because the latest version of the emerging Local Plan sets a reduced target of 400, 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.

5.16 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



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

| Sites / clusters | Comments | Progress? |
|--|--|-----------|
| Sites 8, 15, 16, 48 & 70 “Tower End” | Formed part of the previous strategy . Could potentially deliver a strategic road link. | Yes |
| Site 71 | Formed part of the previous strategy. Less well-related to the settlement, but potentially necessary to secure the link road, and might primarily deliver open/green space. | Yes |
| The remaining parcel of land between Kelvedon Road and Grove Road (other than the site under construction) comprises a traveller site. | | No |
| Sites 49 & 51 “Highland Nursery (HN)” | Formed part of the previous strategy. Could deliver a strategic road link and enable delivery of a new commercial area. | Yes |
| Sites 35, 44 & 68 “South of HN” | Formed part of the proposed strategy in 2020, but subject to availability issues. | No |
| Site 17 | Well related to the settlement edge, but in different land ownership to land to the north (Highland Nursery and Elms Farm) and not considered to be a site with the potential to deliver a section of strategic road link. Also no current road access, and seemingly used informally for dog walking etc. | No |
| Sites 4 & 50 “Elms Farm” | Formed part of the previous strategy. Could deliver 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 |
| Sites 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. | No |

5.17 In conclusion, there are three site combinations that warrant further consideration through the appraisal of reasonable growth scenarios:

- **Tower End** – on balance it is appropriate to assume allocation of Site 71, as it could well prove necessary to secure the road link. The assumption is that housing would only be delivered on a small proportion of Site 71, although this assumption leads to a degree of uncertainty in respect of availability. **200 homes** is assumed, but it could be fewer (e.g. 175, as per the previous version of the TNP) subject to further consideration of Site 71.

It is important to note that part of this site (Sites 8 and 16) is the subject of a refused planning application for 130 homes (ref. [190647](#)), which is now being appealed. The scheme could hinder delivery of the strategic road link.

- **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, but these sites could come forward as windfall in due course, as they would be within a revised settlement boundary. It would not be appropriate to delay the plan on their account.

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

With regards to Site 17, 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. The land is in different land ownership to the wider Elms Farm site, and has recently been the subject of a change of ownership (discussions were held with a representative of the previous owners in 2018). In practice, were Elms Farm to come forward, then Site 17 could well be considered as a potential location for growth in the near future, as part of work to complete the northern expansion of Tiptree and complete the link road, to include development outside of the Parish (i.e. development of the land in between Highland Nursery and Elms Farm, which is within Messing Parish).

It is not clear that there would be any significant benefit to exploring the potential to bring the land forward at the current time, alongside Elms Farm. Whilst the possibility of a southern route for the strategic link road might be envisaged, that passes through this site and therefore serves to limit the need for northern expansion of Tiptree, this option is constrained on account of the availability issues with Sites 35, 44 and 68, to the west. Furthermore, fewer homes within the Elms Farm site, to the north of Site 17, would likely lead to less land being made available for non-housing uses across the wider land holding being promoted by Mersea Homes, i.e. delivery of the commercial area, community infrastructure and/or green infrastructure, as discussed above, would be called into question.

- 5.18 These three broad sites could potentially come forward in any combination.
- 5.19 Delivery of two sites in combination would deliver a total quantum of homes in line with the target set out in the emerging Local Plan (400 homes). However, there is also considered to be merit in testing the option of delivering all three sites in combination, for a total of circa 600 homes.
- 5.20 With regards to scenarios that would involve just one of either Highland Nursery or Elms Farm, there is an argument to suggest that any such scenario is 'unreasonable', given the direction set out in the Local Plan in respect of the strategic road link, and also given likely implications for the land-owner's willingness to make land available for non-housing uses. However, on balance, it is considered reasonable and appropriate to explore these scenarios further.

East

- 5.21 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.
- 5.22 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.
- 5.23 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

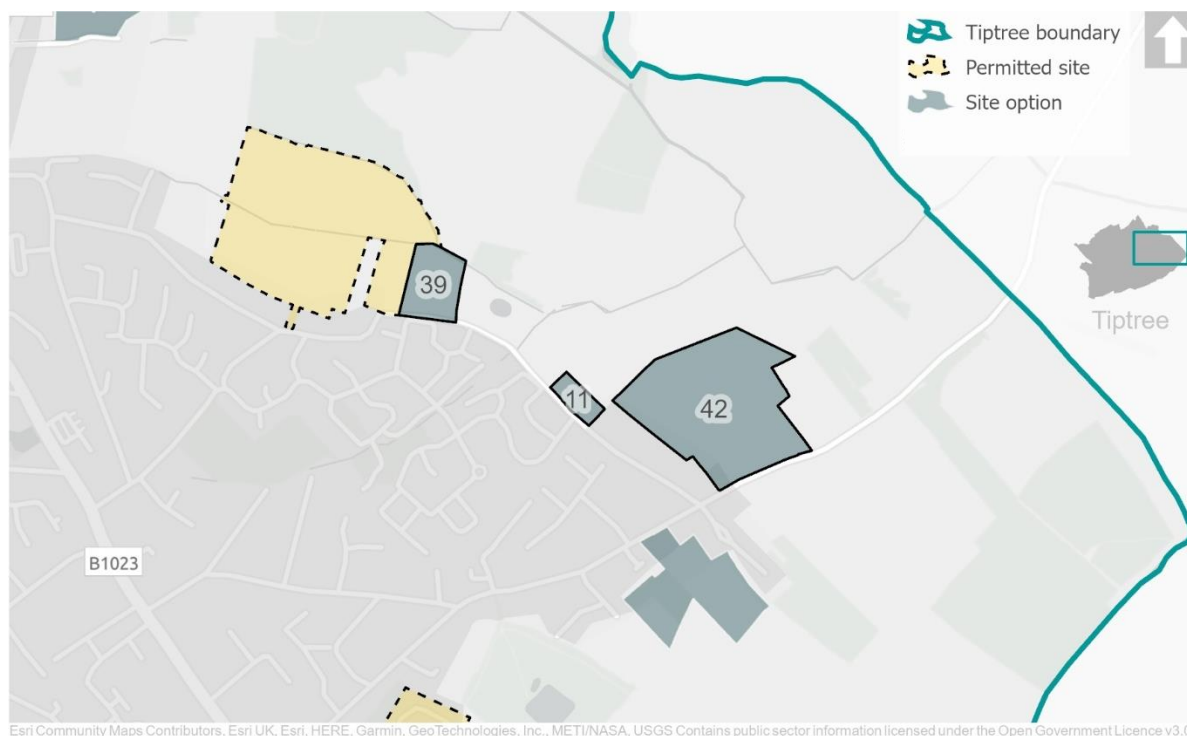


Table 5.2: Shortlisted site options in the east

| 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. | No |

| Sites | Comments | Progress? |
|---------|---|-----------|
| 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 |

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

South

5.25 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.

5.26 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

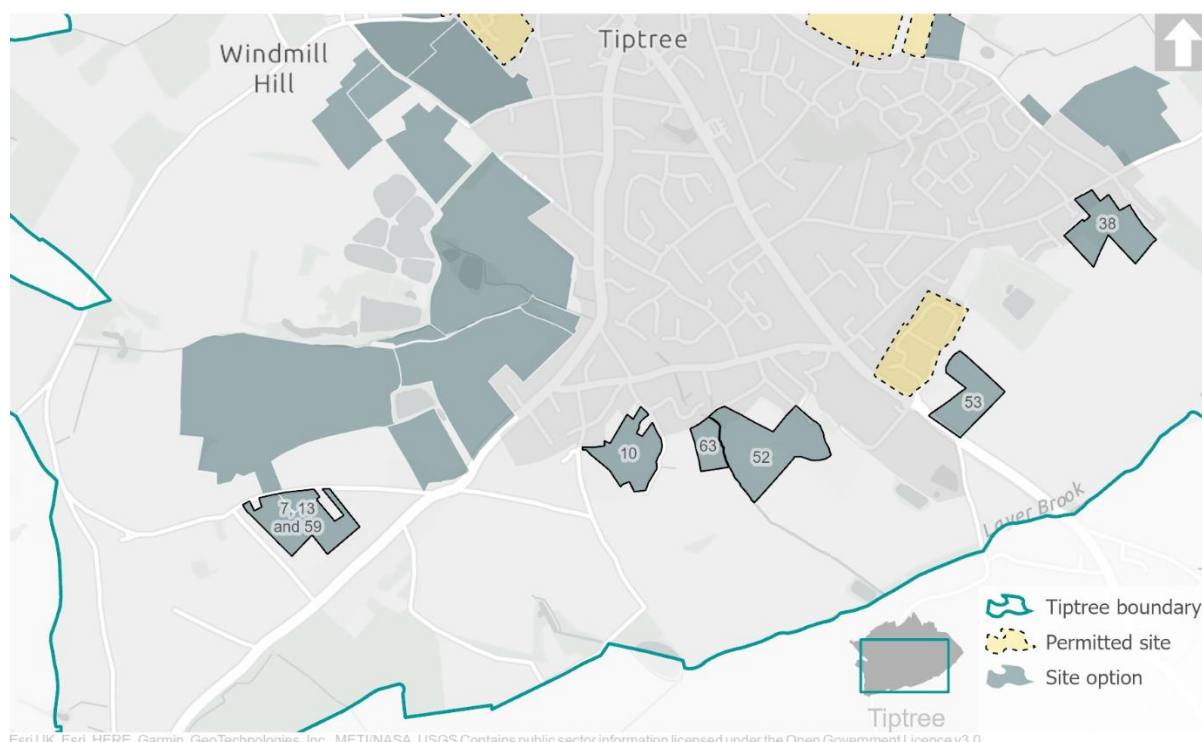


Table 5.3: Shortlisted site options in the South

| 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 |
| 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 Toleshunt 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. | No |
| Sites, 7, 13 & 59 | Perform poorly on account of being associated with Tiptree Heath, which performs poorly as a potential growth location. | No |

5.27 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

5.28 As discussed, there are strategic arguments for giving close consideration to the option of growth to the west of Tiptree.

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

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

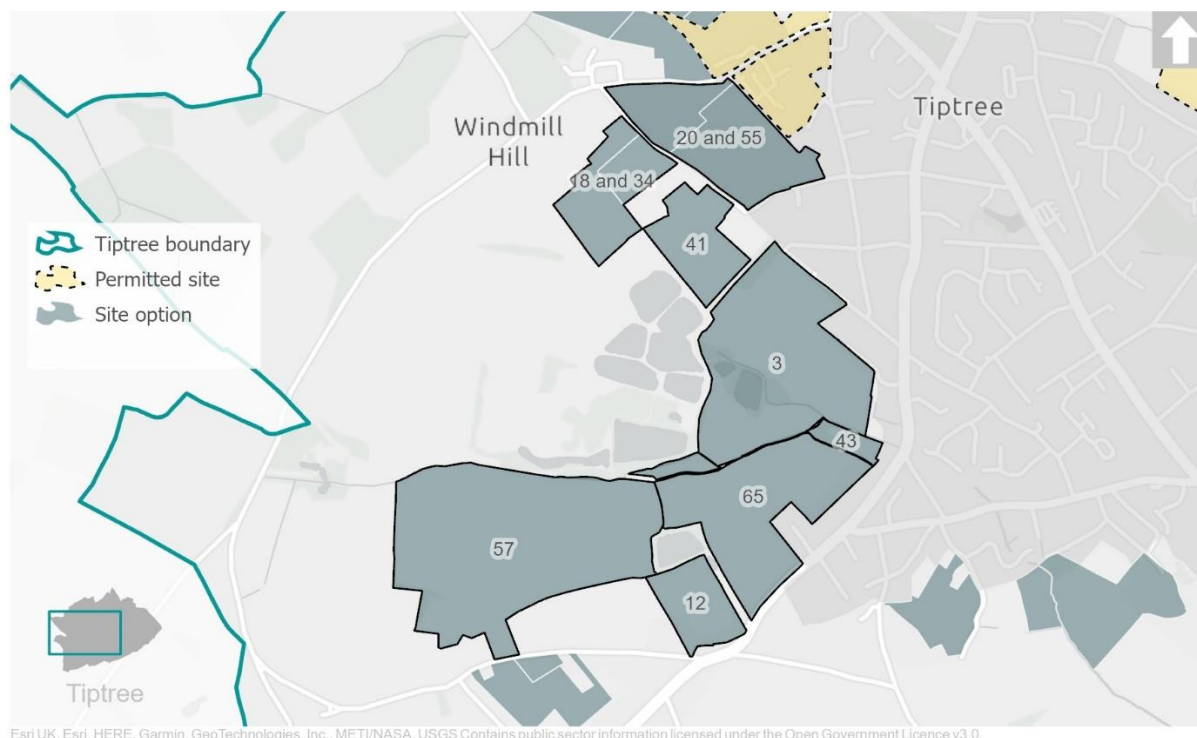


Table 5.5: Shortlisted site options in the West

| 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, and (accordingly) the emerging Local Plan Policies Map indicates that this is a potential direction of growth. An application for a 255 home scheme (plus other uses onsite) was refused at appeal in 2020 (ref. 192025) for reasons including “ <i>coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath.</i> ” Other potential concerns include traffic, including noting the adjacent primary school (the previous scheme proposed school parking, but the potential for this to be effective is not entirely clear). In summary, there are a range of issues and the scheme, as previously proposed, would contribute little towards strategic objectives. There is a clear argument for considering the site in combination with other land parcels, with a view to potentially realising relief road / bypass aspirations, rather than considering a piecemeal village extension. | No |
| 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 | 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. There is currently a pending planning application for a 221 home scheme (ref. 202604); however, 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. | No |
| Site 41 | 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. | No |
| Sites 20, 55 | These sites currently comprise the Colchester United training ground, which leads to deliverability challenges. Site 20 comprises the club house, and it is understood that it could be made available as a community facility as part of a redevelopment scheme. Site 55 is adjacent to a large scheme that is still under construction, having commenced in 2016, which is a reason not to rush any consideration of further growth in this area. Were land to the north ("Tower End") to come forward and deliver a section of link/relief road, then this land would come into consideration, as the first step towards expansion to the west of Tiptree in order to deliver strategic aspirations, as discussed above. | No |
| Sites 18, 34 | Currently relate poorly to the settlement and constrained by adjacent LWS, adjacent Pennsylvania Lane and an adjacent field that has not been submitted as available for development. | No |

5.30 In conclusion, there are no reasonable growth scenarios for the west of the village that warrant being taken forward for further consideration. Site 65 performs relatively well, in the context of all site options at Tiptree, in light of the Local Plan policies maps, but would lead to coalescence with Tiptree Heath, would increase traffic issues more so than growth to the north, and would deliver relatively little in the way of planning gain, in comparison with sites to the north. Other sites perform relatively poorly at the current time, in light of the neighbourhood plan objectives and understanding of key issues/opportunities, but could potentially be revisited in the future, should there be a need for further housing, and with a view to realising strategic road infrastructure and/or accessibility/ biodiversity (potentially country park) aspirations.

The reasonable growth scenarios

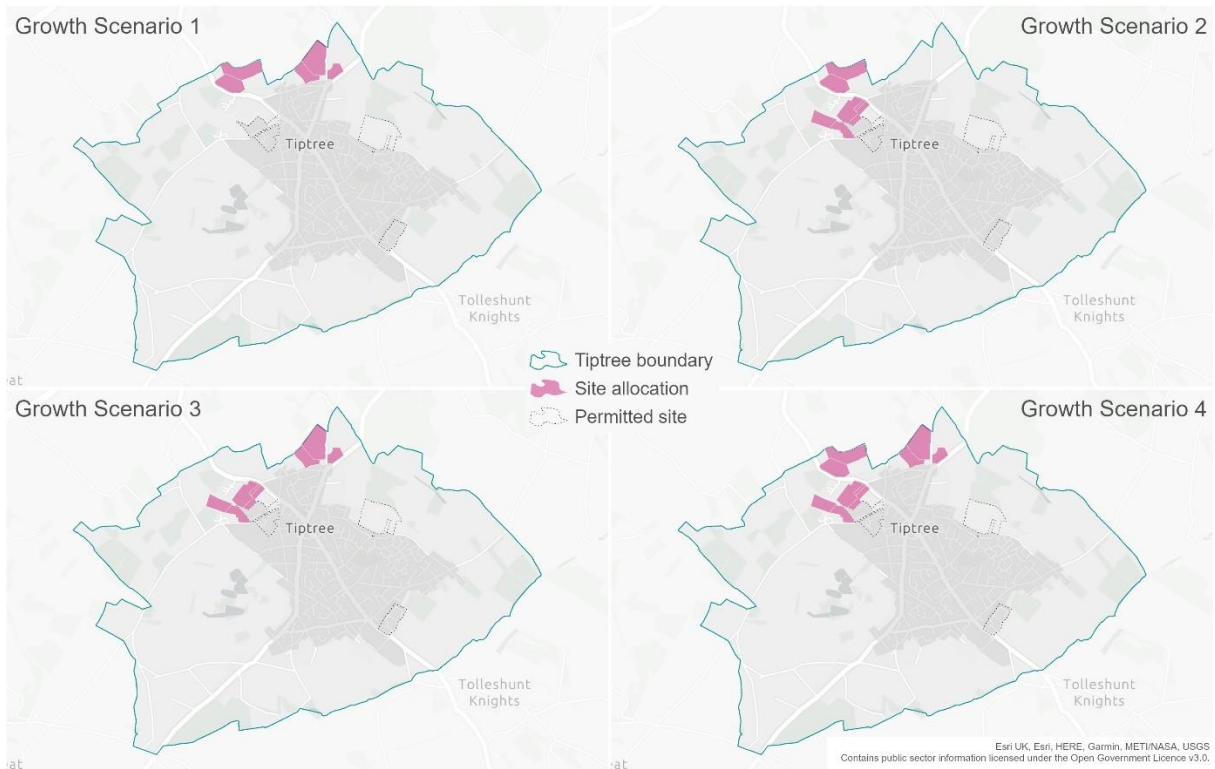
5.31 In light of the discussion above there are four reasonable growth scenarios, specifically combinations of the three shortlisted sites in the northern sub-area that would deliver in the region of 400 – 600 homes – see Table 5.5.

5.32 Many other scenarios can be envisaged, including scenarios involving Site 65 (which has support through the Local Plan) but are ruled out as unreasonable on balance, in light of the discussion presented above.

Table 5.5: 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 |
| Tower End (northwest) | | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| Total homes 2022-2033 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 600 |

Figure 5.7: The reasonable growth scenarios



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

Table 6.1: Growth scenarios assessment findings

| Topic | Scenario 1 Highland Elms Farm 400 homes | Scenario 2 Tower End Highland 400 homes | Scenario 3 Tower End Elms Farm 400 homes | Scenario 4 Tower End Highland Elms Farm 600 homes |
|-------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Biodiversity | = | = | = | = |
| Climate change | = | = | = | = |
| Communities | ★1 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Economy | ★1 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Heritage | 3 | ★1 | 3 | 2 |
| Landscape | 2 | ★1 | ★1 | 2 |
| Land, soil, water | 2 | ★1 | ★1 | 3 |
| Transport | 2 | 3 | 3 | ★1 |

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), albeit Scenario 1 also has certain drawbacks relative to Scenarios 2, 3 and 4. Another headline finding is that Scenario 3 performs relatively poorly in terms of most objectives, which is a strong indication that it performs relatively poorly overall (and is arguably even ‘unreasonable’).

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 the 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 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, Tower End potentially gives rise to reduced concern regarding the ecological functioning of the wooded ridge, but the site comprises something of a ‘patchwork’ of small fields, such that there is a relatively high density of hedgerows, most of which are visible on the pre-WW1 OS map. Also, the site relates very closely to two small woodland patches and a small Local Wildlife Site (LWS) associated with the water works. Having said this, there is a clear and potentially significant opportunity to create new habitat so as to improve functional connectivity between, and potentially even link, Perry’s Wood with Hill Wood to the south, which is not recorded as comprising ancient woodland, but is shown on the pre-WW1 OS map.

In **conclusion**, there are some notable tensions and opportunities, but overall it is not possible to differentiate between the scenarios with any confidence. It is not possible to simply highlight the higher growth scenario as giving rise to tensions with biodiversity objectives, given the potential for growth to deliver targeted enhancements to support the realisation of strategic / landscape scale objectives.

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 concerns with the previously submitted TNP,⁷ although it is recognised that Scenario 4 under consideration at the current time would involve a higher growth strategy (by circa 200 homes).

⁷ 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. A final consideration is the long term aspiration to deliver new strategic green and blue infrastructure to the west of the village, potentially in the form of a country park, which could potentially be given particular support under Scenario 4. A country park adjacent to, or integrated with, the village could serve to reduce car trips to the Essex coast, which would be supported both from a transport/decarbonisation and a biodiversity perspective.

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 the higher growth scenario (Scenario 4), 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 emerging Colchester Borough Local Plan 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 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), but a more significant consideration is potentially supporting both the Highland Nursery and Elms Farm, because of the single land ownership interest, and 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 delivery are achieved in practice. 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, in Messing Parish.

In contrast, Tower End is a more complex site to deliver, with: a relative lack of cooperation between land owners (noting that a scheme to deliver 130 homes on part of the site is currently the subject of an appeal, with the scheme considered not to align fully with the Parish Council's strategic aspirations for growth in this area, e.g. as understood from the previously submitted TNP); a potential ransom strip (the western extent (triangular promontory) of the field currently building-out to the north of Grange Road); and a major water pipe in the vicinity of the water works. As such, there could feasibly be delivery challenges, or viability challenges that lead to pressure on affordable housing. In turn, Scenarios 2 and 3 would lead to a risk of the 400 homes target not being met.

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. 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 Tower End, which would feature under Scenarios 2, 3 and 4, there is clear potential to deliver a high quality new greenspace, as discussed above under 'biodiversity', and the potential for this greenspace to link well to existing public rights of way and the wider green and blue infrastructure network can be envisaged (also noting long term aspirations for significant enhancements to the south, potentially even a new county park). However, on balance, the community 'planning gain' argument for growth at Tower End is considered lower than the argument for growth to the north of the village.

In **conclusion**, focusing matters of housing needs and community infrastructure, it is fair to highlight Scenario 1 as performing best, and to predict significant positive effects. Scenario 4 is also judged to perform very well, as there would be additional new 'planning gain', and the village would be set on course towards realising long-term strategic objectives in respect of transport and green/blue infrastructure; however, there could be something of a housing oversupply over the coming years, giving rise to tensions with communities objectives, including noting the housing site that is currently building-out adjacent to Tower End; also, under Scenario 4, there could be a risk of the level of growth leading to pressure on community infrastructure (e.g. school capacity) recalling that the level of growth would be in excess of that advised by the District Council.

- **Economy** – there is an existing employment site at the northwest extent of Tiptree, and the emerging Local Plan Policies Map anticipates expansion of this site into the Tower End site that, it is assumed, would deliver a housing-led scheme (alongside a strategic road link and green infrastructure) under Scenarios 2, 3 and 4. However, this tension is potentially alleviated under scenarios whereby Tower End is delivered in combination with Highland Nursery, namely under Scenarios 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. 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 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.

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, e.g. Mersea.

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.

In contrast, expansion to the **northwest** (Tower End) is thought likely to give rise to relatively limited concerns, from a landscape perspective, including due to the containment that would be provided by existing built form. However, there is an important public footpath in this area, which links to Inworth to the north and, to the south, land to the west of Tiptree where there is currently an extensive network of public rights of way, and where there is a long term aspiration to deliver strategic green and blue infrastructure enhancements, potentially to include a countr/y park. The long term possibility of strategic growth and new strategic green / blue infrastructure to the west and northwest of Tiptree supporting increased access to the highly wooded landscape to the west, which appears currently to have low public accessibility, might also be envisaged.

In **conclusion**, it is judged appropriate to flag a tension with scenarios that would see significant expansion of Tiptree to the north, although significant effects are not predicted.

- **Land, soil, water** – the key consideration here is 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 potential to differentiate the growth scenarios in respect of ‘water’ related objectives. 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. However, it is fair to highlight that Tower End comprises a patchwork of smaller fields that appear not to be in use for arable, and which are presumably less suited to agricultural production than is the case for the large fields directly to the north of Tiptree. In **conclusion**, all scenarios would likely give rise to the loss of BMV agricultural land, and there is a particular concern with scenarios involving both Highland Nursery and Elms Farm.
- **Transport** – as has been discussed, a key objective for the TNP is to deliver new strategic road links to address existing traffic congestion hotspots, and there is a long term aspiration to provide alternative routes to strategic destinations, thereby reducing non-local traffic through the village, most notably Church Road.

With regards to expansion to the **north**, involving Elms Farm, Highland Nursery and intervening land in Messing Parish, the new link road would only serve to relieve traffic on a relatively short stretch of road within the village, namely Oak Road, but the benefits could still be significant, including given issues with junctions on Oak Road, and it is important to note that the emerging Local Plan clearly sets out a need for the TNP to deliver this road link.

With regards to **Tower End**, a new strategic road link between the B1023 and Grange Road would clearly deliver benefits, but these could potentially be of limited significance, e.g. noting that the emerging Local Plan does not discuss this potential road link. However, and importantly, a new strategic road link through Tower End could be seen as the first step towards achieving the long term aspiration for a western bypass of the village. One further consideration is the need to carefully consider the implications of increased traffic along Grange Road, to the west of the village, as it forms part of the National Cycle Network (NCN).

In **conclusion**, there is a clear need to predict significant positive effects for those scenarios that would support a new strategic road link across the north of the village, between the B1022 (Colchester Road) and B1023 (Kelvedon Road) given the context provided by the emerging Local Plan.

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, which is considered to align well with the findings of our site selection process, as set out in the Site Selection Topic Paper. Scenario 1 is considered to align strongly with the established neighbourhood plan objectives, and it is noted that the assessment presented above does not highlight any ‘significant negative effects’ in respect of the SEA objectives. Having said this, we recognise that Scenario 1 gives rise to certain tensions with environmental and wider sustainability objectives, and that there are potentially certain draw-backs relative to alternatives. The assessment serves to highlight a particular tension in respect of loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, which unfortunately is largely unavoidable, but other issues/tensions, including in respect of heritage and landscape objectives, can and will be addressed through stringent development management policy, developed in collaboration with the land-owners (to ensure that policy requirements are achievable). Briefly, taking the non-preferred scenarios in turn: Scenarios 2 and 3 are not supported primarily because the opportunity to deliver a new strategic link road across the north of the village, in line with the emerging Local Plan proposal/requirement, would not be realised; whilst Scenario 4 is not supported primarily because it would involve support for too many homes in the plan period.”

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

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current 'pre-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 appraisal of reasonable alternative growth scenarios presented in Section 6, the appraisal below also takes into account 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: Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation
- TIP13: Highland Nursery
- TIP14: 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 (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) 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 (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and 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. Appraisal 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 above (paragraph 5.7), 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. 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 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).

9.3 With regards to **site specific policy**, at both sites there is a requirement that: *“Development should deliver net environmental and 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](#); however, the requirement for environmental net gain is more open to interpretation. 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.

9.4 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 (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 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,⁷ although Natural England may wish to comment further through the current consultation.

9.5 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

- 9.6 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.
- 9.7 With regards to **site specific policy**, at both sites there are proposed requirements in respect of SuDS and further flood risk assessment.

Mitigation / decarbonisation

- 9.8 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. 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.
- 9.9 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.

9.10 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.

9.11 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.”

Conclusion

9.12 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

9.13 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. 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. 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.

9.14 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.

9.15 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) – explains that: *“Proposals to provide additional burial ground space in Tiptree will be strongly supported.”*

9.16 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.

9.17 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

9.18 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 emerging Local Plan Policies map identifying adjacent land as a Local Economic Area with the potential for expansion.

9.19 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.”*

9.20 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...”*

9.21 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

- 9.22 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.
- 9.23 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.
- 9.24 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.
- 9.25 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.
- 9.26 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.”*
- 9.27 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

9.28 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 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.

9.29 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.”

9.30 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

9.31 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.

9.32 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.

9.33 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.⁸

⁸ 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.

Transport

9.34 As has been discussed, a key objective for the TNP is to deliver new strategic road links to address existing traffic congestion hotspots, and there is a long term aspiration to provide alternative routes to strategic destinations, thereby reducing non-local traffic through the village, most notably Church Road. With regards to strategic growth to the north, involving the proposed **allocations** at Elms Farm and Highland Nursery as well as – in all likelihood - intervening land in Messing Parish, the new link road would only serve to relieve traffic on a relatively short stretch of road within the village, namely Oak Road, but the benefits could still be significant, including given issues with junctions on Oak Road, and it is important to note that the emerging Local Plan clearly sets out a need for the TNP to deliver this road link.

9.35 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.

9.36 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.”*

9.37 In **conclusion**, there is a clear need to predict **significant positive effects** given support for a new strategic road link across the north of the village, between the B1022 (Colchester Road) and B1023 (Kelvedon Road), and given the context provided by the emerging Local Plan.

Conclusions

9.38 The assessment predicts significant positive effects in terms of **communities** and **transport** objectives, given that the proposed allocations will act together deliver significant ‘planning gain’ in these respects, and more modest positive effects are also predicted in respect of **employment** objectives, as the proposed allocations will 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 appraisal has not led to any firm recommendations, but a number of areas for potential further work have been identified.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

10. Next steps

Plan finalisation

- 10.1 This Further Environmental Report Update is published for consultation alongside a revised draft of the TNP, in order to inform the consultation.
- 10.2 Subsequently steps will be taken to finalise the TNP, taking account of this report, consultation responses and any other new and updated evidence.
- 10.3 The plan will then be submitted to CBC and subject to a further consultation, under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. It will then be for an Independent Examiner to consider responses, and test whether the TNP meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans, and to confirm that it is in general conformity with the Local Plan.
- 10.4 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

- 10.5 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report.
- 10.6 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by Colchester Borough Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 10.7 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. 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; | The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA’). With regards to explaining “ <i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i> ”, Chapter 7 explains the Steering Group’s ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e. explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives. |
| 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, and also makes 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 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. |