Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report accompanying Regulation 14 consultation

Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group

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Quality information

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Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to lead on SEA in support of the emerging Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP). The BNDP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011, and in the context of the local planning framework for Somerset Council. Once 'made' the BNDP will hold material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area, as part of the local development framework for Somerset.

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 potential negative effects and maximising positive effects.

It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations stipulate that 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".

This report (and NTS) is the Environmental Report for the BNDP. It is published alongside the Regulation 14 version of the Plan.

Structure of the Environmental Report / this NTS

SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

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 current draft plan).
3. What happens next?

Each of these questions in answered in turn within a discrete 'part' of the Environmental Report and summarised within this NTS. However, firstly there is a need to set the scene further by answering the questions 'What is the Plan seeking to achieve?', and 'What is the scope of the SEA?'.

Vision and objectives of the BNDP

The following vision has been identified for the BNDP:

"Beckington Parish will be a thriving, friendly and inclusive rural local community and a tranquil and attractive place to live, work and visit. The historic rural setting and rich traditional character of Beckington village, the hamlet of Rudge and part of Standerwick will have been conserved retaining their unique charm.

New sustainable housing development will have met local requirements promoting our development as a compact and sustainable community.

The parish will increasingly recognise the impact of climate change and the need for sustainable upgrades and environmental solutions."

To support this vision, high-level objectives have been identified. They are grouped under two main themes: landscape, built environment, heritage, character and heritage; and housing development and design.

Landscape, built environment, heritage, character and heritage objectives:

4. Development, whether traditional or contemporary, should protect and enhance the traditional rural and historical character of the parish.
5. New development should integrate well with its historical architectural character, particularly within the Conservation Area which contributes so much to the character of Beckington village.
6. The valued countryside views from the approaches to, and from within, the settlements should be protected and not adversely affected by development.
7. New development should reflect the best of the local vernacular, utilising varied designs and local materials to retain, or enhance with innovative design, the distinctive character of the built environment.
8. New development should seek to improve and enhance foot and cycle paths through and around the village including those with links to the MacMillan Way and the River Frome valley.
9. Existing facilities and areas of important local green space should be safeguarded for current and future generations. The parish should gain public green space proportionate to the scale of any new development.
10. The best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land surrounding settlements in the parish should be protected.
11. Development should protect and where possible supplement areas of key habitats, particularly those that support endangered species.
12. New development must be supported by appropriate infrastructure to avoid damage to the environment.
13. The parish should gain community facilities including public green space proportionate to the scale of any new development.

Housing development and design objectives:

1. The location, nature, scale and layout of development of new housing should maintain the rural character of the parish, which contributes to its friendly, village feel.
2. New development should reflect the best of the local vernacular, utilising varied designs and local materials to retain, or enhance with innovative design, the distinctive character of the built environment.
3. Future development should provide sufficient sustainable housing stock to maintain a diverse community, including small starter homes, affordable housing and homes for the elderly.
4. Development applications should take into account and be assessed against the guidelines and codes contained in the Design Guidance and Codes report that forms part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
5. Drainage and sewerage infrastructure should be fully capable of assimilating any new development and mitigate any pre-existing over-capacity issues.

6. Additional traffic resulting from any new development should be mitigated by appropriate road / junction upgrades within the village and interconnectors to the A36 and A361.
7. Suitable off-road parking for residents and visitors should be provided for every new dwelling.
8. Any new development should be accompanied by appropriate new or upgraded infrastructure and community facilities.
9. Energy efficient technologies should be incorporated into both existing and new buildings to contribute to a more sustainable environment.

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of SEA topics and objectives that together comprise a framework to guide the appraisal. The SEA framework for the BNDP is provided below.

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and support cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

Plan-making / SEA up to this point

An important element of the SEA process involves assessing ‘reasonable alternatives’ in time to inform development of the proposals, and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the proposals.

As such, Part 1 of the Environmental Report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches to the allocation of land for housing, focusing on alternative sites.

Establishing reasonable alternatives

Recognising that sites that have already been identified in Beckington have undergone an in-depth independent assessment, there is little value in re-assessing the sites individually through the SEA. Rather, it is more useful to explore how the housing target could be met.

One option could be to allocate one large site to meet the housing target of 95 dwellings in full. Three identified sites could achieve this (assuming a 25 dwelling per hectare development density). These three sites are all located on the edge of the settlement adjoining the settlement boundary:

- Site 3c – Land off Bath Road (HELAA site 291943); it is approximately 4.57ha in size and could deliver 114 dwellings.
- Site 87 - Land off Frome Road (HELAA site 291863); it is approximately 5.9ha in size and could deliver 147 dwellings.
- Site 89 - Land to the South of Warminster Road (HELAA site 292781); it is approximately 4.6ha in size and could deliver 115 dwellings.

Another option would be to allocate a number of smaller sites in combination. As there are multiple smaller sites in Beckington, there could be a multitude of combinations. Instead of presenting effects linked to all possible combinations of smaller sites, a points of the compass approach is taken – which highlights constraints and opportunities in different parts of the Beckington settlement. The areas are as follows:

- North – which could include site 88 (Land off Rudge Lane, HELAA site 291700), site 84 (Land South of Great Dunns Close, HELAA site 291232), site 3a (Land off Bath Road), and site 3b (Land West of A36/A361 Roundabout).
- West – which could include 2b (Land West of Bath Road, HELAA site 291702), 2c (Land to the North of Mill Lane, HELAA site 291704), 2d (Land to the South of Mill Lane, HELAA site 291705), 2e (Land west of the Bath/Frome Road, HELAA site 291708), and site 82 (Land at the Cedars).
- South – which could include site 36 (Land North of Warminster Road), site 86 (Land Rear of 24 Warminster Road), site 7 (Land between Warminster Road and the A36, HELAA site 291520), and site 90 (Land West of A361, HELAA site 292780).

Two ‘sets’ of alternative options are therefore progressed for appraisal in the next chapter with a view to aiding decision making – an appraisal of the large sites and a points of the compass appraisal encompassing all the smaller sites – see Figures 3.1 and 3.2. It will be down to the plan-maker to weigh up the pros and cons of these different approaches and identify the preferred approach for the Beckington NDP.

Assessment method and outcomes

In terms of methodology, for each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline pre-mitigation (i.e., a policy off approach), drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertain effects, will also be noted. Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a significant effect, this is made explicit in the appraisal text.

For the assessment of the large sites, efforts are also made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms, and **a rank of preference** has been provided. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective, with 1 performing the best. An 'equals' sigh (=) indicates options are ranked on par with each other, and occurs when no significant or meaningful differences can be drawn between the options.

For the assessment of broad areas for development, a narrative has been produced that evaluates the potential impacts of individual sites and combinations of sites in the three different directions selected. The SEA has considered the potential constraints and opportunities associated with delivering new homes in these locations and is informed by the SEA topics which have been scoped into the assessment. The appraisal findings are presented as a commentary of effects as opposed to a direct comparison.

Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

Large sites conclusion

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	Yes - negative
	Rank	3	1	2
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	3	1	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	1	2	3
Historic environment	Significant effect?	No	Yes – negative	No
	Rank	1	3	2
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes - negative	No
	Rank	3	2	1
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No
	Rank	3	2	1
Transportation	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	2	3	1

Overall, the assessment identifies that Option 1.3 (Site 89) performs well in relation to landscape, transportation, and land, soil and water resources, but development would likely be constrained by biodiversity and to a lesser extent heritage

considerations (linked to listed buildings within proximity to the site). Additionally, growth through this site has the potential to bring forward a greater number of vehicles on the local road network. Option 1.2 (Site 87) ranks better in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, and climate change and flood risk. However, development could result in significant adverse effects on the setting of the Beckington Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings. Additionally, this option is the least favourable in relation to transportation, due to accessibility issues and uncertainty over impacts to local traffic. Finally, Option 1.1 (Site 3c) would be anticipated to bring forward significant negative effects in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, climate change and flood risk, land, soil and water resources, and landscape, reflecting the higher sensitivity of the option when compared to the other two. Whilst it is located within closer proximity to services and community infrastructure, its potential to adversely impact upon the landscape contributes to it being considered the least sustainable site for future growth. However, it is anticipated that growth through Option 1.1 would not lead to any effects on the historic environment or heritage value of the neighbourhood area, given the distance of the site from heritage constraints.

Broad areas for development conclusions

Overall, a northern direction of growth would provide opportunities to deliver new housing in locations that are generally well related to Beckington and benefit from good access to community facilities, the local road network, active and sustainable transport opportunities. However, a northern growth strategy would also be likely to be constrained by environment considerations. For example, all site combinations would have the potential to affect biodiversity associated with the Mells Valley SAC bat consultation zones and locally important habitats, and most combinations would result in the loss of higher quality agricultural soils. Negative effects are also expected in relation to climate change and flood risk, and landscape, given growth northwards would extend the Beckington settlement into the open countryside. Heritage impacts linked to northwards development are considered to be more uncertain and would depend on the sites selected, due to the proximity of heritage assets and the Beckington Conservation Area.

A western direction of growth would likely be more constrained than northern or southern growth. Development would still be likely to result in adverse effects on biodiversity due to the overlap with bat consultation zones and the loss or disturbance of locally important habitats and ecological networks. Additionally, westward growth would result in the loss of higher quality agricultural soils, and could also exacerbate existing drainage and water quality concerns associated with the River Frome to the west. The area is highly constrained in relation to the landscape, given the importance of the area to the setting of the existing Beckington settlement and valued views. As such, development in this direction is likely to negatively impact upon valued landscape character and protected views. Furthermore, growth through this approach is likely to have an adverse effect upon the historic environment, due to the number of heritage assets within proximity to the site that could be negatively impacted by new development – through changes to their setting and significance. There are also concerns over access opportunities to the potential sites, given that Mill Lane is narrow and does not provide for safe pedestrian access.

Finally, a southern direction of growth may offer a more balanced opportunity for accommodating development in Beckington. The southern sites are generally less constrained in landscape terms when compared to northern and western sites, as

they are located within an area identified as having limited landscape sensitivity and no special or distinctive features according to the Valued Landscape Report. Additionally, impacts to valued views would be avoided entirely. Development would also benefit from good connectivity to the local road network through Warminster Road and proximity to the A36 and A361, and would provide access to local recreational assets and community facilities that support community wellbeing. It is also noted that development through these sites would be focused on lower quality agricultural soils, and as such would be an efficient use of land within the neighbourhood area, and work toward safeguarding higher quality soils in other locations in Beckington. However, the area would still present constraints related to bat consultation zones and local biodiversity connectivity, and flood risk - though this could be avoided within individual site boundaries.

Developing the preferred approach

The NDP Steering Group have provided the following response to the alternatives assessment:

Large Site Options

Option 1.1 (Site 3c) would be anticipated to bring forward significant negative effects in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, climate change and flood risk, land, soil and water resources, and landscape. Whilst it is located within closer proximity to services and community infrastructure and is away from the Conservation Area and removed from listed buildings, its potential to adversely impact upon the landscape contributes to it being considered the least sustainable site for future growth.

Development of Option 1.2 (Site 87) could result in significant adverse effects on the setting of the Beckington Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings and is more constrained in terms of transportation. The recent site assessment (July 2026) conducted by Brodie Planning Associates concludes that "*Access is a major constraint"* and "*A safe and suitable residential point of access to the easternmost part of the site* [from Frome Road] *is highly unlikely due to land level difference, road alignment, the impact on the verdant character of this part of the settlement and the loss of biodiversity corridor including mature trees*." It performs well in terms of climate change and flood risk.

Option 1.3 (Site 89) performs well in relation to landscape, transportation, and land, soil and water resources, but development would likely be constrained by biodiversity considerations. Additionally, the absence of existing public transport infrastructure could result in a greater number of private vehicles on the local road network.

Overall, the Steering Group considers that Option 1.3 performs better in terms of development potential.

Points of Compass Options

The key constraints to housing development in Beckington using the points of the compass review are summarised below

For sites located in North of Beckington:

- Biodiversity: Significant constraint due to overlap with bat consultation zones linked to the Mells Valley SAC, plus SSSI Impact Risk Zones for some sites.

- Landscape: Development would extend the village into open countryside, with particular sensitivity around the “Village North” landscape area and long views across the river valley.
- Heritage: Some northern sites are close to the Conservation Area or listed buildings, particularly Sites 84 and 88.
- Agricultural land: Several sites are on Grade 3a agricultural land, increasing the risk of losing best and most versatile soils.
- Amenity: Sites close to the A36 may experience road noise and air pollution.
- Transport: Generally reasonable access to the road network and some bus/active travel opportunities, although site-specific access issues would still need to be resolved.

For sites located in West Beckington:

- Landscape: This is the most constrained direction in landscape terms. The western area contributes strongly to Beckington’s setting, valued landscape character, tranquillity and protected views.
- Biodiversity: Significant constraint as all western sites overlap with bat consultation zones and SSSI Impact Risk Zones, with hedgerows, trees, grassland and orchard remnants contributing to local ecological connectivity.
- Heritage: Significant impacts as several sites are close to, adjacent to, or partly within the Conservation Area and near listed buildings, especially around Frome Road and Castle Corner.
- Community wellbeing: Sites 2d and 2e overlap with Local Green Space 6, so development could result in the loss of this valued space.
- Land and water resources: Western sites are generally on Grade 3a agricultural land and are closer to the River Frome, raising concerns about drainage, runoff and downstream water quality.
- Transport: Mill Lane is narrow and lacks pavement provision, making access and safe pedestrian movement a key constraint.

For sites located in South Beckington:

- Biodiversity: Still constrained by bat consultation zones linked to the Mells Valley SAC, and Sites 7, 36 and 86 intersect SSSI Impact Risk Zones.
- Surface water and drainage: Flood Zone 1 means low fluvial flood risk, but surface water issues affect parts of Sites 86 and 90 and may affect Warminster Road through increased runoff.
- Wastewater capacity: As with all areas of Beckington, drainage and sewerage capacity is a key strategic constraint that would need to be addressed before development proceeds.
- Heritage: Southern sites avoid the Conservation Area but may affect the setting of listed buildings along Warminster Road, especially near Nos. 24, 26 and 28. It is noted that recent developments along Warminster Road to the west (Shepherds Way and Longmeadow) have been completed and have avoided adverse effects.
- Landscape: Generally, it is less sensitive than the north and west, but Site 7 could cause urban encroachment and Site 90 is more detached from the main settlement pattern.

- Transport and amenity: Warminster Road provides access and pedestrian links, and the area is close to the A36/A361, but bus provision is limited and sites near the main roads may be affected by noise and air pollution.
- In considering and evaluating the points of the compass review West Beckington is the most constrained direction, mainly because of landscape, heritage, local green space, access and River Frome-related concerns. North Beckington has reasonable accessibility but is constrained by landscape sensitivity, biodiversity, agricultural land quality and some heritage issues. Whereas South Beckington appears to be the least constrained broad direction overall, particularly in relation to landscape and agricultural land.

Points of Compass Summary Table

	Significant effect?		
SEA topic	**Area 1 - North**	**Area 2 - West**	**Area 3 - South**
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
Climate change and flood risk	No	No	No
Community wellbeing	No	Yes - negative	No
Historic environment	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No
Land, soil and water resources	No	No	No
Landscape	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No
Transportation	No	Yes – negative	No

Points of Compass Advantages/Disadvantages Table

Area	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
North	Generally, well related to the village, with good access to community facilities, local road network, and opportunities for active/sustainable transport. Some sites (e.g., Site 84) are within the settlement boundary, reducing landscape and heritage impacts.	All site combinations risk significant negative effects on biodiversity, especially due to proximity to bat habitats and SSSI Impact Risk Zones. Most combinations would result in the loss of higher quality agricultural soils (Grade 3a). Heritage impacts are uncertain and depend on site selection, with some sites close to the Conservation Area or listed buildings.
West	Some sites are adjacent to existing residential development, supporting community cohesion. Site 82 is fully within the urban classification, reducing impact on agricultural soils and landscape.	Significant negative effects on biodiversity due to overlap with bat consultation zones and loss of ecological networks. Loss of higher quality agricultural soils (Grade 3a). Potential to exacerbate drainage and water quality concerns related to the River Frome. Highly constrained in landscape terms, with development likely to impact protected views and the village's landscape setting. Access issues: Mill Lane is narrow and lacks safe pedestrian access, reducing connectivity.

Area	Advantages	Disadvantages
		Some sites could result in the loss of important local green spaces, negatively affecting community wellbeing. Potential negative effects on the historic environment, especially for sites near or within the Conservation Area or close to listed buildings
South	Less constrained in landscape terms; the area has limited landscape sensitivity and no special or distinctive features. Avoids impacts on valued views. Good connectivity to the local road network (Warminster Road, A36, A361). Proximity to recreational assets and community facilities (e.g., Beckington Tennis Association, White Row Farm), Sue's Walk to the church and school. Sites are on lower quality agricultural land (Grade 4), avoiding loss of best and most versatile soils. Development would be adjacent to existing settlement, supporting community integration.	Still presents constraints related to bat consultation zones and local biodiversity connectivity. Some surface water flood risk, though generally manageable with sustainable drainage. Some sites are close to the A36, which could lead to noise and pollution impacts on new residents. Moderate negative effects on the historic environment due to proximity to listed buildings, though not within the Conservation Area

Based on the SEA the strongest argument is that housing development is best placed to the south/south-east of Beckington, particularly where it is adjacent to the existing settlement and well related to Warminster Road, rather than to the west or north. This is considered the best location for the following reasons:

- Landscape impact is lower: The southern area is described as having fewer special or distinctive landscape features, avoids protected views, and is less sensitive than the valued western landscape or the open countryside to the north.
- It protects the valued western setting: Westward growth is heavily constrained by landscape value, protected views, Local Green Space, heritage sensitivity, access issues, and potential effects on the River Frome.
- It avoids the sensitive northern landscape: Northward growth would extend the village into open countryside and could affect long views, rural character, better-quality agricultural land, and biodiversity.
- It uses poorer agricultural land: Southern options are generally on Grade 4 agricultural land, helping avoid the loss of higher-quality Grade 3a land found to the north and west.

- It is reasonably well connected by road: Southern sites relate well to Warminster Road and the A36/A361, making vehicular access more achievable than some western options, especially those reliant on Mill Lane.
- It can support community wellbeing: Southern growth would be near facilities such as recreational assets and White Row Farm and could link with existing residential areas where sites are immediately adjacent to the settlement.
- It is more capable of mitigation: The SEA still identifies biodiversity, drainage, flood risk, heritage, and noise constraints, but these appear more manageable through design, landscaping, sustainable drainage and policy controls than the more fundamental constraints in the west and north.

Community Opinion

The Steering Group notes that, based on consultation and community engagement, the preference is to progress small sites that are in keeping with the rural setting and settlement identity, rather than large sites. The Neighbourhood Area has already been recently subject to two large housing estate developments, where consultation has identified that it is taking time to assimilate the growth and foster community cohesion. It is considered that additional large scale development sites are unlikely to assist in this process.

Furthermore, as traffic was the main factor disliked about living in the parish in the NP survey, the potential traffic impact of high growth in one location is also deemed significant, which will reduce the potential to deliver additional community benefits in development.

Conclusions

The Steering Group notes that the overall planning judgement is that a southern growth strategy appears to be the most defensible broad location. Housing growth that is focused on sites that adjoin the existing settlement and avoid detached or isolated development provides the best balance between meeting local housing needs and minimising environmental harm.

A southern option avoids the highly valued western landscape and views, reduces the loss of higher-quality agricultural land, maintains separation from the River Frome and its associated water-quality sensitivities, and limits harm to the historic core and Conservation Area.

While southern sites are not unconstrained, the identified issues are capable of being addressed through careful site masterplanning, biodiversity mitigation, drainage measures, highway design, and landscape-led development.

Sites 7 and 36 perform most strongly as part of a southern growth strategy, particularly when compared with more sensitive western and northern options. Site 36 performs particularly well because it is closely related to the existing settlement edge and would read as a more natural extension of Beckington.

Key reasons supporting allocation of Site 36 include:

- Good settlement relationship: Site 36 adjoins existing residential development and is likely to integrate better with the village than more detached southern options.
- Lower landscape sensitivity: It lies within the “Village East adjoining bypass” landscape area, which is described as having no special or distinctive features.

- No protected view conflict: The southern sites, including Site 36, are not within proximity to identified protected views.
- Lower agricultural land impact: The southern sites are generally Grade 4 agricultural land, reducing harm to best and most versatile agricultural soils.
- Good highway access: Site 36 benefits from direct relationship with Warminster Road, with onward access to the A36 and A361.
- Community wellbeing benefits: It is close to recreational and community assets, including Beckington Tennis Club, Sue's Walk to the school and church and White Row Farm.
- Manageable heritage risk: Although listed buildings on Warminster Road require careful consideration, sensitive design, boundary treatment and landscaping can help avoid unacceptable impacts.

Site 7 also has a defensible case for allocation, but it is more sensitive than Site 36 and would need stronger mitigation. Key reasons supporting allocation include:

- Part of the less constrained southern growth area: Like Site 36, it avoids the more sensitive western valued landscape and avoids protected views.
- Lower soil quality: It falls within the southern area of lower-quality agricultural land, helping to protect higher-quality Grade 3a land elsewhere.
- Strategic road access: It is well placed in relation to Warminster Road and the A36/A361.
- Potential to contribute to housing need: It can help meet the village's identified housing requirement and support delivery of a suitable mix of homes, including affordable and smaller dwellings.
- Opportunity for planned mitigation: Its impacts are not necessarily unacceptable if controlled through a clear allocation policy requiring landscape buffers, set-backs, biodiversity protection, noise mitigation and drainage controls.

However, Site 7 is more constrained because:

- It has a greater risk of urban encroachment into the countryside.
- It is closer to the A36, increasing potential noise and air quality amenity issues.
- It may need careful access design because of its relationship with Warminster Road and the nearby strategic road network.
- It has biodiversity constraints because it falls within bat consultation zones and intersects an SSSI Impact Risk Zone.

The combined allocation of Sites 7 and 36 can be justified because it would:

- Focus growth in the least harmful broad direction identified by the SEA.
- Avoid the strongest landscape objections associated with westward growth.
- Avoid the higher agricultural land impacts seen in northern and western options.
- Provide a planned, coherent southern extension rather than piecemeal speculative development.
- Support delivery of housing need in a location that is accessible to the local road network.

- Enable a single policy framework to manage biodiversity, drainage, landscape, heritage and amenity mitigation.

To ensure that the allocations are robust, the policy should require:

- HRA and ecological evidence, including bat-sensitive design and lighting.
- Retention and enhancement of hedgerows, trees and habitat corridors.
- Sustainable drainage systems and evidence of wastewater capacity.
- Landscape buffers and soft settlement-edge treatment, especially for Site 7.
- Heritage impact assessment for effects on listed buildings along Warminster Road.
- Noise and air quality mitigation for areas closest to the A36/A361.
- Safe pedestrian access along Warminster Road and links back into Beckington village.

Assessment findings at this stage

Part 2 of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the BNDP as a whole. Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the SEA framework topic headings and the following conclusions are reached for each topic.

“The BNDP demonstrates a strong and comprehensive commitment to supporting and enhancing community wellbeing within the Beckington neighbourhood area. By allocating sites that respond directly to identified housing needs, the Plan helps to address local demographic challenges and improve accessibility to housing for a range of residents. This is complemented by a clear emphasis on high-quality design, noise mitigation, and connectivity – all of which work to ensure that new development promotes healthy, inclusive, and sustainable lifestyles. The integration of active travel infrastructure, the protection of valued green spaces, and safeguarding of the surrounding landscape further contributes to maintaining and enhancing physical and mental wellbeing. Collectively, these measures ensure that growth is not only accommodated in the Beckington neighbourhood area, but rather positively contributes to the vitality, cohesion, and overall quality of life within the community. Overall, **significant positive effects** are concluded most likely.

Additionally, the BNDP demonstrates a strong and clear commitment to conserving and enhancing the landscape character and visual quality of the Beckington neighbourhood area. Whilst development has the potential to introduce changes to character and visual amenity, the Plan ensures that this is carefully managed through masterplanning requirements through Policy HA and robust design principles set out in Policy HD and the associated Design Guidance and Codes. The designation of the Beckington Valued Landscape Zone and the protection of key views through Policy PV further reinforce the importance of the wider landscape setting and visual amenity to the community. Supported by complementary policies promoting green infrastructure and biodiversity, the BNDP ensures that new development integrates sensitively with its surroundings and contributes positively to local character, supporting the conclusion of **significant positive effects** for the landscape SEA topic.

Overall, the BNDP provides a robust and proactive framework for safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity within the Beckington neighbourhood area. Whilst there is some potential for minor localised effects associated with

development (in relation to the woodland area which is part of Policy HA1.2), these are considered to be effectively mitigated through policy requirements that address noise, design, and environmental sensitivity. The BNDP has a strong emphasis on habitat protection, connectivity, and enhancement, which is supported by design codes and complementary policies. As such, the Plan works to ensure that new development is aligned with biodiversity and geodiversity objectives. Consequently, the BNDP is expected to deliver meaningful improvements to biodiversity networks and quality. As such, **moderate positive effects** are identified.

The BNDP provides a clear and effective framework for conserving and enhancing the historic environment in Beckington, ensuring that its rich heritage continues to contribute to local character and identity. Whilst there is some limited potential for adverse effects on the settings of nearby listed buildings and the possible presence of below-ground archaeological remains through the allocation of the two sites under Policy HA, these risks are appropriately recognised and are anticipated be mitigated through sensitive design, boundary treatments, and the recommended inclusion of heritage assessments. Strong policy provisions – including Policies HE and HD and the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Code – work to ensure that new development is respectful of local context and reinforces historic character. In combination with wider policies safeguarding landscape setting and key views, the Plan is well positioned to deliver positive outcomes for heritage conservation, supporting the conclusion of **moderate positive effects** overall.

The BNDP establishes a positive and locally responsive framework for addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation in the neighbourhood area. Potential risks associated with surface water flooding - particularly in relation to site HA1.2 and the adjacent road network - are effectively managed through design measures embedded within Policy HD and the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes. Simultaneously, the Plan promotes reduced carbon emissions through promoting development on sites that are well located to existing development, enhancing active travel connectivity, and integrating energy-efficient and low-carbon design features. Wider policy stipulations for green infrastructure and native planting further strengthens both climate change adaptation and mitigation in Beckington. Whilst an increase in emissions is inevitable as a result of planned growth, the overall approach of the BNDP ensures that development is aligned with climate objectives. As such, **minor positive effects** across the climate change and flood risk SEA topic are concluded as likely through the implementation of the Plan.

The BNDP takes a balanced and considered approach to the protection of land, soil and water resources within the neighbourhood area. By directing development to areas of lower-quality agricultural land adjacent to the existing settlement, the Plan avoids the unnecessary loss of higher-grade soils and supports the efficient use of land. The integration of design-led measures through Policy HD further promotes the retention and enhancement of green infrastructure, helping to safeguard soil quality and function. Although there are recognised concerns relating to wastewater capacity and potential impacts on water quality, the provisions set out in Policy EP provide an appropriate mechanism to mitigate these risks through sustainable water management and environmental safeguards. Combined with the protection of green spaces under Policy LGS, the BNDP is well positioned to deliver modest but meaningful benefits for this SEA topic, supporting the conclusion of **minor positive effects** overall.

Finally, the BNDP provides a positive and locally focused approach to improving transport and accessibility within the Beckington neighbourhood area, particularly through its emphasis on active travel. Whilst there are limitations on the BNDP in

regard to addressing strategic transport issues such as bus service reliability, the Plan effectively promotes walking and cycling through enhanced connectivity, design-led development, and integration with existing and proposed infrastructure. Measures such as new footpath links, improved street layouts, and alignment with local cycling and walking strategies contribute to a more accessible and sustainable transport network. As a result, the BNDP is well positioned to support incremental improvements in local transport provision and reduce reliance on private vehicles for shorter journeys, supporting the conclusion of **minor positive effects** overall."

Next steps

This Environmental Report accompanies the BNDP for Regulation 14 consultation.

Following consultation, and representations made will be considered by the Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group, and the BNDP and SEA Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated SEA Environmental Report will then accompany the BNDP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Somerset Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.

Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the BNDP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

Assuming that the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the BNDP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Somerset Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the BNDP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the BNDP will become part of the Development Plan for Somerset Council, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

1. Introduction

Background

1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on SEA in support of the emerging Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP). The BNDP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011, and in the context of the local planning framework for Somerset Council. Once 'made' the BNDP will hold material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area (**Figure 1.1**), as part of the local development framework for Somerset.

1.2 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 potential negative effects and maximising positive effects.[1]

Understanding SEA

1.3 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations stipulate that 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 considered when finalising the plan. More specifically, the report can be structured to address requirements by answering 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 current draft plan).
3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

1.4 This report is the Environmental Report for the BNDP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended). The report answers the three questions outlined above in turn, as discrete 'parts' of the report.[3]

[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 Beckington NDP was officially 'screened in' as requiring SEA in April 2026.

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

[3] See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the Environmental Report, and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

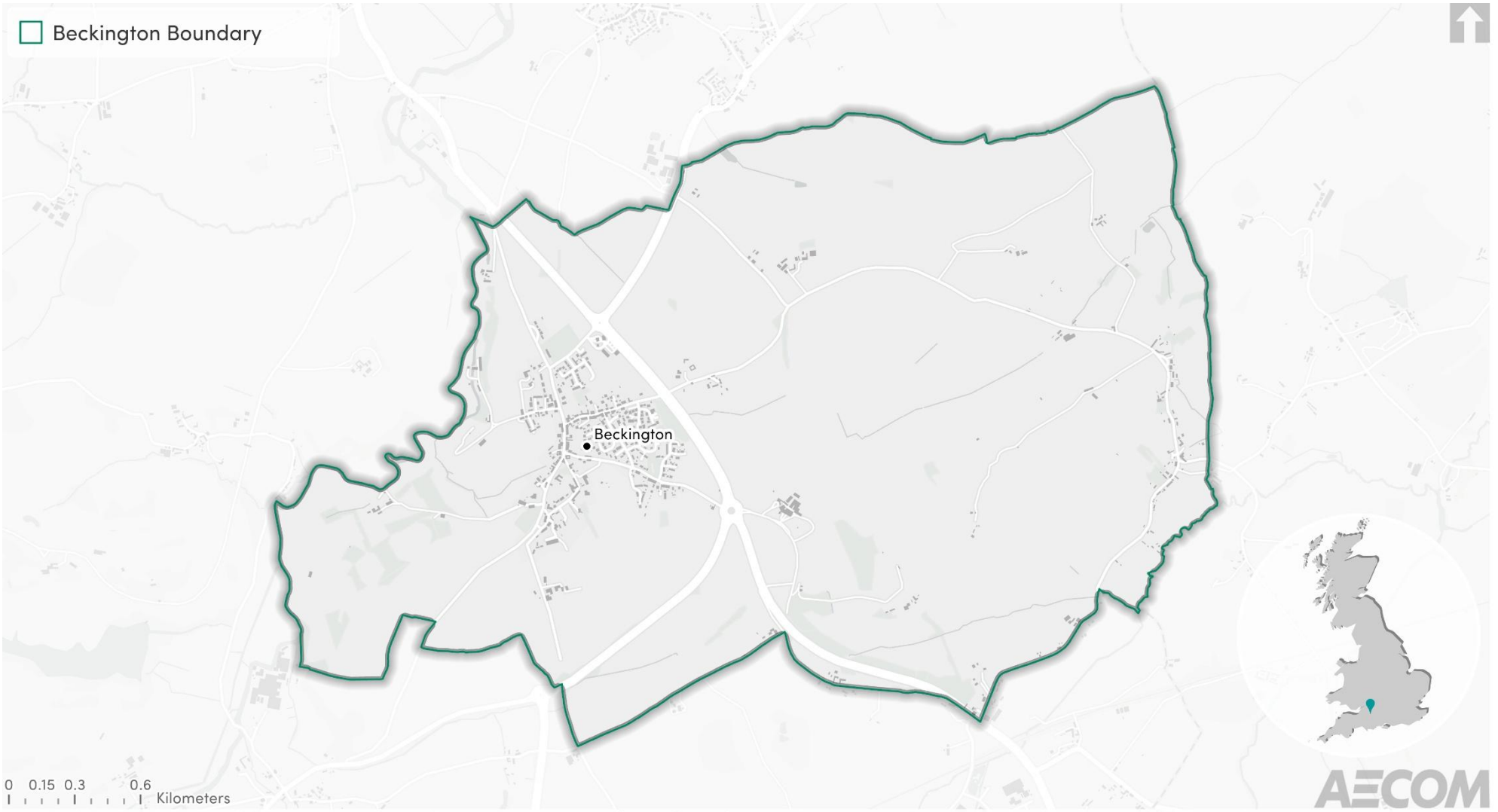


Figure 1.1: Beckington neighbourhood area

Local Plan context

1.5 The Mendip Local Plan 2006-2029 was adopted in December 2014 and forms part of the development plan for the administrative area of Mendip, in Somerset. Within Core Policy 1, Beckington is identified as a 'Primary Village' – villages at this level in the settlement hierarchy offer key community facilities and some employment opportunities, making them the best placed to accommodate most new rural development. In Core Policy 2, the housing requirement of 55 homes in Beckington was set out over the plan period. Completions and committed development as of July 2025 totalled 109 dwellings. Given this level of growth, no sites were allocated in Beckington in the Mendip Adopted Local Plan 2006-2009 Part 2: Limited Update document.

1.6 On April 1st 2023, Somerset Council was officially formed – combining the functions of the former district councils with the former county council. Somerset Council has commenced the preparation of a new Local Plan; until it is adopted, the previous Mendip Local Plan will remain in place and be the main development plan for the BNDP to align with. Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Somerset Local Plan is anticipated to commence in late 2026. The Beckington NDP will seek to identify a supply of land for housing in Beckington that will meet the indicative needs for the period up to 2040 as agreed with Somerset Council.

Vision and objectives of the BNDP

1.7 The following vision has been identified for the BNDP:

"Beckington Parish will be a thriving, friendly and inclusive rural local community and a tranquil and attractive place to live, work and visit. The historic rural setting and rich traditional character of Beckington village, the hamlet of Rudge and part of Standerwick will have been conserved retaining their unique charm.

New sustainable housing development will have met local requirements promoting our development as a compact and sustainable community.

The parish will increasingly recognise the impact of climate change and the need for sustainable upgrades and environmental solutions."

1.8 To support this vision, high-level objectives have been identified. They are grouped under two main themes: landscape, built environment, heritage, character and heritage; and housing development and design.

Landscape, built environment, heritage, character and heritage objectives:

4. Development, whether traditional or contemporary, should protect and enhance the traditional rural and historical character of the parish.
5. New development should integrate well with its historical architectural character, particularly within the Conservation Area which contributes so much to the character of Beckington village.

6. The valued countryside views from the approaches to, and from within, the settlements should be protected and not adversely affected by development.
7. New development should reflect the best of the local vernacular, utilising varied designs and local materials to retain, or enhance with innovative design, the distinctive character of the built environment.
8. New development should seek to improve and enhance foot and cycle paths through and around the village including those with links to the MacMillan Way and the River Frome valley.
9. Existing facilities and areas of important local green space should be safeguarded for current and future generations. The parish should gain public green space proportionate to the scale of any new development.
10. The best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land surrounding settlements in the parish should be protected.
11. Development should protect and where possible supplement areas of key habitats, particularly those that support endangered species.
12. New development must be supported by appropriate infrastructure to avoid damage to the environment.
13. The parish should gain community facilities including public green space proportionate to the scale of any new development.

Housing development and design objectives:

14. The location, nature, scale and layout of development of new housing should maintain the rural character of the parish, which contributes to its friendly, village feel.
15. New development should reflect the best of the local vernacular, utilising varied designs and local materials to retain, or enhance with innovative design, the distinctive character of the built environment.
16. Future development should provide sufficient sustainable housing stock to maintain a diverse community, including small starter homes, affordable housing and homes for the elderly.
17. Development applications should take into account and be assessed against the guidelines and codes contained in the Design Guidance and Codes report that forms part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
18. Drainage and sewerage infrastructure should be fully capable of assimilating any new development and mitigate any pre-existing over-capacity issues.
19. Additional traffic resulting from any new development should be mitigated by appropriate road / junction upgrades within the village and interconnectors to the A36 and A361.
20. Suitable off-road parking for residents and visitors should be provided for every new dwelling.
21. Any new development should be accompanied by appropriate new or upgraded infrastructure and community facilities.

22. Energy efficient technologies should be incorporated into both existing and new buildings to contribute to a more sustainable environment.

Scope of the SEA

1.9 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA meaning the sustainability topics and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives.

1.10 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.[4]

1.11 An SEA Scoping Report was prepared and shared with these authorities between 8th June 2026 and 13th July 2026. The SEA Scoping Report was also shared with Somerset Council as per the BNDP Steering Group's request. Scoping responses are detailed in **Appendix B**.

1.12 A key output from scoping is the SEA framework, which is essentially a summary table of the scope, identifying the SEA topics and objectives that will be a focus for the SEA. The SEA framework for the BNDP is provided in **Table 1.1** and is formed of seven SEA topics and their associated objectives. The key issues that have informed the development of this framework are provided in **Appendix B**.

Table 1.1: BNDP SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and support cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

[4] The consultation bodies were selected *"by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes"* [SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

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

2. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

2.1 This section of the report provides an overview of the approach to identifying and assessing reasonable alternatives for the purposes of SEA.

2.2 Whilst work on the BNDP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives at this stage.

2.3 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 development, or alternative growth options.

2.4 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:

- The BNDP vision and objectives, particular the objective to ensure a mix of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of the population – including small starter homes, affordable housing, and homes for the elderly.
- Housing growth and development is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and key stakeholders in neighbourhood areas.
- The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect when compared to other proposals in the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

2.5 Wider thematic policies in the BNDP area are explored in more detail in Part 2 (What are the SEA findings at this stage?) of this Environmental Report.

Structure of this part of the report

2.6 This part of the report is structures as follows:

- Chapter 3 – explains the process of establishing the reasonable alternatives of the BNDP.
- Chapter 4 – presents the outcomes of the assessment of reasonable alternatives.
- Chapter 5 – explains the BNDP Steering Group's reasons for selecting the preferred option, considering the appraisal.

3. Establishing alternatives

Introduction

3.1 The aim of this chapter is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present "*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*".[5]

Local Plan context

3.2 At the start of the Mendip Local Plan Part I planning period, the housing target for Beckington was 55 new homes, based on the existing housing stock at the time. Between April 2006 and July 2025, Beckington village has accommodated an additional 109 dwellings (a mix of completed or granted consent dwellings), and a further 28 have been completed outside of the settlement of Beckington in the wider neighbourhood area. This gives a total of 137 homes. Under the Mendip Local Plan Part II, no additional housing target was provided – reflecting the level of growth already achieved in the neighbourhood area.

3.3 Following updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the housing target for Somerset Council increased by 41%. Following communication between Beckington Parish Council and Somerset Council's Planning Department, an indicative target of 95 dwellings over the next 15 years was provided. This is the figure on which the BNDP bases its growth target.

Site options

3.4 A Call for Sites (CfS) process was undertaken to identify sites that could accommodate the indicative level of growth of 95 homes. This included writing to all known landowners within the neighbourhood area, writing to landowners who submitted land into the Mendip CfS as part of the Mendip Local Plan Part II, and publishing the CfS process on the internet and on notices across the neighbourhood area. This resulted in responses linked to 24 sites. From this, 19 sites were identified for onward assessment, but five sites were removed as the landowners indicated they were no longer available. An initial sift of these 19 sites removed six sites from consideration, as these sites were not within or adjacent to the settlement area, or were being promoted for employment development. As such, the following 13 sites were identified and assessed in full:

- 2b – Land West of Bath Road (HELAA site 291702).
- 2c – Land to the North of Mill Lane (HELAA site 291704).
- 2d – Land to the South of Mill Lane (HELAA site 291705).
- 2e – Land west of the Bath/Frome Road (HELAA site 291708).
- 3a – Land off Bath Road.
- 3b – Land West of A36/A361 Roundabout.

[5] Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations.

- 3c – Land off Bath Road (comprising sites BNDP 3a and 3b) (HELAA site 291943).
- 7 – Land between Warminster Road and the A36 (HELAA site 291520).
- 36 – Land North of Warminster Road.
- 82 – Land at the Cedars.
- 84 – Land South of Great Dunns Close (HELAA site 291232).
- 85 – Land South of Bath Road (HELAA site 291388).
- 86 – Land Rear of 24 Warminster Road.

3.5 It is recognised that site 85 (Land South of Bath Road, HELAA site 291388) had an outline planning application for up to 35 dwellings approved on 1st June 2026[6], and as such has been removed from consideration.

3.6 Following this CfS activity in 2025, a further four sites were brought forward by Somerset Council as being present in the neighbourhood area and included in the HELAA:

- 87 – Land off Frome Road (HELAA site 291863).
- 88 – Land off Rudge Lane (HELAA site 291700).
- 89 – Land to the South of Warminster Road (HELAA site 292781).
- 90 – Land West of A361 (HELAA site 292780).

3.7 Each of the sites that have not been discounted have been subject to a detailed independent site assessment, undertaken by Brodie Planning Associates.

Identifying alternatives

3.8 Recognising that sites that have already been identified in Beckington have undergone an in-depth independent assessment, there is little value in re-assessing the sites individually through the SEA. Rather, it is more useful to explore how the housing target could be met.

3.9 One option could be to allocate one large site to meet the housing target of 95 dwellings in full. Three identified sites could achieve this (assuming a 25 dwelling per hectare development density). These three sites are all located on the edge of the settlement adjoining the settlement boundary:

- Site 3c – Land off Bath Road (HELAA site 291943); it is approximately 4.57ha in size and could deliver 114 dwellings.
- Site 87 - Land off Frome Road (HELAA site 291863); it is approximately 5.9ha in size and could deliver 147 dwellings.
- Site 89 - Land to the South of Warminster Road (HELAA site 292781); it is approximately 4.6ha in size and could deliver 115 dwellings.

3.10 Another option would be to allocate a number of smaller sites in combination. As there are multiple smaller sites in Beckington, there could be a multitude of combinations. Instead of presenting effects linked to all

[6] Somerset Council (2026): Planning Application Summary - 2025/0276/OUT.

possible combinations of smaller sites, a points of the compass approach is taken – which highlights constraints and opportunities in different parts of the Beckington settlement. The areas are as follows:

- North – which could include site 88 (Land off Rudge Lane, HELAA site 291700), site 84 (Land South of Great Dunns Close, HELAA site 291232), site 3a (Land off Bath Road), and site 3b (Land West of A36/A361 Roundabout).
- West – which could include 2b (Land West of Bath Road, HELAA site 291702), 2c (Land to the North of Mill Lane, HELAA site 291704), 2d (Land to the South of Mill Lane, HELAA site 291705), 2e (Land west of the Bath/Frome Road, HELAA site 291708), and site 82 (Land at the Cedars).
- South – which could include site 36 (Land North of Warminster Road), site 86 (Land Rear of 24 Warminster Road), site 7 (Land between Warminster Road and the A36, HELAA site 291520), and site 90 (Land West of A361, HELAA site 292780).

3.11 Two ‘sets’ of alternative options are therefore progressed for appraisal in the next chapter with a view to aiding decision making – an appraisal of the large sites and a points of the compass appraisal encompassing all the smaller sites – see Figures 3.1 and 3.2. It will be down to the plan-maker to weigh up the pros and cons of these different approaches and identify the preferred approach for the Beckington NDP. To this effect a response from the plan-maker is provided in Chapter 5.



Figure 3.1: Reasonable alternatives Set 1 - large sites

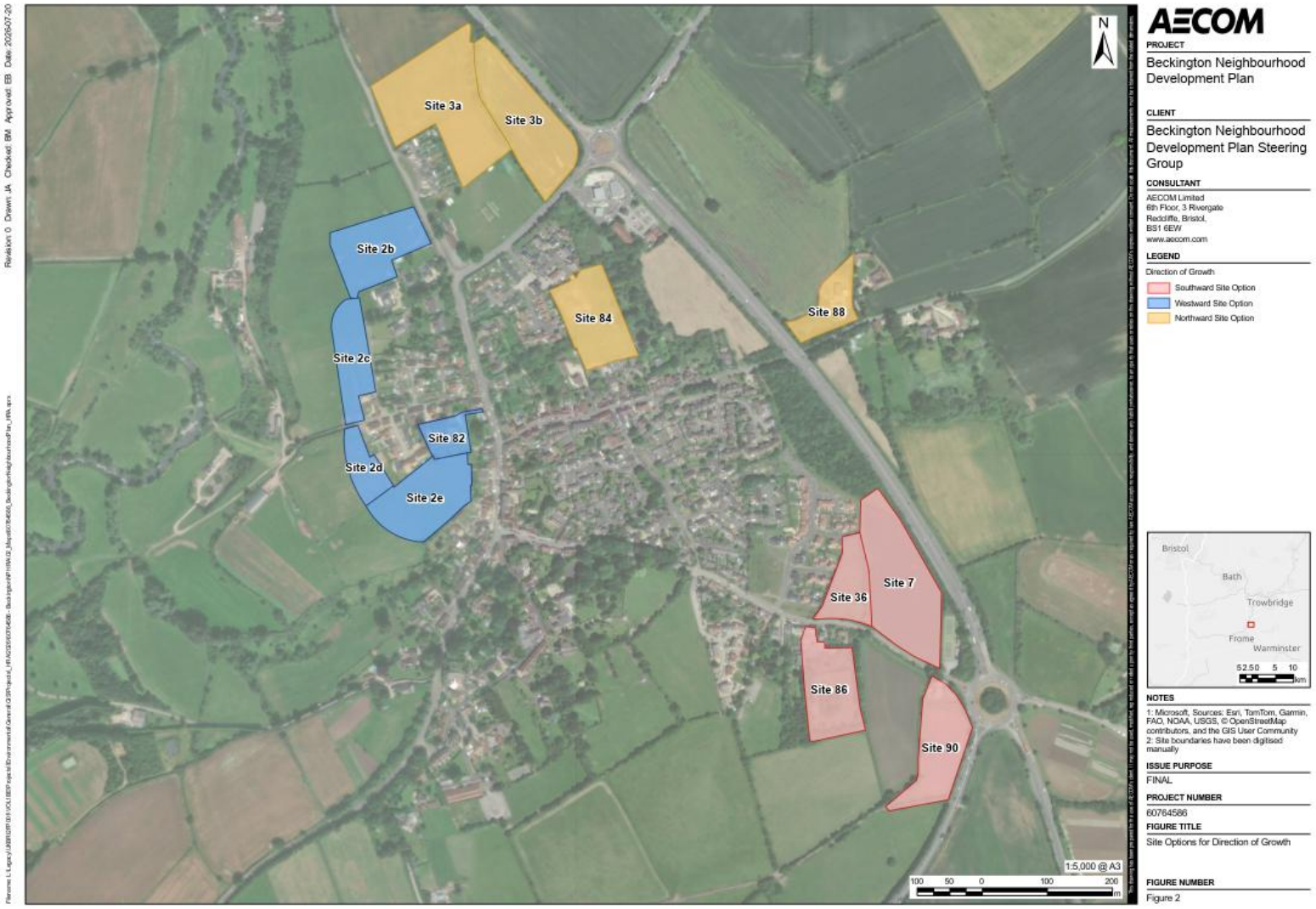


Figure 3.2: Reasonable alternatives Set 2 - direction of growth on smaller sites

4. Assessing alternatives

Methodology

4.1 For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline pre-mitigation (i.e., a policy off approach), drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertain effects, will also be noted.

4.2 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a significant effect, this is made explicit in the appraisal text.

4.3 For the assessment of the large sites, efforts are also made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and provide a **ranking** of the options relative to each topic. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective, with 1 performing the best. An 'equals' sign (=) indicates options are ranked on par with each other and occurs when no significant or meaningful differences can be drawn between the options.

4.4 For the assessment of broad areas for development, a narrative has been produced that evaluates the potential effects at individual sites and combinations of sites in the three different directions selected. The SEA has considered the potential constraints and opportunities associated with delivering new homes in these locations and is informed by and structured around the SEA topics which have been scoped into the assessment. The appraisal findings are presented as a commentary of effects as opposed to a direct comparison.

4.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the Regulations.[7] So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

[7] Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Large sites

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Table 4.1: Summary findings for biodiversity and geodiversity

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	Yes - negative
	Rank	3	1	2

4.6 In relation to internationally and nationally designated biodiversity and geodiversity, Option 1.2 is considered to be the least constrained of the three options. This is due to the site not intersecting with bat consultation zones that are associated with the Mells Valley SAC and / or the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC, whereas both Option 1.1 and Option 1.3 do overlap with these consultation zones. This highlights the potential for development of these sites to disrupt roosting and hunting behaviours of important bat populations in the wider Somerset area. Additionally, growth through Option 1.2 or Option 1.3 would deliver growth in areas of Beckington that do not overlap with SSSI Impact Risk Zones, unlike Option 1.1– which intersects an Impact Risk Zone associated with Vallis Vale SSSI.

4.7 In relation to local biodiversity, all three options contain important, mature boundary trees and hedgerows that are identified as being key contributing features in supporting local biodiversity connectivity and value. This is especially important for Option 1.2, given that the features onsite are identified as contributors to a wider green corridor of biodiversity value in the neighbourhood area. Additionally, the site assessment work identifies that the mature hedgerows and tree belt coverage within the boundaries of Option 1.1 is substantial, and the development of the site would result in the loss of an established field boundary, which could disrupt biodiversity connectivity and detract from value in the neighbourhood area. As such, development through this option could lead to negative effects and is less likely to protect or enhance biodiversity.

4.8 Considering the above, Option 1.1 is concluded to have the greatest biodiversity and geodiversity sensitivity and is ranked last followed by Option 1.3. This reflects the contribution of the sites to important bat populations, and the substantial local biodiversity features associated with the sites. As such, the potential for significant negative effects is highlighted at this stage and if either of the sites were to be progressed, mitigation in relation to European designated sites should be agreed with Natural England. Option 1.2 is ranked first. Whilst it is recognised that there are important local features within and on the site boundaries, development of this site is more likely to avoid significant effects arising. If the site were progressed, policy mitigation could be provided that seeks to ensure existing habitats are retained and enhanced in development proposals.

4.9 Notably, any site that is progressed as an allocation will be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) which will better inform the nature and significance of effects under this topic.

Climate change and flood risk

Table 4.2: Summary findings for climate change and flood risk

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	3	1	2

4.10 In relation to climate change adaptation, all three options would deliver growth within areas of fluvial Flood Zone 1 – indicating that they have a low likelihood of experiencing flooding linked to river sources. As such, the options cannot be differentiated based on this type of flood risk alone.

4.11 It is recognised that each site is also at risk of surface water flooding, but to varying levels. For example, Option 1.2 would deliver growth in an area with generally low surface flood risk – with a small area of greater risk in the north-western corner of the site. Whilst surface water flood risk does not significantly constrain the site, it is noted that growth in this location could exacerbate the existing low surface water flood risk on the adjacent Frome Road to the south and west, due to a likely increase in surface runoff. Additionally, whilst much of Option 1.3 has low surface flood risk, there is a greater area at low risk of surface water flooding within the northern extent of the site, and adjacent along Warminster Road to the north and the A361 to the east. Again, development in this location would exacerbate surface water flood risk on the road network. Comparatively, Option 1.1 is the most constrained in relation to surface water flood risk – with areas of low to medium risk cutting through the centre of the site, and an area of high risk on the northern boundary. As such, there is a need to deliver effective new drainage solutions at any of the options.

4.12 In relation to climate change mitigation, any growth in the neighbourhood area will likely result in an increase in emissions being generated in Beckington. This is due to an intensification of activity in the neighbourhood area – largely linked to an increase in domestic activities and transportation levels. Whilst Option 1.2 is a slightly larger site than Options 1.1 and 1.3, it is assumed that development under any option would be capped at around 100 new homes in line with the housing target (of 95 homes) – and therefore there would be negligible differences in terms of total emissions. However, it is recognised that Option 1.1 is positioned closer to key facilities and services in Beckington, and within proximity to a bus stop – which could help reduce emissions linked to transportation, as active and sustainable transport opportunities may be more viable.

4.13 Overall, Option 1.2 is ranked first, due to it being at the lowest risk of flooding – as such development through this option would likely have reduced impacts to surrounding flood risk when compared to other options. However, it is recognised that this site would be a relative distance from key services and sustainable transport opportunities present in the settlement. Following this, Option 1.3 is ranked next – reflecting the relative distance of the site from services within the settlement boundary and sustainable transport opportunities, and its potential to exacerbate flood risk along Warminster Road and the A361. Finally, Option 1.1 is ranked last – given its greater risk

of flooding within the site boundaries. It is considered likely under any option that significant effects could be avoided, particularly considering the NPPF and Local Plan policy mitigation in place in relation to elements like sustainable drainage solutions. Reflecting the nature of the constraints and the need for on-site mitigation, the potential for moderate negative effects is highlighted prior to site specific mitigation being identified.

Community wellbeing

Table 4.3: Summary findings for community wellbeing

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	1	2	3

4.14 From a community wellbeing perspective, all three options are likely to perform positively – as they will deliver development to meet or potentially exceed the identified housing need in Beckington. Furthermore, all three options would deliver growth that is well related to Beckington, by focusing on sites adjacent to the defined settlement boundaries. Delivering growth adjacent to the settlement boundaries will help to deliver development within proximity to important services and facilities within Beckington village.

4.15 Option 1.1 would deliver growth to the north of Beckington. Growth would be within good proximity to the playing field, Beckington Playground (Local Green Space 1), and Beckington Memorial Hall to the south / south-west of the site. It is noted that the Beckington playground is the only public space of its type in the neighbourhood area, and as such is considered to be very important by Somerset Council. Furthermore, it is recognised that there is a public right of way that passes through the site that should be retained in development as this would likely benefit health by linking with safe and established local pedestrian routes. Additionally, the site is within close proximity to existing residential development to the south and west, which would likely help with promoting community identity and integration. Development would also be positioned within close proximity to the services at A36 roundabout to the east, which contains an M&S Simply Food convenience store. However, it is recognised that parts of the site are adversely impacted by road noise associated with the A36 – which could negatively impact upon health through levels of disturbance.

4.16 It is noted that Option 1.2 would deliver growth within proximity to existing residential areas to the north and east, which would likely contribute towards promoting community identity and integration with the existing settlement. However, it is recognised that the site is less well connected to the settlement core than Option 1.1 and would not be positioned within proximity to key community services and facilities that promote community integration or support health and wellbeing. Whilst growth would be delivered within proximity to Springmead School, it is recognised that this school is private and is not well integrated with the community of Beckington. Additionally, the playing field within the site boundary is currently only for use by the school – it is not open to the public.

4.17 Option 1.3, whilst adjacent to the settlement boundaries, is less well-connected to the settlement core when compared to Option 1.1. It would deliver development adjacent to residential development to the west, and within proximity to residential development to the north-west, which would likely allow for a level of community cohesion. Additionally, it would also deliver growth within proximity to the Beckington Tennis Association courts, which are located to the north, which could encourage an uptake in the sport and contribute towards physical and mental health. However, similarly to Option 1.1, there could be issues associated with noise disturbances, given the presence of Warminster Road to the north and the A361 and roundabout to the east.

4.18 In conclusion, Option 1.1 is ranked first – reflecting that development would be delivered within close proximity to important community infrastructure but could also result in negative impacts due to noise and pollution associated with the road network. Option 1.2 is ranked second, reflecting that it is set back from the A361 and avoids associated impacts with wellbeing, but is also removed from community infrastructure. Option 1.3 is ranked the least favourably, given it would deliver growth further from community infrastructure, and would also likely be negatively impacted by noise and pollution associated with the road network. All options perform positively in terms of their housing contribution, and by meeting needs in full at one site, there is the potential to maximise affordable housing contributions, which could lead to significant positive effects. However, this is notwithstanding the potential need for site level mitigation in relation to development adjacent to the A36 / A361 to avoid negative effects arising as well under Options 1.1 and 1.3.

Historic environment

Table 4.4: Summary findings for historic environment

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Historic environment	Significant effect?	No	Yes – negative	No
	Rank	1	3	2

4.19 In relation to the historic environment, Option 1.1 would deliver development away from the Beckington Conservation Area and removed from listed buildings. As such, it is anticipated that growth through this option would not lead to any effects on the historic environment or heritage value of the neighbourhood area.

4.20 Comparatively, Option 1.2 is adjacent to the Beckington Conservation Area, which is located to the north, north-east, and east. As such, growth through this option could adversely impact upon the designated area, given there would be changes to the Frome Road ‘gateway’, additional development on the western side of the road (which has previously detracted from the historic character of the road), and impacts to the area’s sense of intimacy. Additionally, growth through this option could adversely impact upon views to and / or from several listed buildings and could also impact upon their setting. This includes:

- Grade II Gazebo and attached garden wall, about 35 metres south-east of Beckington Manor (to the north of the site).
- Grade II Beckington Manor, attached garden wall, gate and piers (to the north of the site)
- Grade II Sandy Hill House (to the east of the site).
- Grade II Knoyle Cottage (to the east of the site).
- Grade II 40 and 42, Castle Corner (to the east of the site).
- Grade II Cartref (to the east of the site).
- Grade II* The Castle (to the east of the site).
- Grade II The Wool Hall (to the east of the site).

4.21 Option 1.3 would deliver development outside of the Beckington Conservation Area but in proximity to three listed buildings:

- Grade II Somerlea, forecourt wall and gate piers (located to the north / north-west of the site).
- Grade II 26, Warminster Road (located to the north / north-west of the site).
- Grade II No 24 and adjacent garden wall (located to the north / north-west of the site).

As such, these listed structures could be impacted in terms of changes to their views and their setting. However, given that development has occurred in closer proximity to these heritage assets to the north of Warminster Road (Shepherds Way development), their sensitivity to development through Option 1.3 has the potential to be low.

4.22 Overall, Option 1.1 is considered to rank first in relation to the historic environment, given its removal from heritage designations. This is followed by Option 1.3, given the likely reduced sensitivity of the nearby listed buildings. Option 1.2 is found to rank last in relation to the historic environment, given it is located adjacent to the Beckington Conservation Area, and development through this option could adversely impact on the historic character of the designation. It also reflects the potential for nearby listed buildings to be adversely affected by development. As such, the potential for significant negative effects is identified under Option 1.2. Minor negative effects are associated with Option 1.3 reflecting the potential need for additional mitigation. Neutral effects are considered likely under Option 1.1.

Land, soil and water resources

Table 4.5: Summary findings for land, soil and water resources

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes - negative	No
	Rank	3	2	1

4.23 It is important to note that previous development applications in Beckington have been refused due to issues relating to drainage systems and wastewater capacity. Whilst it is recognised as a key constraint in relation to development, it is not used to differentiate options. Rather, it is considered to be a baseline issue affecting all the options.

4.24 In relation to land, soil and water resources, Option 1.1 would deliver development on a greenfield site that is currently in agricultural use. The site has been identified as Grade 3a according to the Predictive Agricultural Land Classification 2026, and there is also agricultural activity in the fields to the north and west. As such, development at this site has the potential to result in the loss of productive soils, which cannot be mitigated. Additionally, it is recognised that there is a watercourse to the west of the site included in Option 1.1, which could also be adversely affected by development and an increase in surface runoff.

4.25 Comparatively, both Option 1.2 and Option 1.3 have been identified as being Grade 4 under the Predictive Agricultural Land Classification 2026. As such, whilst they are both in agricultural use, it is less likely that they are underlain by high-quality soils. Therefore, if development were to be delivered through one of these two options, its potential impact is considered likely to be lower. It is also recognised that Option 1.2 would deliver development within proximity to the River Frome, which has been identified as being adversely affected by sewage and water pollutants downstream of Beckington. As such, Option 1.2 has the potential to impact upon the local water environment.

4.26 In conclusion, Option 1.3 is ranked first. This reflects its predicted lower agricultural land quality and its reduced likelihood of impacting upon the water environment. Following this is Option 1.2; whilst it has a predicted lower agricultural land quality, it is within proximity to a tributary of the River Frome and as such development of the site could lead to adverse effects on the water environment. Comparatively, Option 1.1 is ranked last, as development through this option would result in the loss of higher quality land and could adversely impact upon the watercourse to the west. The potential for significant negative effects is identified under Option 1.1 and Option 1.2, reflecting the need for onsite mitigation in relation to the watercourse. It is assumed under any development scenario that appropriate wastewater treatment capacity and sufficient drainage will be identified prior to development as an intrinsic issue for plan development and progression.

Landscape

Table 4.6: Summary findings for landscape

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No
	Rank	3	2	1

4.27 In relation to landscape character and quality, Option 1.1 has been identified as being highly sensitive. It is located within the 'Village north' area in the Landscape Value Report, which is special for its long views over the open countryside and river valley. It is also adjacent to Character Area 4: North of Conservation Area mid and northern end of Bath Road and mid-section of Mill Lane, which is identified as having a good spatial distribution and a green character. Site assessment work indicates that development through this option would be located on a landscape plateau that is visible from the A36 to the east of the site, Bath Road to the west, and the existing Beckington settlement to the south – given that the site would be at a slightly lower elevation and would be easily viewed from these directions. As such, character and quality in this part of the neighbourhood area could be adversely affected, and impact further on the settlement character of Beckington. This is reaffirmed through a previous planning application (2017/0818/FUL), which was refused and dismissed at appeal, as development would "*encroach into the open countryside and have a harmful impact on the countryside's intrinsic character and appearance*". Furthermore, whilst undesignated, it is also recognised that there are also significant oak trees within the hedgerow / tree belt that intersects the site, which are likely to have landscape importance (for example, contributing to key views, or providing screening effects).

4.28 Option 1.2 is located within the 'Frome Road and Bonnyleigh Hill' area as identified through the Landscape Value Report, and the long views to the river valley with the village perched on the plateau are special qualities of the area. It is noted that the river valley itself is important to the community in terms of its landscape value, and development within proximity to this area through Option 1.2 could negatively impact upon its value and significance. Additionally, the site under Option 1.2 is adjacent to Character Area 3: Conservation Area Castle Corner, southern end of Church Street and the mid and southern end of Frome Road, which has important landscape features including the intimacy of development that contrasts with the wider spaces along the road, and gaps in development providing views to the undeveloped fields. It is recognised that the eastern half of the site experiences a distinct land level difference when compared to Frome Road, and is considerably higher than the surrounding development. Additionally, Option 1.2 experiences a declining topography in a north-east direction; the western half of the site is also elevated, and as such the site is more visually and topographically prominent. Considering this, development of the site could impact upon character and quality through changes to visual amenity in the neighbourhood area. Additionally, it is noted that this site contains a strong hedgerow and tree belt along its boundary with Frome Road, which is

a valued landscape feature, and the site is identified as contributing to the Beckington Conservation Area gateway from this approach. As such, it is noted that achieving access to the site could interfere with this landscape feature, through potentially having to remove sections to accommodate suitable pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movements. However, it is also noted that effects would largely be dependent on the design of potential development schemes.

4.29 Option 1.3 would deliver development on a site that is relatively flat, with a slight decline in a north-west direction. As such, it is at a similar elevation to existing development within proximity and would be unlikely to be visually prominent in the wider landscape. Additionally, there is a level of screening provided by hedgerow and tree planting along the northern, western, and southern site boundaries. Reflecting on this, it is unlikely that development through this option would result in impacts to visual amenity in the neighbourhood area. This is reaffirmed through the Landscape Value Report, which identifies the site as being within the 'Village East adjoining bypass', which is a common type of rural village edge, and has no special or distinctive features. Additionally, the site is adjacent to the newer development that forms Character Area 7: Shepherds Way development in 2016 of 31 dwellings and Longmeadow development of 8 dwellings infill to historic buildings to south of Warminster Road, which is anticipated to have a reduced landscape sensitivity than character areas closer to the settlement core of Beckington. However, it is recognised that development through this option would result in the southern extension of the built form of Beckington into the open countryside, which would be an undesirable pattern of growth.

4.30 Reflecting on the above, Option 1.3 is ranked first, given that development would be delivered on a site with a lower landscape sensitivity, and a level of visual screening. Whilst negative effects could be anticipated reflecting the extension of the settlement southwards through this option, no significant effects are concluded likely. Following this is Option 1.2, given that the site is visually prominent and contributes to the gateway into the village from Frome Road. Moderate negative effects are anticipated through this option. Finally, Option 1.1 is ranked last in relation to the landscape, given that development through this option would be prominent in the landscape, highly visible, and detract from the open countryside character that is present to the north of Beckington. Significant negative effects are considered more likely under this option. However, it is also recognised that Option 1.1 is the only option that has been subject to a planning application that has provided more detail in relation to landscape impacts.

Transportation

Table 4.7: Summary findings for transportation

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Transportation	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	2	3	1

4.31 Considering transportation, Option 1.1 is anticipated to have vehicular access provided from Bath Road to the west, with access to this road coming from the main Beckington Roundabout and Trowbridge Road to the south. It is noted that there is no access from the A36 to the north. The option is positioned well to deliver development within proximity to sustainable transportation opportunities (given the bus stop located on Bath Road to the south) and is likely to encourage active transportation engagement given the pavement along Bath Road and Trowbridge Road. It is noted that an existing public right of way (FR1.1) intersects the site, which will need to be retained in development. Again, this is anticipated to contribute positively towards active travel uptake by integrating development through this option with the wider public rights of way network in Beckington and surrounding the neighbourhood area. However, it is noted that a previous planning application (2017/0818/FUL) was refused and dismissed, as part of this site is considered to be a "*relatively inaccessible location",* but this planning application was for an industrial park and car dealership on part of the site to the east, adjacent to the A36.

4.32 Option 1.2 is more constrained in terms of transportation. Whilst the site already benefits from access provided by Frome Road, existing access via Stubbs Lane to the north would be unsuitable due to the width of the road, and its status as a public right of way. As such, it is unlikely to be able to support additional vehicles on the road associated with new development, resulting in an increase in vehicles on Frome Road, which would likely be subject to a highways assessment given the 30mph limit on this road. An independent site assessment of Option 1.2 also highlights that access from the easternmost part of the site is highly unlikely, due to land level difference and road alignment. It is also recognised that residents of Beckington feel that the shape of Frome Road and the traffic speed in this part of the neighbourhood area contributes to an unsafe road, and as such development through Option 1.2 could lead to increased concerns around safety, due to more cars moving through this area. However, it is also noted that development through this option would be delivered within proximity to sustainable transportation opportunities (bus stops located on Frome Road) and active travel opportunities given the public right of way and pavement along Frome Road.

4.33 Development through Option 1.3 would benefit from existing access onto Warminster Road to the north, which has pavement provision to allow for engagement with active transportation opportunities. However, the lack of sustainable transport infrastructure in this part of Beckington is likely to increase the number of private vehicles on the local road network.

4.34 As large sites, all options have increased viability in terms of addressing highways impacts but would concentrate all growth in one location in the settlement and potentially exacerbate traffic conditions in certain locations. Reflecting this, site-specific traffic mitigation schemes should be developed with the Highways Authority should any option be progressed.

4.35 Overall, Option 1.3 is considered to rank first in relation to transportation. Whilst development would be delivered in an area with limited potential for sustainable transportation engagement, it has existing road access and pedestrian connectivity. Option 1.1 is ranked next, as development would be delivered with good access to sustainable and active transport opportunities, and reflecting the potential for vehicle access to be provided – but also taking into consideration the findings of the previous planning application, which concluded that part of the site was in a "*relatively inaccessible location*". Option 1.2 is ranked last – whilst it could provide for sustainable and active transport engagement, Stubbs Lane and Frome Road are unsuitable access points for private vehicles. At this stage, there are traffic impact uncertainties associated with concentrating all growth in one location in the settlement, apparent under all options. Further input from the Highways Authority would be able to better inform the potential effects if any option were to be progressed.

Conclusion

Table 4.8: Overall summary findings

Summary findings		Option 1.1 – site 3c	Option 1.2 – site 87	Option 1.3 – site 89
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	Yes - negative
	Rank	3	1	2
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	3	1	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	1	2	3
Historic environment	Significant effect?	No	Yes – negative	No
	Rank	1	3	2
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes - negative	No
	Rank	3	2	1
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No
	Rank	3	2	1
Transportation	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	2	3	1

4.36 Overall, the assessment identifies that Option 1.3 (Site 89) performs well in relation to landscape, transportation, and land, soil and water resources, but development would likely be constrained by biodiversity and to a lesser extent heritage considerations (linked to listed buildings within proximity to the site). Additionally, growth through this site has the potential to bring forward a greater number of vehicles on the local road network. Option 1.2 (Site 87) ranks better in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, and climate change and flood risk. However, development could result in significant adverse effects on the setting of the Beckington Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings. Additionally, this option is the least favourable in relation to transportation, due to accessibility issues and uncertainty over impacts to local traffic. Finally, Option 1.1 (Site 3c) would be anticipated to bring forward significant negative effects in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, climate change and flood risk, land, soil and water resources, and landscape, reflecting the higher sensitivity of the option when compared to the other two. Whilst it is located within closer proximity to services and community infrastructure, its potential to adversely impact upon the landscape contributes to it being considered the least sustainable site for future growth. However, it is anticipated that growth through Option 1.1 would not lead to any effects on the historic environment or heritage value of the neighbourhood area, given the distance of the site from heritage constraints.

Broad areas for development

Area 1: North Beckington

4.37 Growth through any combination of the northern site options in Beckington would deliver growth within bat consultation zones - linked to the Mells Valley SAC to the south-west of the neighbourhood area. As such, development has the potential to disrupt important roost and hunting habitats for bat populations in the wider Somerset area. Additionally, Site 3a, Site 3b and Site 84 are anticipated to be subject to consultation with Natural England, reflecting their intersection with SSSI IRZs associated with the Vallis Vale SSSI, which is located to the south-west of the neighbourhood area. In relation to local biodiversity considerations, each site within the northern area includes features within, on, or adjacent to their boundaries – including substantial hedgerows and treebelts (Site 3a and Site 3b), woodland priority habitat (Site 84) and boundary vegetation and trees (Site 88). As such, any combination of these sites is anticipated to result in impacts to biodiversity connectivity in Beckington, through disturbance or habitat loss and increased human activity. As such, the potential for **significant negative effects for biodiversity** under a northwards direction of growth is identified at this stage. This particularly reflects the sensitivity of bat populations and associated habitats and the need to consult with Natural England further to this effect. Notably, sites that are progressed through the plan will be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) which will better inform the nature and significance of effects under this topic.

4.38 In relation to climate change and flood risk, growth across any combination of the northern sites would likely result in an increase in emissions generated in Beckington. This is due to an intensification of activity in the neighbourhood area, largely associated with domestic and transport activity. However, the increase could be marginally reduced through a focus on Site 84, given that it is located within the settlement boundary and could offer better access to important services and facilities through active and sustainable transport opportunities. The same could be said of Site 3a or Site 3b, given that they are both located within proximity to bus stops to allow for sustainable transport access. With regards to flood risk, growth through any combination of the northern sites would deliver growth in areas in Flood Zone 1 with reduced risk of fluvial flooding. In relation to surface water flood risk, all the northern sites experience a level of risk, or are adjacent to areas at risk, though it is anticipated that this could largely be avoided or mitigated with sustainable drainage solutions. As such, **minor negative effects** are concluded as most likely for **climate change and flood risk** under a northwards direction of growth.

4.39 Considering community wellbeing, growth at the northern sites would deliver hew housing of a range of types and tenures within proximity to the Beckington Playground (Local Green Space 1) and Beckington Memorial Hall (Site 3a and Site 3b), the services at the A36 roundabout (Site 3b), and The Foresters pub (Site 84). With the exception of Site 88 which is further removed from existing community infrastructure. It is noted that growth to the north would also deliver development within proximity to the A36, which has associated noise and pollution impacts. As such, growth combinations have the potential to negatively impact upon health and wellbeing. Overall, **mixed minor positive and negative effects** are considered likely for community wellbeing under a northwards direction of growth and the potential need to mitigate health impacts associated with the A36 is noted.

4.40 With regards to the historic environment, growth in the north that avoids Site 84 would deliver development removed from the Beckington Conservation Area – minimising the associated impacts. Additionally, growth in the north that avoids Sites 84 and 88 would also avoid development in the vicinity of listed buildings, thus protecting the settings and significance of important heritage assets in Beckington. However, it is noted that the Grade II Priors Court Farmhouse is within proximity to Site 88 – located to the south-east of the site. As such, a development combination including this site could impact the setting of the heritage asset, for example through changes to key views. Site 84 is adjacent to the Beckington Conservation Area's northern boundary and development at this site could have impacts on the distinctive Bath Road, the northern end of Frome Road, the western end of Warminster Road and Goose Street character area – which is characterised by long rows of houses and cottages interspersed with larger houses. As such, a change in the settlement pattern linked to new development could adversely impact upon the character and quality of the designated area. It is considered that the site is screened from listed buildings associated with the conservation area through existing development. Overall, there is the **potential to allocate sites in the north and avoid significant effects arising for the historic environment**. However, there is the **potential for significant negative effects at two sites**; Sites 84 and 88, which should be noted.

4.41 Growth at Sites 3a, 3b and 88 would result in the development of greenfield sites underlain with Grade 3a (best and most versatile) agricultural land, according to the 2026 Predictive Agricultural Land Classification. However, Site 84 is classified as 'urban' in this dataset, and as such a growth combination including this site is anticipated to reduce the potential for loss of high quality soils. In relation to water quality, there are known drainage and wastewater capacity issues within Beckington that are a constraint for any given development opportunity. Site 84 has previously had a planning application refused (2020/1150/FUL) and then dismissed at appeal based on the potential adverse impacts of unsatisfactory drainage considerations development of the site could have on the existing Beckington village. As such, **minor negative effects** are considered likely for land, soil and water resources through northwards growth – reflecting the likely loss of higher quality soils through small-scale development opportunities. It is assumed under any development scenario that appropriate wastewater treatment capacity and sufficient drainage will be identified prior to development as an intrinsic issue for plan development and progression.

4.42 In relation to landscape, two sites lie adjacent to established Character Areas - Character Area 4: North of Conservation Area mid and northern end of Bath Road and mid-section of Mill Lane (Site 3a) and Character Area 6: Great Dunns development in 2015 of 43 dwellings (Site 84). These areas are characterised by their urban form and spatial distribution, and as such are likely to have some capacity to incorporate additional growth. Development at Site 3a and/ or Site 3b will extend the settlement of Beckington northwards into the open countryside, which could impact upon the character of this part of the Beckington neighbourhood area. This is especially true for Site 3b, which has had a previous planning application refused and dismissed at appeal due to the urbanising effect development would have in this part of the neighbourhood area, which could have a "*harmful impact upon the countryside's intrinsic character and appearance*" (2017/0818/FUL). It is also noted these sites lie the 'village north' landscape area, identified for fitting within the rural rolling hills and river valley, and its special qualities of long views over open countryside and river valley. It is likely development would disturb this character and impact upon associated qualities, though it is recognised that Site 3a is relatively discreet in terms of landscape and is anticipated to have reduced landscape impacts when compared to Site 3b. Development at Site 88 would extend the settlement to the north-east, whilst development at Site 84 would deliver growth within the settlement boundary, and within the 'village east adjoining bypass' landscape area, which is considered to be of typical rural village edge character and has no special or distinctive features. As such, Site 84 is anticipated to have lower landscape impacts. **Minor negative effects** are considered likely in relation to the landscape through growth at any of the northern area options. Reflecting the potential for development to affect the intrinsic character of the area, **moderate negative effects are considered more likely at Site 3a and significant negative effects are considered more likely at Site 3b**.

4.43 In relation to transportation, growth to the north has the potential to be well connected to the local road network. This is due to Site 3a being adjacent to Bath Road (access is anticipated to be provided from here), Site 3b being adjacent to Trowbridge Road (access is anticipated to be provided from

here), and both of these sites being within easy access of the A36 to the east. Additionally, Site 3a has a public right of way intersecting the site in a north to south direction, which provides pedestrian access to Trowbridge Road, and both sites are likely to facilitate further pedestrian activity due to the pavement provision along Bath Road and Trowbridge Road. Sustainable access could be facilitated through bus stops on Bath Road to the south. Comparatively, a growth combination including Site 88 would deliver development adjacent to Rudge Lane; whilst this site has existing access from this route, and the road has a pavement, there are no bus stops along the route – nor along Goose Street, which it connects to in the west. Connectivity can still be achieved through Site 84, though it will come from Great Dunns Close to the north. This is a more narrow, residential street, and as such does is a greater distance from sustainable transport opportunities along Bath Road. Overall, **positive effects** are considered likely for transportation under a northwards direction of growth.

Table 4.9: Overall summary findings for North Beckington

SEA topic	Significant effect?
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Yes - negative
Climate change and flood risk	No
Community wellbeing	No
Historic environment	Yes - negative
Land, soil and water resources	No
Landscape	Yes - negative
Transportation	No

Area 2: West Beckington

4.44 Growth through any combination of the western site options in Beckington has the potential to disrupt important roost and hunting habitats for bat populations in the wider Somerset area. This reflects the overlap of all the western sites with the bat consultation zones linked to the Mells Valley SAC to the south-west of the Beckington neighbourhood area. Additionally, development through any combination of western sites is anticipated to require consultation with Natural England, reflecting their intersection with SSSI IRZs associated with the Vallis Vale SSSI, which is located to the south-west of the neighbourhood area. Furthermore, each site contributes towards local biodiversity, and so growth in a westwards direction will likely have different effects depending on which sites are developed. For example, growth could come forward on sites with established hedgerows (Site 2b, Site 2c, Site 2d and Site 2e), established boundary trees (Site 2c), or non-designated grass areas (Site 2e), and trees linked to the remnants of a fruit orchard (Site 82). As such, any combination of these sites is anticipated to result in impacts to biodiversity connectivity in Beckington, through disturbances to the network experienced due to potential loss, or increased human activity. Overall, the potential for **significant negative effects** is identified for biodiversity at this stage under a westwards direction of growth. Most notably, any sites progressed as allocations would be subject to Habitat

Regulations Assessment (HRA) to better inform the nature and significance of effects.

4.45 With regards to climate change and flood risk, growth across any combination of the western sites would likely result in an increase in emissions generated in Beckington. This is due to an intensification of activity in the neighbourhood area, largely associated with domestic and transport activity. Additionally, whilst the sites are positioned adjacent to the existing settlement boundaries, there do not offer easy access to sustainable transportation infrastructure, and only Site 2b and Site 82 would likely offer safe pedestrian access given the pavement provision on Bath Road, adjacent to these sites to the east. Concerning flood risk, growth in a westwards direction in Beckington would deliver new development in areas of Flood Zone 1 (low risk of fluvial flooding) and low risk of surface water flood risk, though it is recognised that some sites experience greater surface water flood risk on site boundaries or within proximity (for example, Site 2c experiences greater risk on the southern site boundary, and Site 2d experiences greater risk on the northern site boundary). It is considered likely that sustainable drainage solutions in new development could reduce the flood risk if a westwards direction was taken. Overall, **minor negative effects** are considered likely in relation to climate change and flood risk.

4.46 Considering community wellbeing, all sites could contribute new homes of a range of types and tenures to meet the forecasted needs. Additionally, growth through the western sites would deliver development within proximity to the Beckington Playground and Beckington Memorial Hall (Site 2b), Mes Amis Café, and the Woolpack (Site 2e) supporting community cohesion. The western sites are all located adjacent to existing residential development in Beckington, and as such delivering development in this direction would further allow for an enhanced sense of community. However, it is recognised that Site 2d and Site 2e contribute to Local Green Space 6: Fields south of Mill Lane / Beckington Loop, and as such development through these two sites could result in the loss of this important space and its contribution to physical and mental health in the Beckington neighbourhood area. Considering this, the potential for **significant negative effects** is identified (associated with Sites 2d and 2e). **Minor positive effects** are considered more likely at Sites 2b, 2c, and 82.

4.47 With regards to the historic environment, Sites 2c and 2d are not within or in proximity to the Beckington Conservation Area or listed buildings. Site 2b lies outside of the Beckington Conservation Area but adjacent to three Grade II listed buildings to the south of the site: Bountrol (Pickford House) and adjacent Garden Wall; Clifford House; and Coach house and Garden Wall adjacent to Clifford House. As such, development at this site could impact the setting of these heritage assets, for example through changes to their settings which contribute to how they are interpreted in the wider landscape. Site 2e would bring forward development adjacent to the Beckington Conservation Area, and growth through Site 82 would deliver development partially within the conservation area – both sites are adjacent to / within the Castle Corner and the remainder of Frome Road area. This part of the conservation area is characterised by intimacy and more modern development (the improved main road). Both sites are also within close proximity to multiple listed buildings along Frome Road, and Site 2e is within

proximity to two of the five landmark buildings in Beckington village: Grade II* The Cedars, and Grade II Beckington House. As such, development through either Site 2b or Site 2e has the potential to adversely impact upon the historic environment through changes to the setting and significance of important heritage assets and areas. Considering this, the potential for **significant negative effects is identified at all sites except for Sites 2c and 2d where neutral effects are considered more likely**.

4.48 Allocating sites for development to the west of Beckington would result in the development of sites underlain by Grade 3a agricultural soil, according to the 2026 Predictive Agricultural Assessment. It is noted that Site 2b, Site 2c, Site 2d and Site 2d do partially overlap with land considered to be in 'urban' use, linked to the existing Beckington settlement to the east. As such, directing growth to areas closer to existing development may help to reduce impacts to or the loss of productive agricultural soils. It is noted that Site 82 is fully within the 'urban' classification, and as such an approach to development utilising this site would be anticipated to have a reduced effect on soil resources. In relation to water quality, there are known drainage and wastewater capacity issues within Beckington that will affect any growth strategy for neighbourhood area. Whilst none of the westward sites overlap with watercourses, it is recognised that the River Frome is directly to the west of the sites, and is within closer proximity to Site 2b and Site 2c. It is also noted that a tributary of the river runs immediately adjacent to Site 2e and Site 87. There have been concerns over the impact of drainage entering the River Frome and effecting the designating bathing water further downstream. It is possible that development through the westwards sites could exacerbate these concerns, with associated with surface runoff. Overall, **moderate negative effects** are considered likely under a westward direction of growth for land, soil and water resources. It is assumed under any development scenario that appropriate wastewater treatment capacity and sufficient drainage will be identified prior to development as an intrinsic issue for plan development and progression.

4.49 Considering the landscape, development sites in the west lie adjacent to Character Area 1: Conservation Area the southern end of Bath Road, the northern end of Frome Road, the western end of Warminster Road and Goose Street (Site 2e and Site 82), and Character Area 4: North of Conservation Area mid and northern end of Bath Road and mid-section of Mill Lane (Site 2b, Site 2c, and Site 2d). These areas are characterised by their urban form and spatial distribution, and as such are likely to have some capacity to incorporate additional growth. However, growth westwards is also anticipated to have negative effects. This is due to the high likelihood that growth through Site 2b, Site 2c, Site 2d, and 2e would be highly visible in wide ranging views across short, medium, and long distances, due to the distinct landform of this area. The Village West area is identified for its contribution to the village's story, landscape beauty, tranquillity, ecological value, and amenity for residents – and is concluded to be eligible for 'valued landscape' status. As such, any development westwards is anticipated to adversely impact upon landscape character and quality. Furthermore, Site 2b would negatively impact upon Protected View 6 – Views of River Frome valley and beyond, which incorporates the views over undeveloped fields and the river valley from Bath Road to the east. Additionally, Sites 2d and 2e

could negatively impact upon four protected views: Protected View 2 (View out to River Frome valley and hills beyond from Frome Road), Protected View 3 (Views of River Frome valley and western edges of village across fields, from footpath), Protected View 4 (Views of River Frome valley and western edge of Beckington village, across sloping fields, from public footpath leading from Stubb's Lane and the Beckington Loop (south)), and Protected View 5 (Views of western edge of Beckington village, across sloping fields, from the Beckington Loop (north) and public footpath connecting with Mill Lane). As such, it is considered that development in this area would have a significant adverse effect on landscape character and quality in the Beckington neighbourhood area. Landscape impacts at Site 82 could be lower, due to the site being located within the existing settlement and surrounded by residential development on its boundaries. As such, growth focused on this site alone in the west would be less likely to have impacts on the open countryside and its character and quality. Overall, the potential for **significant negative effects** is identified for westward growth in relation to the landscape.

4.50 In relation to transportation, growth to the west is unlikely to be well connected to the road network. Whilst Site 2b has existing access via Bath Road to the east, which would allow for vehicular and pedestrian travel, Site 2c would be reliant on this access and the site coming forward for development. Similarly, Site 2d would require access to be established from Mill Lane to the north – and Site 2e would need to be able to access this access point via Site 2d. Mill Lane is narrow with no pavement, and as such is unlikely to be able to accommodate an increase in the number of vehicles using it, and would be unlikely to provide for safe pedestrian access. Site 82 will likely be accessed from Bath Road depending on land purchasing and / or the demolition of existing structures to make sufficient space. As such, whilst the westward sites are within proximity to Bath Road and its existing sustainable transport offer, it is unlikely that development through Site 2c, Site 2d and Site 2e will encourage an uptake in bus service use. Overall, **moderate negative effects** are considered likely for transportation under a westward direction of growth, with the potential for **significant negative effects** due to reduced connectivity levels along Mill Lane.

Table 4.10: Overall summary findings for West Beckington

SEA topic	Significant effect?
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Yes - negative
Climate change and flood risk	No
Community wellbeing	Yes - negative
Historic environment	Yes – negative
Land, soil and water resources	No
Landscape	Yes - negative
Transportation	Yes – negative

Area 3: South Beckington

4.51 Development at the southern site options in Beckington would deliver growth within bat consultation zones - linked to the Mells Valley SAC to the south-west of the neighbourhood area. As such, development has the potential to disrupt important roost and hunting habitats for bat populations in the wider Somerset area. Additionally, Site 7, Site 36, and Site 86 are anticipated to be subject to consultation with Natural England, reflecting their intersection with SSSI IRZs associated with the Vallis Vale SSSI, which is located to the south-west of the neighbourhood area. In relation to local biodiversity considerations, each site within the southern area includes features within, on, or adjacent to their boundaries – including non-priority grasses and established hedgerows and trees. As such, any combination of these sites is anticipated to result in impacts to biodiversity connectivity in Beckington, through disturbance, potential habitat loss, or increased human activity. Overall, **significant negative effects** are considered likely if development were to come forward through a southern direction. Notably, any site progressed in the plan will be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) which will help to inform the nature and significance of the likely effects.

4.52 In relation to climate change and flood risk, growth across any combination of the southern sites would likely result in an increase in emissions generated in Beckington. This is due to an intensification of activity in the neighbourhood area, largely associated with domestic and transport activity. Whilst Warminster Road offers active transport opportunities through pavement provision, there is a lack of sustainable transport infrastructure along the road, and as such transport emissions are likely to increase through growth focused to the south. With regards to flood risk, growth through any combination of the southern sites would deliver growth in areas in Flood Zone 1 with reduced risk of fluvial flooding. In relation to surface water flood risk, the southern sites experience a mix of flood risk. For example, development through Site 7 or Site 36 would not experience surface water flood risk itself but could exacerbate surface water flood risk along Warminster Road to the south due to a potential increase in surface runoff. Comparatively, the northern extent of Site 86 experiences mid to high surface water flood risk, largely associated with Warminster Road on the northern site boundary, and Site 90 also experiences risk in its northern half and along the northern boundary. However, it is noted that areas of surface water flood risk could largely be mitigated with the effective application of sustainable drainage solutions. Overall, **minor negative effects** are considered likely under southern growth in relation to climate change and flood risk.

4.53 Considering community wellbeing, growth through the southern sites would deliver a range of housing types and tenures within proximity to the Beckington Tennis Association (Local Green Space 3), and within a short distance of White Row Farm and its associated establishments to the east. Growth through Site 7 and Site 86 would also deliver development within proximity to community allotments on Shepherd's Way and a public footpath (Sue's Walk), which gives direct access to the church and Beckington First School. Additionally, the site would also be within close proximity to the doctor's surgery if improved footpath connectivity could be achieved through

development. As such, it is considered that growth southwards would provide positive benefits to new residents by encouraging an uptake in exercise and delivering development within close proximity to key infrastructure that facilitates interactions between residents (for example, the White Row Farm café). This is anticipated to support physical and mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, Site 86 and Site 36 would be likely to encourage greater levels of community cohesion than Site 7 and Site 90, as they are adjacent to the settlement boundaries and existing residential development (though it is noted a small part of Site 7 is also adjacent to the existing settlement boundary in its northern extent). However, it is noted that growth to the south could deliver development within proximity to the A36 to the east, which has associated noise and pollution impacts. This is likely to be more acutely experienced at Site 7 or Site 90, given they are adjacent to the road. As such, growth combinations with these two sites have the potential to negatively impact upon health and wellbeing of new residents. Overall, **both minor positive and minor negative effects** are considered likely for community wellbeing under a southwards direction of growth.

4.54 With regards to the historic environment, the southern sites would avoid development coming forward within or within proximity to the Beckington Conservation Area, which helps to maintain the designated area's historic character and quality. However, any combination of sites to the south would result in growth coming forward within proximity to listed buildings. For example, growth at Site 7 and Site 36 would be within proximity to Grade II listed No.28, forecourt wall and gate piers, Warminster Road; No. 26 Warminster Road; and No. 24 and adjacent garden wall, Warminster Road (to the south-west), and growth at Site 86 would be located adjacent to these historic assets to the south. As such, development to the south has the potential to negatively impact upon the settings and significance of these listed buildings – though it is noted that recent developments along Warminster Road to the west (Shepherds Way and Longmeadow) have been completed and have avoided adverse effects. Whilst the site assessment for Site 90 indicates that growth would be within proximity to these sites, given the distance it would be unlikely for development to impact upon their setting and significance. Overall, **moderate negative effects** are concluded as most likely under a southwards direction of growth for the historic environment (pre-mitigation).

4.55 Growth through a combination of the southern sites will develop greenfield sites identified as being Grade 4 (lower quality) agricultural quality, according to the 2026 Predictive Agricultural Land Classification. Furthermore, Site 86 is in an area of 'urban' land and Grade 4 quality soil. This indicates that a southward direction of growth would result in the development of sites with a lower chance of being underlain by quality soils that can support productive agricultural activity. This would be an efficient use of land and would help to direct growth away from areas in Beckington with higher quality underlying soils. In relation to water quality, there are known drainage and wastewater capacity issues within Beckington, applicable to all sites. This will be a key constraint to overcome as the plan progresses. Growth to the south of Beckington will deliver development away from the River Frome, which could help to avoid exacerbating water quality issues associated with the watercourse and its bathing water downstream of Beckington. It is noted that

Site 7 would be delivered within proximity of an existing watercourse to the west of the site, which flows northward. As such, it may be impacted by new development in this location, through changes in drainage into it. Additionally, Site 86 has a pond within the site boundaries, which could also be impacted by development due to surface water runoff. Overall, **minor negative effects** are considered likely for land, soil and resources under a southwards direction of growth. It is assumed under any development scenario that appropriate wastewater treatment capacity and sufficient drainage will be identified prior to development as an intrinsic issue for plan development and progression.

4.56 Considering the landscape, development through a combination of the southern sites could have a range of impacts. Notably, all southern sites are within the 'Village East adjoining bypass' landscape area, as identified through the Landscape Value Report. This area has no special or distinctive features – which lends to being a more suitable area for development, as new growth would not detract from valued areas and open countryside within the Beckington neighbourhood area. Site 7, Site 36, and Site 86 adjoin Character Area 7: Shepherds Way development in 2016 of 31 dwellings and Longmeadow development of 8 dwellings infill to historic buildings to south of Warminster Road. This area is largely formed of newer development, and as such is likely to have a reduced landscape character sensitivity when compared to the older and more historic parts of the Beckington settlement. Additionally, none of the southern sites are within proximity to a protected view – demonstrating that they are likely to be less visually sensitive than sites to the north and west. Furthermore, growth at Site 36 would likely be viewed as a seemingly natural extension to the settlement of Beckington and would have a reduced landscape impact. This is similar to Site 86, which is considered to be discreetly located and consistent with the surrounding pattern of development. However, Site 7 has been assessed as likely to result in urban encroachment of housing into the countryside and negatively impact upon the character and appearance of this area and the countryside of Beckington. Additionally, growth through Site 90 would be detached from the main settlement of Beckington and would likely have negative landscape effects due to focusing development in an area that is removed from the existing pattern of development. Overall, **minor negative effects** are concluded as most likely in relation to the landscape, reflecting greenfield development and the site-specific constraints where they are present.

4.57 In relation to transportation, growth to the south has the potential to be well connected to the local road network. This is due to all four sites being located adjacent to Warminster Road (to the south of Site 7 and Site 36, and to the north of Site 86 and Site 90). Access to this road already exists for Site 36 (through a farm gate and a dropped curb) and Site 7 (through a dropped curb), and could be expanded for Site 86 and created for Site 90 (subject to considering the distance to the roundabout to the east), which will enable safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the site and the existing Beckington settlement to the west. Additionally, growth to the south would be well positioned to access the A36 and the A361 to the east. However, growth in this direction would not have good access to sustainable transport provision, given the lack of bus stops along Warminster Road. Despite this, **minor**

positive effects would be likely for transportation under a southwards direction of growth.

Table 4.11: Overall summary findings for South Beckington

SEA topic	Significant effect?
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Yes - negative
Climate change and flood risk	No
Community wellbeing	No
Historic environment	No
Land, soil and water resources	No
Landscape	No
Transportation	No

Conclusions

4.58 Overall, a northern direction of growth would provide opportunities to deliver new housing in locations that are generally well related to Beckington and benefit from good access to community facilities, the local road network, active and sustainable transport opportunities. However, a northern growth strategy would also be likely to be constrained by environment considerations. For example, all site combinations would have the potential to affect biodiversity associated with the Mells Valley SAC bat consultation zones and locally important habitats, and most combinations would result in the loss of higher quality agricultural soils. Negative effects are also expected in relation to climate change and flood risk, and landscape, given growth northwards would extend the Beckington settlement into the open countryside. Heritage impacts linked to northwards development are considered to be more uncertain and would depend on the sites selected, due to the proximity of heritage assets and the Beckington Conservation Area.

4.59 A western direction of growth would likely be more constrained than northern or southern growth. Development would still be likely to result in adverse effects on biodiversity due to the overlap with bat consultation zones and the loss or disturbance of locally important habitats and ecological networks. Additionally, westward growth would result in the loss of higher quality agricultural soils, and could also exacerbate existing drainage and water quality concerns associated with the River Frome to the west. The area is highly constrained in relation to the landscape, given the importance of the area to the setting of the existing Beckington settlement and valued views. As such, development in this direction is likely to negatively impact upon valued landscape character and protected views. Furthermore, growth through this approach is likely to have an adverse effect upon the historic environment, due to the number of heritage assets within proximity to the site that could be negatively impacted by new development – through changes to their setting and significance. There are also concerns over access opportunities to the potential sites, given that Mill Lane is narrow and does not provide for safe pedestrian access.

4.60 Finally, a southern direction of growth may offer a more balanced opportunity for accommodating development in Beckington. The southern sites are generally less constrained in landscape terms when compared to northern and western sites, as they are located within an area identified as having limited landscape sensitivity and no special or distinctive features according to the Valued Landscape Report. Additionally, impacts to valued views would be avoided entirely. Development would also benefit from good connectivity to the local road network through Warminster Road and proximity to the A36 and A361, and would provide access to local recreational assets and community facilities that support community wellbeing. It is also noted that development through these sites would be focused on lower quality agricultural soils, and as such would be an efficient use of land within the neighbourhood area, and work toward safeguarding higher quality soils in other locations in Beckington. However, the area would still present constraints related to bat consultation zones and local biodiversity connectivity, and flood risk - though this could be avoided within individual site boundaries.

5. Developing the preferred approach

5.1 The NDP Steering Group have provided the following response to the alternatives assessment:

Large Site Options

5.2 Option 1.1 (Site 3c) would be anticipated to bring forward significant negative effects in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, climate change and flood risk, land, soil and water resources, and landscape. Whilst it is located within closer proximity to services and community infrastructure and is away from the Conservation Area and removed from listed buildings, its potential to adversely impact upon the landscape contributes to it being considered the least sustainable site for future growth.

5.3 Development of Option 1.2 (Site 87) could result in significant adverse effects on the setting of the Beckington Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings and is more constrained in terms of transportation. The recent site assessment (July 2026) conducted by Brodie Planning Associates concludes that "*Access is a major constraint"* and "*A safe and suitable residential point of access to the easternmost part of the site* [from Frome Road] *is highly unlikely due to land level difference, road alignment, the impact on the verdant character of this part of the settlement and the loss of biodiversity corridor including mature trees*." It performs well in terms of climate change and flood risk.

5.4 Option 1.3 (Site 89) performs well in relation to landscape, transportation, and land, soil and water resources, but development would likely be constrained by biodiversity considerations. Additionally, the absence of existing public transport infrastructure could result in a greater number of private vehicles on the local road network.

5.5 Overall, the Steering Group considers that Option 1.3 performs better in terms of development potential.

Points of Compass Options

5.6 The key constraints to housing development in Beckington using the points of the compass review are summarised below

5.7 For sites located in North of Beckington:

- Biodiversity: Significant constraint due to overlap with bat consultation zones linked to the Mells Valley SAC, plus SSSI Impact Risk Zones for some sites.
- Landscape: Development would extend the village into open countryside, with particular sensitivity around the "Village North" landscape area and long views across the river valley.
- Heritage: Some northern sites are close to the Conservation Area or listed buildings, particularly Sites 84 and 88.
- Agricultural land: Several sites are on Grade 3a agricultural land, increasing the risk of losing best and most versatile soils.

- Amenity: Sites close to the A36 may experience road noise and air pollution.
- Transport: Generally reasonable access to the road network and some bus/active travel opportunities, although site-specific access issues would still need to be resolved.

5.8 For sites located in West Beckington:

- Landscape: This is the most constrained direction in landscape terms. The western area contributes strongly to Beckington's setting, valued landscape character, tranquillity and protected views.
- Biodiversity: Significant constraint as all western sites overlap with bat consultation zones and SSSI Impact Risk Zones, with hedgerows, trees, grassland and orchard remnants contributing to local ecological connectivity.
- Heritage: Significant impacts as several sites are close to, adjacent to, or partly within the Conservation Area and near listed buildings, especially around Frome Road and Castle Corner.
- Community wellbeing: Sites 2d and 2e overlap with Local Green Space 6, so development could result in the loss of this valued space.
- Land and water resources: Western sites are generally on Grade 3a agricultural land and are closer to the River Frome, raising concerns about drainage, runoff and downstream water quality.
- Transport: Mill Lane is narrow and lacks pavement provision, making access and safe pedestrian movement a key constraint.

5.9 For sites located in South Beckington:

- Biodiversity: Still constrained by bat consultation zones linked to the Mells Valley SAC, and Sites 7, 36 and 86 intersect SSSI Impact Risk Zones.
- Surface water and drainage: Flood Zone 1 means low fluvial flood risk, but surface water issues affect parts of Sites 86 and 90 and may affect Warminster Road through increased runoff.
- Wastewater capacity: As with all areas of Beckington, drainage and sewerage capacity is a key strategic constraint that would need to be addressed before development proceeds.
- Heritage: Southern sites avoid the Conservation Area but may affect the setting of listed buildings along Warminster Road, especially near Nos. 24, 26 and 28. It is noted that recent developments along Warminster Road to the west (Shepherds Way and Longmeadow) have been completed and have avoided adverse effects.
- Landscape: Generally, it is less sensitive than the north and west, but Site 7 could cause urban encroachment and Site 90 is more detached from the main settlement pattern.
- Transport and amenity: Warminster Road provides access and pedestrian links, and the area is close to the A36/A361, but bus provision is limited and sites near the main roads may be affected by noise and air pollution.

- In considering and evaluating the points of the compass review West Beckington is the most constrained direction, mainly because of landscape, heritage, local green space, access and River Frome-related concerns. North Beckington has reasonable accessibility but is constrained by landscape sensitivity, biodiversity, agricultural land quality and some heritage issues. Whereas South Beckington appears to be the least constrained broad direction overall, particularly in relation to landscape and agricultural land.

Points of Compass Summary Table

Table 5,1: Points of Compass Summary Table

	Significant effect?		
SEA topic	**Area 1 - North**	**Area 2 - West**	**Area 3 - South**
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
Climate change and flood risk	No	No	No
Community wellbeing	No	Yes - negative	No
Historic environment	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No
Land, soil and water resources	No	No	No
Landscape	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No
Transportation	No	Yes – negative	No

Points of Compass Advantages/Disadvantages Table

Table 5.2: Points of Compass Advantages/Disadvantages Table

Area	Advantages	Disadvantages
North	Generally, well related to the village, with good access to community facilities, local road network, and opportunities for active/sustainable transport. Some sites (e.g., Site 84) are within the settlement boundary, reducing landscape and heritage impacts.	All site combinations risk significant negative effects on biodiversity, especially due to proximity to bat habitats and SSSI Impact Risk Zones. Most combinations would result in the loss of higher quality agricultural soils (Grade 3a). Heritage impacts are uncertain and depend on site selection, with some sites close to the Conservation Area or listed buildings.

Area	Advantages	Disadvantages
West	Some sites are adjacent to existing residential development, supporting community cohesion. Site 82 is fully within the urban classification, reducing impact on agricultural soils and landscape.	Significant negative effects on biodiversity due to overlap with bat consultation zones and loss of ecological networks. Loss of higher quality agricultural soils (Grade 3a). Potential to exacerbate drainage and water quality concerns related to the River Frome. Highly constrained in landscape terms, with development likely to impact protected views and the village's landscape setting. Access issues: Mill Lane is narrow and lacks safe pedestrian access, reducing connectivity. Some sites could result in the loss of important local green spaces, negatively affecting community wellbeing. Potential negative effects on the historic environment, especially for sites near or within the Conservation Area or close to listed buildings
South	Less constrained in landscape terms; the area has limited landscape sensitivity and no special or distinctive features. Avoids impacts on valued views. Good connectivity to the local road network (Warminster Road, A36, A361). Proximity to recreational assets and community facilities (e.g., Beckington Tennis Association, White Row Farm), Sue's Walk to the church and school. Sites are on lower quality agricultural land (Grade 4), avoiding loss of best and most versatile soils. Development would be adjacent to existing settlement, supporting community integration.	Still presents constraints related to bat consultation zones and local biodiversity connectivity. Some surface water flood risk, though generally manageable with sustainable drainage. Some sites are close to the A36, which could lead to noise and pollution impacts on new residents. Moderate negative effects on the historic environment due to proximity to listed buildings, though not within the Conservation Area

5.10 Based on the SEA the strongest argument is that housing development is best placed to the south/south-east of Beckington, particularly where it is adjacent to the existing settlement and well related to Warminster Road, rather than to the west or north. This is considered the best location for the following reasons:

- Landscape impact is lower: The southern area is described as having fewer special or distinctive landscape features, avoids protected views, and is less sensitive than the valued western landscape or the open countryside to the north.
- It protects the valued western setting: Westward growth is heavily constrained by landscape value, protected views, Local Green Space, heritage sensitivity, access issues, and potential effects on the River Frome.

- It avoids the sensitive northern landscape: Northward growth would extend the village into open countryside and could affect long views, rural character, better-quality agricultural land, and biodiversity.
- It uses poorer agricultural land: Southern options are generally on Grade 4 agricultural land, helping avoid the loss of higher-quality Grade 3a land found to the north and west.
- It is reasonably well connected by road: Southern sites relate well to Warminster Road and the A36/A361, making vehicular access more achievable than some western options, especially those reliant on Mill Lane.
- It can support community wellbeing: Southern growth would be near facilities such as recreational assets and White Row Farm and could link with existing residential areas where sites are immediately adjacent to the settlement.
- It is more capable of mitigation: The SEA still identifies biodiversity, drainage, flood risk, heritage, and noise constraints, but these appear more manageable through design, landscaping, sustainable drainage and policy controls than the more fundamental constraints in the west and north.

Community Opinion

5.11 The Steering Group notes that, based on consultation and community engagement, the preference is to progress small sites that are in keeping with the rural setting and settlement identity, rather than large sites. The Neighbourhood Area has already been recently subject to two large housing estate developments, where consultation has identified that it is taking time to assimilate the growth and foster community cohesion. It is considered that additional large scale development sites are unlikely to assist in this process.

5.12 Furthermore, as traffic was the main factor disliked about living in the parish in the NP survey, the potential traffic impact of high growth in one location is also deemed significant, which will reduce the potential to deliver additional community benefits in development.

Conclusions

5.13 The Steering Group notes that the overall planning judgement is that a southern growth strategy appears to be the most defensible broad location. Housing growth that is focused on sites that adjoin the existing settlement and avoid detached or isolated development provides the best balance between meeting local housing needs and minimising environmental harm.

5.14 A southern option avoids the highly valued western landscape and views, reduces the loss of higher-quality agricultural land, maintains separation from the River Frome and its associated water-quality sensitivities, and limits harm to the historic core and Conservation Area.

5.15 While southern sites are not unconstrained, the identified issues are capable of being addressed through careful site masterplanning, biodiversity mitigation, drainage measures, highway design, and landscape-led development.

5.16 Sites 7 and 36 perform most strongly as part of a southern growth strategy, particularly when compared with more sensitive western and northern options. Site 36 performs particularly well because it is closely related to the existing settlement edge and would read as a more natural extension of Beckington.

5.17 Key reasons supporting allocation of Site 36 include:

- Good settlement relationship: Site 36 adjoins existing residential development and is likely to integrate better with the village than more detached southern options.
- Lower landscape sensitivity: It lies within the “Village East adjoining bypass” landscape area, which is described as having no special or distinctive features.
- No protected view conflict: The southern sites, including Site 36, are not within proximity to identified protected views.
- Lower agricultural land impact: The southern sites are generally Grade 4 agricultural land, reducing harm to best and most versatile agricultural soils.
- Good highway access: Site 36 benefits from direct relationship with Warminster Road, with onward access to the A36 and A361.
- Community wellbeing benefits: It is close to recreational and community assets, including Beckington Tennis Club, Sue’s Walk to the school and church and White Row Farm.
- Manageable heritage risk: Although listed buildings on Warminster Road require careful consideration, sensitive design, boundary treatment and landscaping can help avoid unacceptable impacts.

5.18 Site 7 also has a defensible case for allocation, but it is more sensitive than Site 36 and would need stronger mitigation. Key reasons supporting allocation include:

- Part of the less constrained southern growth area: Like Site 36, it avoids the more sensitive western valued landscape and avoids protected views.
- Lower soil quality: It falls within the southern area of lower-quality agricultural land, helping to protect higher-quality Grade 3a land elsewhere.
- Strategic road access: It is well placed in relation to Warminster Road and the A36/A361.
- Potential to contribute to housing need: It can help meet the village’s identified housing requirement and support delivery of a suitable mix of homes, including affordable and smaller dwellings.
- Opportunity for planned mitigation: Its impacts are not necessarily unacceptable if controlled through a clear allocation policy requiring landscape buffers, set-backs, biodiversity protection, noise mitigation and drainage controls.

5.19 However, Site 7 is more constrained because:

- It has a greater risk of urban encroachment into the countryside.
- It is closer to the A36, increasing potential noise and air quality amenity issues.
- It may need careful access design because of its relationship with Warminster Road and the nearby strategic road network.
- It has biodiversity constraints because it falls within bat consultation zones and intersects an SSSI Impact Risk Zone.

5.20 The combined allocation of Sites 7 and 36 can be justified because it would:

- Focus growth in the least harmful broad direction identified by the SEA.
- Avoid the strongest landscape objections associated with westward growth.
- Avoid the higher agricultural land impacts seen in northern and western options.
- Provide a planned, coherent southern extension rather than piecemeal speculative development.
- Support delivery of housing need in a location that is accessible to the local road network.
- Enable a single policy framework to manage biodiversity, drainage, landscape, heritage and amenity mitigation.

5.21 To ensure that the allocations are robust, the policy should require:

- HRA and ecological evidence, including bat-sensitive design and lighting.
- Retention and enhancement of hedgerows, trees and habitat corridors.
- Sustainable drainage systems and evidence of wastewater capacity.
- Landscape buffers and soft settlement-edge treatment, especially for Site 7.
- Heritage impact assessment for effects on listed buildings along Warminster Road.
- Noise and air quality mitigation for areas closest to the A36/A361.
- Safe pedestrian access along Warminster Road and links back into Beckington village.

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

6. Introduction (to Part 2)

6.1 The aim of this part of the report is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 14 version of the BNDP. This part of the report presents:

- An appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the BNDP under the seven SEA topic headings established through scoping (Chapter 7).
- The overall conclusions at this current stage (Chapter 8).

Methodology

6.2 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 1.1**) as a methodological framework.

6.3 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, for example in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explaining within the text (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 Regulation 14 version of the BNDP in more general terms.

6.4 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the BNDP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

6.5 The BNDP proposes nine policies to guide development in the Beckington neighbourhood area. These are listed in **Table 7.1**.

7. Appraisal of the draft BNDP

7.1 This chapter presents an appraisal of the pre-submission draft of the BNDP under the seven SEA topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework.

BNDP policies

7.2 The BNDP contains the following policies.

Table 7.1: BNDP policies

Policy reference	Policy name
Policy VL1	Valued Landscape Protection
Policy HE	Heritage and Historic Environment
Policy EP	Environmental Protection and Sustainability
Policy LGS	Local Green Space
Policy PV	Protected Views
Policy AT	Active Travel
Policy HM	Housing Mix
Policy HD	Housing Design
Policy HA	Housing Allocation

Biodiversity and geodiversity

7.3 The BNDP allocates two sites for residential development under Policy HA. The sites are located adjacent to the existing Beckington settlement boundary (they are located to the east of the village) and are bounded by the A36 to the east. The sites are removed from internationally and nationally designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity, and as such do not overlap with Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) associated with such designations. Additionally, neither site overlaps with Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats or important areas designated under the Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy. However, it is noted that the site HA1.2 includes an area of woodland to the north. As such, development at this location could impact upon the habitat through species disruption – for example, an increase in light a noise pollution. Policy HA does include considerations for this, stipulating that suitable noise considerations would need to be taken into account for residential development to go forward at site HA1.2. This is anticipated to help reduce the potential for adverse impacts on the population and diversity of species.

7.4 Furthermore, it is recognised that the associated Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) undertaken for the BNDP concludes that Policy HA (the only policy screened in for appropriate assessment) would not have an adverse impact on the conservation objectives of identified habitat sites. This further demonstrates that the policy works well to reduce any impact of

development on biodiversity within and in proximity to the Beckington neighbourhood area.

7.5 The BNDP highlights the importance of the River Frome valley to local biodiversity, in which the neighbourhood area sits. Additionally, the local community have expressed strong support for biodiversity conservation, and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. As such, the BNDP makes specific provisions in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity through Policy EP – which stipulates that development proposals must protect and enhance local biodiversity. This includes through native planting to support wildlife corridors in the neighbourhood area. By ensuring local biodiversity is protected through the BNDP, the Plan works to maintain existing levels of connectivity within the local biodiversity network. This is especially important given the presence of rare bat species and their associated habitats in the wider area.

7.6 Policy HD requires new development to demonstrate due regard to the objectives, guidance and codes set in the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes.[8] In this respect, biodiversity and geodiversity are further considered through this policy and the Beckington design codes – including (but not limited to): ensuring development layouts include space for gardens and landscaping; including mature trees and landscape features within development design; incorporating planting to reduce visual impacts of development; encouraging the planting of new trees and hedgerows; and incorporating wildlife friendly features that support biodiversity connectivity and important habitat areas. By incorporating biodiversity and geodiversity into development design through the Beckington Design Codes, the BNDP is anticipated to work well in protecting and enhancing biodiversity quality and connectivity in the neighbourhood area, including by extending the local network.

7.7 The wider plan policies also work to benefit the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA topic. This is achieved through a focus on protecting important landscape areas (Policy VL), designating local green space (Policy LGS), and enhancing and improving active travel corridors (Policy AT). This is achieved through safeguarding areas that could contribute towards biodiversity connectivity in the neighbourhood area and enhancing connections that exist alongside the network of public rights of way in Beckington.

7.8 In conclusion, **moderate positive effects** are considered likely through the BNDP in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity. This reflects the distance of the site allocations from important designations, the provisions of Policy HA which seeks to reduce disturbance to a nearby habitat area, and the focus of the wider plan policies - which seek to integrate biodiversity enhancements and connectivity within development design and through safeguarding important features in the neighbourhood area.

[8] AECOM (2024): ‘Beckington Design guidance and codes’.

Climate change and flood risk

7.9 The BNDP presents an opportunity to include policy provisions that help to reduce carbon emissions created by new and existing development in the neighbourhood area, and to help the community to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is little value in duplicating planning policies that are already set out at the Local Plan level, the BNDP should focus on what could be strengthened, and respond to local concerns. This can include the dependency on private vehicles, surface water flood risk, and opportunities to integrate renewable energy and sustainable design and construction.

7.10 In relation to climate change adaptation, neither of the sites allocated under Policy HA are at risk of fluvial flooding. Whilst site HA1.1 is not at risk of surface water flooding, it is recognised that site HA1.2 has areas of low and high risk of surface water flooding in its northern extent – to the east of The Lays. However, given that the flood risk is located within the woodland on the site, which is excluded from the developable area, it is unlikely that development would lead to significant effects. Furthermore, it is recognised that Warminster Road adjacent to both sites to the south is at risk of surface water flooding. This risk is likely linked to surface water runoff associated with road surface materials and a lack of ground absorption of excess water. It is possible that additional development on the sites could increase the surface water flood risk and effects, associated with a greater level of surface water runoff and absorption, but the use of sustainable drainage solutions should mitigate this issue.

7.11 Whilst Policy HA does not make stipulations in relation to addressing flood risk, Policy HD requires new development and alterations to consider the objectives, guidance and codes included in the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes document[9]. This includes stipulations relating to reducing flood risk – including (but not limited to): ensuring new development retains boundary ditches where they are present, and incorporates planting on the new boundaries (which helps to intercept excess water); ensuring existing and new homes are flood resilient and resistant; and incorporating permeable materials in surface developments (for example, road and pavements) to allow for water to infiltrate and be absorbed into the ground.

7.12 Wider plan policies are considered to make a contribution towards climate change adaptation in the Beckington neighbourhood area. Policy EP seeks to enhance native planting in the neighbourhood area, which will likely contribute to climate change adaptation by increasing surface water interception and proving shade. Similarly, by designating green spaces through Policy LGS, the BNDP works to protect areas within Beckington that could allow for water absorption.

7.13 In relation to climate change mitigation, Policy HA does not make specific stipulations to help reduce emissions in Beckington. However, it is recognised that both allocated sites are positioned well to access active transport opportunities provided by Warminster Road to the south. This could help to reduce the need to rely on private vehicles for localised journeys

[9] Ibid.

within Beckington village. Furthermore, it is noted that the provision of a footpath link between site HA1.2 and the doctor's surgery would also contribute to encouraging an uptake in active travel opportunities.

7.14 Policy HD and the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes document[10] also include stipulations in relation to climate change mitigation. This includes (but is not limited to): incorporating measures to make new and existing homes more energy efficient (for example, including insulation in walls and loft space, integrating low-carbon heating, and installing renewable energy generation infrastructure); improving airtightness; ensuring streets and roads are laid out well to provide for active and sustainable transport access to key services and facilities; and the planting of native species. This is anticipated to help reduce emissions linked to the domestic and transport sectors in the neighbourhood area and help to increase levels of natural carbon capture and storage (achieved through plant photosynthesis).

7.15 The wider plan policies also include considerations in relation to climate change mitigation. Policy EP seeks to enhance native planting in the neighbourhood area. It is anticipated that this will contribute to greater levels of natural carbon sequestration linked to plant photosynthesis, which could help to reduce overall emissions originating from Beckington. Furthermore, Policy AT seeks to encourage an enhancement of existing active travel corridors across the neighbourhood area, and the provision of new corridors to link new development with key village infrastructure. This will further help to reduce emissions linked to transportation, as travelling by foot or by bike will become a more accessible option for localised journeys.

7.16 Reflecting on the above, **minor positive effects** are considered likely in relation to the climate change and flood risk SEA topic. This reflects the focus of the BNDP on ensuring that new development is sustainably designed and includes features to reduce emissions and flood risk and effects, and the contribution of the wider policies to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Community wellbeing

7.17 The BNDP is seeking to allocate two sites for housing development under Policy HA. Together, the development of these two sites is anticipated to provide up to 72 homes – 19 at site HA1.1, and 53 at site HA1.2. This is based on an indicative density of 25 dwellings per hectare for edge of settlement sites. The policy also indicates that windfall and speculative development sites would be considered. Immediately this policy is considered to perform positively in relation to community wellbeing, as this level of growth will contribute to the housing need in the neighbourhood area. This is detailed in Policy HM, which indicates that there should be a mix of different housing unit types and sizes, and the priority should be one-to-three-bedroom homes that meet the needs of newly forming households on lower budgets, and older households looking to downsize. This policy is informed by the 2024 Beckington Housing Needs Assessment[11], which indicates that population growth in Beckington is likely to be driven by older

[10] Ibid.
[11] AECOM (2024): 'Beckington Housing Needs Assessment'.

households, and that a housing mix with a lower number of bedrooms would be most appropriate for this. The 2024 assessment also indicates that local households are unable to access entry-level homes unless they have a very large deposit; Policy HA works to mediate this by ensuring that all housing development proposals meet affordable housing needs in accordance with existing Somerset Council policy. This will work to help make new development affordable for younger people.

7.18 Furthermore, the policy wording for site HA1.2 allocated under Policy HA indicates that noise impacts will need to be considered, likely due to the road infrastructure to the south and east. By ensuring potential noise is mitigated, Policy HA works well to further support community wellbeing, as noise disturbances and their linked impacts will be reduced. The policy wording for site HA1.2 also indicates that a footpath link between the site and the doctor's surgery would also be a potential benefit. If this is incorporated into the development design, the policy would provide additional contributions towards community wellbeing, by providing opportunities to engage with physical activity and improving connectivity to health infrastructure. This is linked to Policy AT, which ensures that development proposals consider how residents can move throughout Beckington on foot or by cycling. This includes through enhancing and improving active travel corridors and providing new corridors where appropriate. This, supported by the Beckington Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP)[12], and the Beckington Cycle Route Strategy Feasibility Study[13], which contributes to community wellbeing by inspiring healthy and active lifestyles.

7.19 Community wellbeing is further supported by Policy HD, which seeks to ensure new development (including the allocated sites under Policy HA), and alterations to existing structures incorporate the objectives, guidance, and codes set out in the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes document[14]. This includes (but is not limited to): ensuring streets are laid out to encourage connectivity, especially through walking and cycling; layouts and plots that allow for large and spacious gardens; and ensuring new growth reflects, respects and reinforces local character and quality. This is anticipated to support community wellbeing, as it ensures that opportunities to create active and healthy lifestyles are embedded into development design, and that new development allows for a sense of community.

7.20 Wider plan policies in the BNDP also contribute towards maintaining and enhancing community wellbeing. Policy LGS designates four local green spaces in the neighbourhood area, informed by the 2025 Local Green Space Assessment[15]: the recreation field, Glebe Field, the fields adjacent to St George's Church, and fields south of Mill Lane / Beckington Loop. These local green spaces have been designated due to their importance to the local community, and their protection allows for the safeguarding of space that can facilitate active and healthy lifestyles. This includes space to engage with exercise (for example, through dog walking or fitness activities), or for the community to interact with one another (for example, through village fete days and village school sports days) – which benefits physical and mental

[12] Moss Naylor Young (2023): 'Beckington Parish Framework Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP)'.
[13] Moss Naylor Young (2020): 'Beckington Cycle Route Strategy – Feasibility Study'.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Open Plan (2025): 'Beckington Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Space Assessment Report'.

health and wellbeing. Additionally, Policy VL and Policy PV seek to protect the landscape surrounding Beckington village, including key views. These policies work towards community wellbeing by protecting tranquillity and promoting social cohesion in the neighbourhood area – providing a sense of calm that is a benefit to mental health in the community. Furthermore, Policy EP seeks to reduce the potential for wastewater to enter the River Frome; protecting community health by safeguarding bathing waters further downstream.

7.21 Overall, **significant positive effects** are anticipated for the community wellbeing SEA topic under the BNDP. This is due to the Plan allocating sites to meet housing need in the neighbourhood area and ensuring an appropriate mix of housing types come forward to meet the need of the community. It also reflects the focus of the wider BNDP policies on safeguarding and enhancing key contributors that support physical and mental health in Beckington.

Historic environment

7.22 The historic environment is an important consideration of the BNDP – with 105 listed buildings, a scheduled monument, the Beckington Conservation Area, and additional non-designated, locally important heritage assets within the neighbourhood area. The heritage of Beckington is highly valued by the community and is a key contributor to the neighbourhood's identity and character, and sense of place.

7.23 Whilst neither site allocated under Policy HA includes designated historic environment designations within their boundaries, it is recognised that three Grade II listed buildings are located within 30m south of site HA1.1: 26, Warminster Road[16]; Somerlea, Forecourt Wall and Gate Piers[17]; and No 24 and Adjacent Garden Wall[18]. These three heritage assets are designated for their architectural significance, and whilst their fabric will not be impacted by development, it is possible that their settings could be adversely affected. This is due to potential changes to northwards views that the listed buildings offer, and the possibility of new development altering how these listed buildings are experienced in the wider landscape. However, it is recognised that there is existing boundary vegetation on the southern site boundary that contributes a level of visual screening of the site. Additionally, the stipulations included in the Beckington Design Guidance and Codes document[19] will likely further reduce the potential for negative effects to occur, through ensuring development includes sympathetic boundary treatments – such as stone walls and hedgerows. These measures are further anticipated to help visually screen new development from existing structures.

7.24 The Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER)[20] indicates that a flint scatter was recovered from site HA1.2; and the A36 to the east of the site had a number of finds recovered during construction – including post-medieval pottery, prehistoric flint, and a possible gaming counter. This

[16] Historic England (2026): 26, Warminster Road
[17] Historic England (2026): Somerlea, Forecourt Wall and Gate Piers
[18] Historic England (2026): No 24 and Adjacent Garden Wall
[19] Ibid.
[20] HeritageGateway (2012): HeritageGateway

demonstrates that the site could contain historical artefacts. As such, it is recommended that the wording for Policy HA is revisited to include the need for historical surveys – to ensure that any important heritage artefacts present in the site boundaries are recovered before they are potentially lost or destroyed through the development process.

7.25 The BNDP includes specific provisions in relation to the historic environment. Policy HE indicates that development proposals must preserve or enhance the heritage assets in the neighbourhood area; must demonstrate how they respect the setting of heritage assets; and demonstrate how they will mitigate potential harm and enhance the historical significance of the area. This is particularly important in relation to the Beckington Conservation Area, given that associated Conservation Area Appraisal identifies a number of problems in the wider Beckington environment[21]. This includes (but is not limited to) some unsympathetic modern infill development (especially along Goose Street and Frome Road), and incorrect or damaging 'improvements' to both listed and non-designated buildings. By ensuring new development considers the existing historic environment and its potential effects, the BNDP works well to safeguard and enhance heritage quality in the neighbourhood area.

7.26 This is further considered through Policy HD, which requires development to pay due regard to the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes document[22]. The document includes guidance on local architecture – seeking to ensure development heights are in keeping with surrounding buildings; materials used in construction reflect the local character of the neighbourhood area; sympathetic boundary treatments are used that reflect surrounding development; and providing guidance on housing conversions and extensions. By implementing the guidance provided in the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes document, the BNDP is anticipated to help reduce the potential for adverse effects on the historic environment – especially within and in proximity to the Beckington Conservation Area.

7.27 Wider BNDP policies are also anticipated to contribute positively towards the historic environment in the neighbourhood area. This is achieved through protecting green and open spaces in the neighbourhood area through Policy VL and Policy LGS, protecting key views through Policy PV, and retaining and enhancing native planting through Policy EP. These stipulations benefit the historic environment by maintaining the wider landscape in which designated and non-designated heritage assets, areas and features are located – maintaining their setting and their significance. This links to the Beckington, Rudge and Standerwick Character Assessment[23], which identifies the green setting of the conservation area as being an important and valued feature to the community of Beckington.

7.28 Overall, **mixed minor positive and negative effects** are considered likely through the BNDP in relation to the historic environment. This reflects the focus of the wider BNDP policies on maintaining and enhancing key contributors to heritage setting and significance in the neighbourhood area, and the anticipated benefits new development could deliver where growth is

[21] Mendip District Council (2010): Beckington Conservation Area
[22] Ibid.
[23] Beckington, Rudge and Standerwick Neighbourhood Plan (2025): 'Character Assessment'.

aligned with the objectives of the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes.

Land, soil and water resources

7.29 The agricultural land in Beckington is identified as a key characteristic that the community want to protect through the BNDP. Whilst Policy HA does not make specific stipulations in relation to land, soil and water resources, the site allocations do work to protect high quality soils in the neighbourhood area. This is achieved through their being located adjacent to the existing settlement of Beckington, and in an area of Grade 4 'Poor' agricultural land classification (ALC). This avoids the development of better-quality agricultural land in the neighbourhood area, which is located to the north-east, north, and west of Beckington village.

7.30 Furthermore, it is considered that the design-focused Policy HD will contribute to the land, soil and water SEA topic, through ensuring new development considers the objectives, guidance and codes set out in the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes document[24]. This includes (but is not limited to): ensuring that development allows for garden space; protecting existing vegetation in the neighbourhood area through development; and planting new large trees and hedgerows. These measures are considered likely to contribute positive effects by protecting underlying soils resources that are below green features and infrastructure in the neighbourhood area.

7.31 It is recognised that there are issues regarding water pollution in Beckington. Combined sewage overflow events occur at the local sewage treatment works, due to higher river flow occurrences, an increase in sewage levels, and the under-capacity of the treatment works. This has adversely impacted upon the designated bathing water downstream of the neighbourhood area at Farleigh Hungerford, as raw sewage and runoff is entering the River Frome during heavy rainfall events. A report from 2025[25], and its subsequent update in 2026[26], indicates that an increase in the built footprint of Beckington will increase the sewage load, which could increase impacts on the designated bathing water. It is considered that the potential for adverse effects to water quality is mitigated by Policy EP, which is focused on securing environmental protection and sustainability through the BNDP. This includes ensuring development proposals will not exacerbate the risk of untreated wastewater entering the River Frome, but rather include measures to mitigate environmental impacts – such as on-site wastewater treatment, water efficiency measures, and phased development.

7.32 In terms of the wider plan policies, it is also anticipated that Policy LGS will have a positive effect in relation to land, soil and water resources, as designating and safeguarding green spaces in the neighbourhood area protects the underlying soils in these locations from development.

7.33 In conclusion, both **minor positive and minor negative effects** are considered likely for the land, soil and water SEA topic under the BNDP. This

[24] Ibid.
[25] Dr Andrew Tyler (2025): 'Assessment of Sewage Pollution in the River Frome: Beckington to Farleigh Hungerford'
[26] Dr Andrew Tyler (2026): 'Sewage Pollution in the River Frome: Beckington to Farleigh Hungerford'

is due to the focus of the site allocations on poorer predictive ALC land (Grade 4), and the policy provisions safeguarding soil resources and water quality.

Landscape

7.34 The landscape of the Beckington neighbourhood area is also an important feature to the community – who recognise the significant value of the landscape setting around Beckington village. As such, there is a wish to safeguard the landscape against the threat of inappropriate development, to retain rural character and landscape quality.

7.35 The sites allocated through the BNDP are located adjacent to Character Area 7, as identified in the Beckington, Rudge and Standerwick Character Assessment[27]. This area is described as being formed of a number of curved road and cul-de-sacs, with an inconsistent building line. The key features of the area include the community allotments and the car park. Whilst the policy wording for the site allocations does not make specific stipulations in relation to landscape, Policy HA does require a combined development plan for both sites, which includes master planning. This is anticipated to help reduce any negative effects on the landscape, by ensuring development is designed well and thoroughly considers its surroundings.

7.36 Furthermore, it is anticipated that landscape considerations will be addressed through Policy HD, which seeks to ensure development proposals and alterations regard and reflect the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes Document[28]. This includes (but is not limited to): ensuring development is contemporary and sympathetic to the character of Beckington village in regard to scale, density, form, siting, and proportion; incorporating soft edges at the interface of the village with the countryside; ensuring views and protected and enhanced; utilising landscaping in development design; and ensuring local architecture is reflected in development (for example, building heights, materials and colours used, and details). By ensuring the Design Code document is regarded and reflected through development design, the BNDP works to ensure new growth and alterations to existing structures have a reduced landscape effect. Instead, they integrate well with the surrounding built environment, which helps to reduce impacts to character and visual quality.

7.37 The importance of the landscape in the Beckington neighbourhood area is further demonstrated through Policy VL, which seeks to designate the Beckington Valued Landscape Zone, located to the west of the village. This reflects the significant value of the landscape setting surrounding Beckington village, and the findings of the Beckington Landscape Value Statement[29], which assessed five areas of the landscape that were between the village development perimeter and either the parish boundary or the perceived edge of the landscape setting of Beckington. The designated area – Village West – is described as predominantly agricultural, and distinctive to the south, west and north. The area has contributed to the story of Beckington, as well as towards its landscape beauty, tranquillity, ecological value, and amenity

[27] Beckington, Rudge and Standerwick (2025): ‘Character Assessment’.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Georgina Harvey (2025): ‘Beckington Landscape Value Statement for Beckington Parish Neighbourhood Plan’.

for the community. By designating the Beckington Valued Landscape Zone, the BNDP works to protect the landscape setting of the village – therefore safeguarding its character. Furthermore, Policy VL indicates that development proposals in this designated area will need to protect and enhance the area's special physical attributes, and identified qualities, and undertake a landscape visual impact assessment (LVIA) to demonstrate how they would preserve the landscape value of the area. Again, this shows a commitment to protecting the landscape setting to the west – and the importance of development proposals being designed with landscape impacts in mind.

7.38 Additionally, the Protected Views Assessment[30] highlights the importance of visual amenity to the community of Beckington, and recommends policy provisions are put in place to protect identified important views from being lost or adversely affected through development in the neighbourhood area. To this effect, Policy PV seeks to protect and enhance six important views within Beckington village and in the designated Valued Landscape Zone. This is anticipated to be achieved through not supporting growth that would obscure or interrupt these important views, and requiring development to respect them in terms of location, siting, scale, form and massing. This is considered to have a positive landscape effect by preserving visual amenity in the neighbourhood area, and a key contributor to landscape character and quality.

7.39 The wider plan policies are also anticipated to have a positive landscape impact. For example, by including measures to mitigate environmental impacts and protect and enhance local biodiversity through Policy EP (including through retaining and enhancing native planting), and designating and protecting local green spaces through Policy LGS, the BNDP works well to maintain and enhance the landscape in the Beckington neighbourhood area. This is achieved through providing green features that contribute gaps in the built environment, features for visual amenity, and components of character.

7.40 Overall, **minor positive effects** are considered likely for the landscape SEA under the BNDP. This reflects the provisions of Policy HA and Policy HD, which seek to secure development that is designed with landscape in mind – reducing the potential for adverse effects on landscape character, quality and visual amenity. It also reflects the designation and safeguarding of the Valued Landscape Zone, the protection of key views in the neighbourhood area, and the green infrastructure provision.

Transport

7.41 The Beckington neighbourhood area is mostly served by local roads. There is an extensive Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network, which includes popular walking routes such as the Beckington Loop, and there are bus services that typically run every hourly during weekday working hours to locations including Frome, Melksham, Trowbridge, Chippenham, and Bath. However, it is recognised that there are limited or no services in the evenings

[30] Open Plan (2025): 'Protected Views Assessment'.

and reduced services at weekends, and that the community have expressed dissatisfaction with the reliability of these services.

7.42 Policy HA makes stipulations in relation to transportation, indicating that a footpath link between site HA1.2 and the doctor's surgery would be a potential benefit. If this is implemented in the design of the development scheme, it would bring forward positive effects in relation to transportation by providing additional active travel links, and helping to reduce the need for private vehicle use for local journeys.

7.43 Stipulations relating to transportation are also included within Policy HD, which seeks to ensure that development adheres to the Beckington Parish Design and Codes document[31]. This includes (but is not limited to): ensuring street layouts encourage connectivity through active travel means (walking and cycling); and ensuring sufficient car parking space is provided (whilst ensuring there is minimised harm to the historic environment and landscape character and quality). Again, this helps to put a focus on active travel and connectivity, by encouraging walking and cycling and helping to keep roads clear of parked vehicles.

7.44 Transport is also considered through Policy AT, which outlines the need for development proposals to consider how residents move around Beckington without the use of private vehicles. This includes the need to enhance and improve existing active travel corridors that are within or in proximity to proposed development sites, and provides new links to key infrastructure and the existing travel network. This makes use of the existing network of PRoW that intersect the neighbourhood area. Additionally, Policy AT has the potential to contribute to the Beckington Cycle Route Strategy[32] and the Beckington Parish Framework Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP)[33], which both outline measures to encourage a greater uptake in cycling and walking in the neighbourhood area. This includes (but is not limited to): the implementation of cycle lanes (mandatory, advisable, or contraflow); signage in support of cycling on footways; additional signage to provide direction; improving or upgrading the footway between Beckington and Frome; speed reduction; safer crossings for pedestrians; and providing better lighting on footpaths. This would further provide benefits to the active transportation offering in the neighbourhood area, by improving provision and use.

7.45 Overall, the BNDP works well to maintain and improve active transportation provision in the neighbourhood area. This is achieved through ensuring development is well connected to the local PRoW network, to allow for ease of connectivity by walking, wheeling and cycling. This is also achieved through design stipulations to allow for safe parking and improved connectivity, and the focus of Policy AT on maintaining and enhancing the walking and cycling provision in the neighbourhood area. Recognising that strategic transport issues (such as reduced bus transportation opportunities in the neighbourhood area) are beyond the scope of the BNDP, **minor positive effects** are considered likely through the plan. This reflects the

[31] Ibid.
[32] Moss Naylor Young (2020): 'Beckington Cycle Route Strategy – Feasibility Study'.
[33] Moss Naylor Young (2023): 'Beckington Parish Framework Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP)

likelihood of people needing to rely on private vehicle transportation to access services and facilities further from the neighbourhood area boundary.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

8.1 In conclusion, the BNDP demonstrates a strong and comprehensive commitment to supporting and enhancing community wellbeing within the Beckington neighbourhood area. By allocating sites that respond directly to identified housing needs, the Plan helps to address local demographic challenges and improve accessibility to housing for a range of residents. This is complemented by a clear emphasis on high-quality design, noise mitigation, and connectivity – all of which work to ensure that new development promotes healthy, inclusive, and sustainable lifestyles. The integration of active travel infrastructure, the protection of valued green spaces, and safeguarding of the surrounding landscape further contributes to maintaining and enhancing physical and mental wellbeing. Collectively, these measures ensure that growth is not only accommodated in the Beckington neighbourhood area, but rather positively contributes to the vitality, cohesion, and overall quality of life within the community. Overall, **significant positive effects** are concluded most likely.

8.2 Overall, the BNDP provides a robust and proactive framework for safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity within the Beckington neighbourhood area. Whilst there is some potential for minor localised effects associated with development (in relation to the woodland area which is part of site HA1.2), these are considered to be effectively mitigated through policy requirements that address noise, design, and environmental sensitivity. The BNDP has a strong emphasis on habitat protection, connectivity, and enhancement, which is supported by design codes and complementary policies. As such, the Plan works to ensure that new development is aligned with biodiversity and geodiversity objectives. Consequently, the BNDP is expected to deliver meaningful improvements to biodiversity networks and quality. As such, **moderate positive effects** are identified.

8.3 The BNDP establishes a positive and locally responsive framework for addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation in the neighbourhood area. Potential risks associated with surface water flooding - particularly in relation to site HA1.2 and the adjacent road network - are effectively managed through design measures embedded within Policy HD and the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Codes. Simultaneously, the Plan promotes reduced carbon emissions through promoting development on sites that are well located to existing development, enhancing active travel connectivity, and integrating energy-efficient and low-carbon design features. Wider policy stipulations for green infrastructure and native planting further strengthens both climate change adaptation and mitigation in Beckington. Whilst an increase in emissions is inevitable as a result of planned growth, the overall approach of the BNDP ensures that development is aligned with climate objectives. As such, **minor positive effects** across the climate change and flood risk SEA topic are concluded as likely through the implementation of the Plan.

8.4 Additionally, the BNDP demonstrates a strong and clear commitment to conserving and enhancing the landscape character and visual quality of the Beckington neighbourhood area. Whilst development has the potential to introduce changes to character and visual amenity, the Plan ensures that this is carefully managed through master planning requirements through Policy HA and robust design principles set out in Policy HD and the associated Design Guidance and Codes. The designation of the Beckington Valued Landscape Zone and the protection of key views through Policy PV further reinforce the importance of the wider landscape setting and visual amenity to the community. Supported by complementary policies promoting green infrastructure and biodiversity, the BNDP ensures that new development integrates sensitively with its surroundings and contributes positively to local character, supporting the conclusion of **minor positive effects** for the landscape SEA topic.

8.5 The BNDP also provides a positive and locally focused approach to improving transport and accessibility within the Beckington neighbourhood area, particularly through its emphasis on active travel. Whilst there are limitations on the BNDP in regard to addressing strategic transport issues such as bus service reliability, the Plan effectively promotes walking and cycling through enhanced connectivity, design-led development, and integration with existing and proposed infrastructure. Measures such as new footpath links, improved street layouts, and alignment with local cycling and walking strategies contribute to a more accessible and sustainable transport network. As a result, the BNDP is well positioned to support incremental improvements in local transport provision and reduce reliance on private vehicles for shorter journeys, supporting the conclusion of **minor positive effects** overall.

8.6 Furthermore, the BNDP provides a clear and effective framework for conserving and enhancing the historic environment in Beckington, ensuring that its rich heritage continues to contribute to local character and identity. Whilst there is some limited potential for adverse effects on the settings of nearby listed buildings and the possible presence of below-ground archaeological remains through the allocation of the two sites under Policy HA, these risks are appropriately recognised and are anticipated be mitigated through sensitive design, boundary treatments, and the recommended inclusion of heritage assessments. Strong policy provisions – including Policies HE and HD and the Beckington Parish Design Guidance and Code – also work to ensure that new development is respectful of local context and reinforces historic character. In combination with wider policies safeguarding landscape setting and key views, the Plan is well positioned to deliver positive outcomes for heritage conservation. As such, the potential for **minor positive and negative effects** is concluded overall.

8.7 Finally, the BNDP takes a balanced and considered approach to the protection of land, soil and water resources within the neighbourhood area. By directing development to areas of lower-quality agricultural land adjacent to the existing settlement, the Plan avoids the unnecessary loss of higher-grade soils and supports the efficient use of land. The integration of design-led measures through Policy HD further promotes the retention and enhancement of green infrastructure, helping to safeguard soil quality and function. Combined with the protection of green spaces under Policy LGS,

the BNDP is well positioned to deliver benefits for land and soil resources. However, it is recognised that there are concerns relating to wastewater capacity and potential impacts on water quality. There are provisions set out in Policy EP that provide an appropriate mechanism to mitigate these risks through sustainable water management and environmental safeguards. Overall, the policies of the BNDP work well to protect land, soil and water resources, but given the wastewater capacity concerns, **minor positive and negative effects** are concluded overall.

Recommendations

8.8 It is recommended that the wording for Policy HA is revisited to include the need for historical surveys – to ensure that any important heritage artefacts present in the site boundaries are recovered before they are potentially lost or destroyed through the development process.

9. Next steps and monitoring

Overview

9.1.1 This part of the report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

Plan finalisation

9.1.2 This Environmental Report accompanies the BNDP for Regulation 14 consultation.

9.1.3 Following consultation, and representations made will be considered by the Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group, and the BNDP and SEA Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated SEA Environmental Report will then accompany the BNDP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Somerset Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.

9.1.4 Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the BNDP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

9.1.5 Assuming that the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the BNDP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Somerset Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the BNDP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the BNDP will become part of the Development Plan for Somerset Council, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

9.1.6 The SEA Regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the BNDP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

9.1.7 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the BNDP will be undertaken by Somerset Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the BNDP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by Somerset Council.

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

\As discussed in **Chapter 1**, 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 AA.1** links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table AA.2** explains this interpretation. **Table AA.3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have / will be met.

Table AA.1: Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in accordance with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Report section	Questions answered	Regulatory requirement met
Introduction	What is the plan seeking to achieve?	• An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
	What is the scope of the SEA?	• 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. • 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 significantly affected. • 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/ SA involved up to this point?	• 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 the alternatives assessment/ a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the Plan.

Report section	Questions answered	Regulatory requirement met
Part 2	What are the SA findings at this current stage?	• The likely significant effects associated with the Plan. • The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan.
Part 3	What happens next?	• A description of the monitoring measures envisaged.

Table AA.2: Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in accordance with regulatory requirements

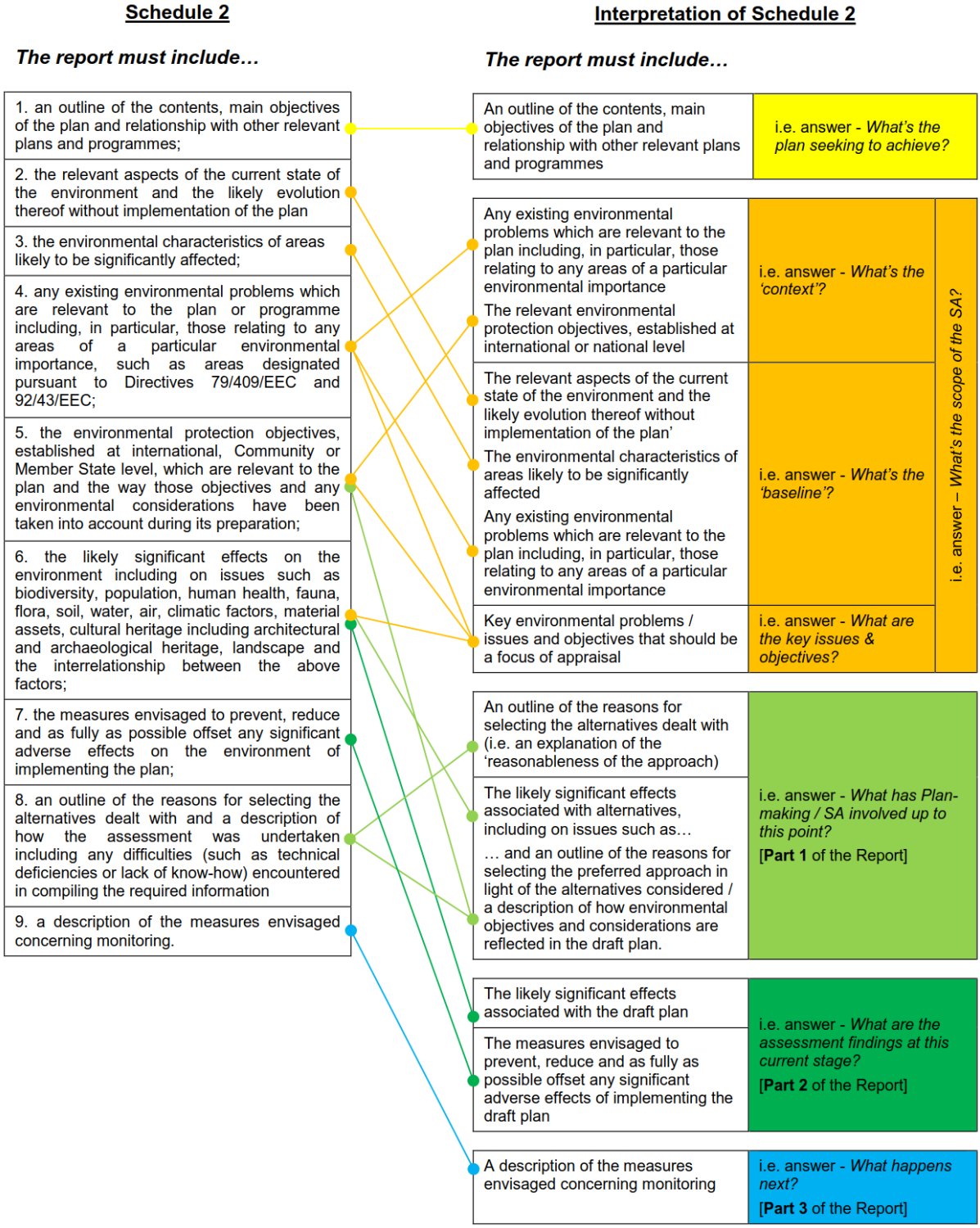


Table AA.3: 'Checklist' of how (throughout the SEA process) and where regulatory requirements are or will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
Schedule 2 requirements:	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Chapter 1 presents this information. The relationship with other plans and programmes is also considered in the SEA Scoping Report (2024).
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 were considered in detail at the scoping stage, which included consultation on a Scoping Report published in May 2026. The outcome of scoping was an 'SEA Framework', and this is presented within Chapter 1 ('Scope of the SEA'). More detailed messages from the Scoping Report - i.e., messages established through context and baseline review - are presented within Appendix B.
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.	

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
5. The environmental protection objectives established at international, national, or community 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 Scoping Report (2026) presents a detailed context review and explains how key messages from the context review (and baseline review) were then refined to establish an 'SEA framework'. The key issues established through scoping are presented in Appendix B. The context review informed the development of the SEA framework and topics, presented in Chapter 1, which provide a methodological 'framework' for appraisal. With regards to explaining "how… considerations have been taken into account" - • Chapter 3 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 4 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 5 explains the BNDP Steering Group's 'reasons for supporting the preferred approach', i.e., explains how / why the preferred approach is justified in-light of alternatives appraisal (and other factors). • Chapter 7 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the Regulation 14 consultation version of the plan and Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations.
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 3 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 4 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 7 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the submission version of the plan and Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations. As explained within the various methodology sections, as part of appraisal work, consideration has been given to the SEA scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics / dimensions.
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.	Where necessary, mitigation measures are identified within the alternatives appraisal (in Chapter 4) and appraisal of the submission version of the Plan (Chapters 7 and 8).

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
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.	Chapter 3 deals with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues/ options. Also, Chapter 5 explains the BNDP Steering Group's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in light of alternatives appraisal). Methodology is discussed at various places, ahead of presenting appraisal findings, and limitations / assumptions are also discussed as part of appraisal narratives.
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10.	At this stage no additional monitoring measures are identified as being necessary over and above those already being considered by Somerset Council.
10. A Non-Technical Summary of the information provided under the above headings.	A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is provided at the start of the report.
The SEA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations: 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 SA Report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1 and 6.2).	At the current time, this SEA Environmental Report is being published alongside the Regulation 14 version of the plan for public consultation.
The SEA Report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the Plan. The SEA 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.	The BNDP Steering Group will take into account this SEA Environmental Report when finalising the Plan.

Appendix B Scoping information

Linked to Chapter 1 of the main report, this appendix provides scoping information. Scoping consultation was undertaken during the period 8th June 2026 to 13th July 2026. Consultation responses were received from the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. An additional response was also received from Somerset Council. These responses are detailed in the table below. Following the feedback, the key issues for each of the SEA topics that have been scoped in and have informed the development of the SEA objectives are provided.

Consultation response	SEA response / action
Somerset Council **Senior Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council East Team**	
The report might benefit from a section looking at the overall population characteristics and trends in the village. I appreciate that there is some information in the Community Facilities section, but it would clarify that this element has been addressed if there was a separate section bringing this information together. Somerset Council has now published the Local Housing Needs Assessment, which can be found at www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/ which provides additional information. Climate change and flooding are presented together in one section of the Scoping. However other forms of climate adaptation are not addressed, such as overheating, wild fire risk etc. Climate mitigation tends to focus heavily on transport, and there might be scope to include other forms of mitigation in the document. This is particularly relevant as the Plan seeks to allocate a site for housing, where on site renewables and other features designed to reduce building carbon emission might be introduced. A clear delineation within the chapter between mitigation and adaptation might help to make the section clearer.	Noted with thanks – the needs assessment has informed the appraisals. The climate change and flooding chapter has focused on more than just transport to address issues relevant to the plan – please see appraisal findings.
Historic England **David Stuart, Historic Places Adviser**	
Thank you for your consultation on the SEA Scoping associated with the emerging Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan. We have no specific comments to make other than to reiterate the desirability of referencing and utilising our guidance on site allocations alongside our other guidance as set out on p4 of the Report, and as advised in our response on the previous SEA Screening consultation (see attached). Though titled with reference to Local Plans the guidance has equally beneficial application when used in the context of site allocations in Neighbourhood Plans.	Noted, with thanks.

Consultation response	SEA response / action
Natural England **Consultations Team**	
Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping request: Natural England has no specific comments to make on the scope of this neighbourhood plan's SEA. However, we refer you to the advice in the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.	Noted, with thanks.
Environment Agency **Graduate Planning Advisor – Wessex Sustainable Places**	
We agree that the themes within our remit, (4) Biodiversity and Geodiversity, (5) Climate Change and Flood Risk, and (8) Land, Soil and Water Resources, should be scoped into the SEA. Furthermore, please see our previous response to the Beckington Neighbourhood Plan and SEA Screening Opinion (Ref: WX/2023/137033/OR-16/IS1-L01, dated 17 April 2026) for the environmental constraints we have identified for the area, and our comments on specific policies including the housing allocation sites and flood risk constraints.	Noted with thanks

Key issues identified in the SEA Scoping Report are as follows:

Air quality

Air quality is considered to be good across Somerset. Furthermore, whilst the Westbury AQMA is within proximity to the Beckington neighbourhood area, it has been compliant with air quality objectives for three years. It is not anticipated that development through the BNDP will lead to non-compliance in the declared area. As such, the **air quality SEA topic is SCOPED OUT of the SEA process for the BNDP**.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

The Beckington neighbourhood area is located in a very biodiverse and geodiverse landscape, with a number of important designations and habitats within proximity to its boundary. Given this, and the overlap with the Ecological Zone of Influence for two important bat designations, development through the BNDP is anticipated to impact upon biodiversity and geodiversity through changes to the existing network. It is anticipated that these impacts could be mitigated by focusing growth within and

adjacent to existing development in the neighbourhood area – reducing impacts to connectivity associated with the open landscape.

Parts of the neighbourhood area includes Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity, linked to Somerset's LNRS. These areas provide opportunities to bring forward enhancements to biodiversity and should be considered through the plan-making process.

Given that there are species requiring additional targeted action in proximity to the neighbourhood area, it is possible that development through the BNDP could impact negatively on important species populations. To better understand potential impacts to species and their wider biodiversity connectivity, the Somerset Environmental Records Centre should be consulted.

Climate change and flood risk

The largest contributing sector to CO_2 emissions in Somerset is the transport sector, which is likely to reflect the largely rural nature of the county. The BNDP could help to reduce emissions linked to local transport through strengthening active travel opportunities and routes and limiting the need to travel outside of the neighbourhood area to access a range of services and facilities. It is noted that domestic emissions could also be addressed through the BNDP by encouraging a reduction in emissions linked to households – for example, by including design principles that bolster energy and resource efficiency.

A climate emergency has been declared by Somerset Council. It will be important for the BNDP to align with the published Climate Emergency Strategy, to ensure development takes appropriate action to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Whilst there are areas at higher risk of fluvial flooding in the neighbourhood area, surface water flood risk is more prevalent. This will not be easily avoided by new development linked to the BNDP, given that the main roads into the existing village are at higher risk of surface water flooding. On this basis, it is recognised that development could exacerbate flood risk and its associated effects in the neighbourhood area, and the BNDP should seek opportunities to improve drainage through the targeted application of new sustainable drainage systems.

Community wellbeing

The population of Beckington is ageing, and as such it will be important to ensure new housing development meets the needs of the elderly residents in the neighbourhood area. However, it will also be important for development to focus on providing a mix of housing types and tenures – in order to help encourage younger people to move into Beckington. This should appropriately reflect the priorities identified by the community.

Overall deprivation in Beckington is low; however, the neighbourhood area does experience high levels of deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services. The community of Beckington have identified key facilities such as a shop, post office, and community hub, which would be beneficial to the community as a whole if delivered. It is noted that an increase in residential development could increase pressure on the existing community infrastructure in Beckington, and new residents are likely to travel to nearby centres to access a wider range of services and facilities (continuing existing trends) in the absence of additional infrastructure development.

Reported health in Beckington is generally better than the average reported for Somerset, the South West, and England. Whilst there is a GP surgery in Beckington, it is likely that residents travel to locations such as Frome to access a wider range of services and facilities that support healthy lifestyles, such as dental practices and specialist services. The BNDP could include a focus on development that supports healthy lifestyles, in order to maintain these reported good health levels in the neighbourhood area. This could include delivering additional green space and active travel opportunities.

Historic environment

The Beckington neighbourhood area has a rich historic environment, with a number of important designations within and in proximity to the neighbourhood boundaries. As such, the neighbourhood area is an important contributor to heritage within Somerset, and development could have an impact on the wider historic landscape. This could include through changes to the settings of specific heritage features, or changes to the wider historic character. As such, the BNDP provides an opportunity to seek high quality and design-led development that minimises adverse impacts on the historic environment and works to enhance it where appropriate and achievable.

The Beckington Conservation Area is a valued heritage designation within the neighbourhood area and is identified as a key contributor to the community's sense of place. The associated appraisal highlights important components that contribute to its character and quality and indicates that modern development has impacted upon the designated area. Additionally, issues such as street furniture and insensitive repair to existing structures have also contributed to its character and quality changing. It will be important for the BNDP to respond to the character appraisal accordingly and consider how it can work to mitigate or resolve issues that harm the character and quality of the designated area.

Land, soil and water resources

Allocating land for development in the Beckington neighbourhood area could result in the loss of productive agricultural land, depending on its location. To prevent this, development should be focused within and adjacent to settlement boundaries as far as possible – or within the larger areas of Grade 4 'Poor' ALC, which has a lower likelihood of being best and most versatile land. This will help to prevent the loss or sterilisation of land and productive soils.

Development in the western extent of the neighbourhood area has the potential to sterilise important sand and gravel resources. However, it is anticipated that development can be steered away from this area – which will reduce the need to consult with Somerset Council.

The neighbourhood area overlaps with three separate water body catchments, with poor or moderate ecological statuses. It is possible that development within Beckington could further impact upon these statuses, especially given that there is limited infrastructure for drainage and treatment of foul water in the neighbourhood area. The BNDP presents an opportunity to maintain and enhance water quality, and reduce impacts to the existing drainage network, by encouraging development to include measures that promote water recycling and discourage water pollution. Addressing drainage and sewage issues could also be a focus of the BNDP, given the concern of sewage pollution entering the River Frome.

Landscape

The BNDP should seek development that is considerate of the NCA, LCT and LCA that overlap with the neighbourhood area. Understanding their unique characteristics and supporting considerate design will help to ensure development brought forward in each area is appropriate, is in keeping with the landscape context and allows for their continued distinction.

The neighbourhood area has a higher elevation, and it is likely that it contributes to long distance views from the south and west. To ensure visual amenity is not adversely impacted by new development coming forward, it will be important to ensure design is of high quality and complementary of existing structures in the neighbourhood area. Encouraging screening design elements, such as tree planting and boundary vegetation, is also anticipated to help reduce the potential for visual impacts.

The interactions between the built environment and the natural environment should be fully considered to ensure the landscape sensitivities of the neighbourhood area are not exacerbated.

Transportation

The neighbourhood area has opportunities to engage with sustainable transportation, however it is considered that these opportunities are limited – given that the bus services have historically been unreliable. As such, an increase in residential development is anticipated to lead to more private vehicles on the local road network. The BNDP could help to reduce any adverse impacts linked to this by encouraging development to come forward within proximity to the existing active travel opportunities, to encourage an uptake in walking and cycling for access to services and facilities within Beckington.

The BNDP could help to reduce the number of private vehicles on the road linked to commuting patterns by encouraging infrastructure that allows for increased levels of working from home. This would be in line with current trends and could include improved internet connections. It could also include shared remote working spaces. However, it is noted that design considerations like these are largely dependent on development proposals that come forward.

Footpaths are identified as having importance to the local community, given that they contribute to a sense of place in the neighbourhood area. To protect their importance, the BNDP could seek their maintenance and enhancement through new development proposals, or extensions to the network. This would likely help to promote active transportation uptake in the neighbourhood area, with associated secondary benefits for health and climate change.

Prepared for: Beckington Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group