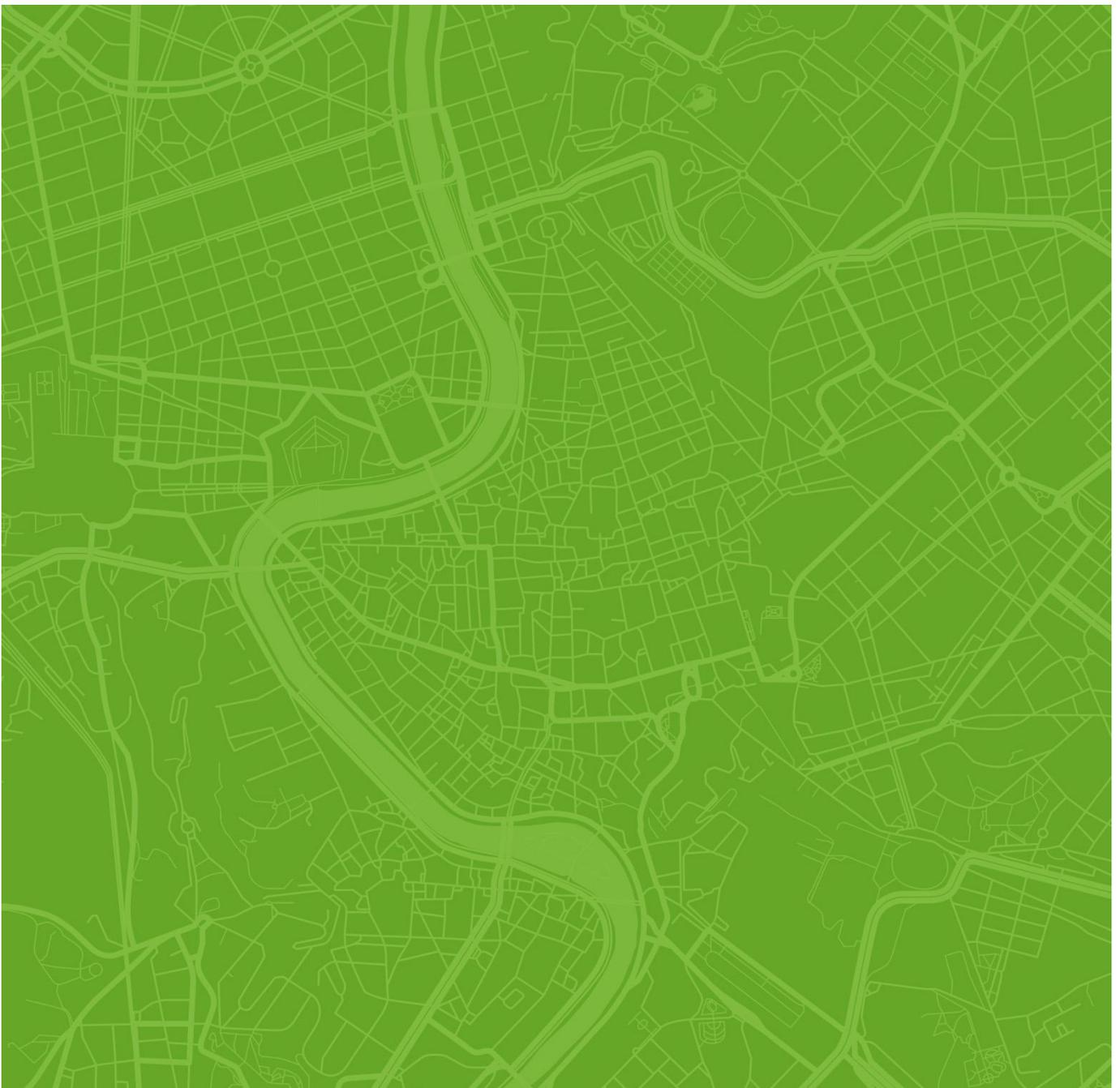


**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District
Councils**

**Shimpling Neighbourhood
Plan 2025-2037
SEA Screening Opinion**

Final report
Prepared by LUC
February 2026



Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

**Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2037
SEA Screening Opinion**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Shimpling Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan to cover the period 2025-2037. Shimpling is a village located in the north west of Babergh District in the county of Suffolk. LUC has been appointed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to consider whether there is a need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 SEA may be required for a Neighbourhood Plan if it is likely to have significant environmental effects. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is similar to SEA but includes assessment of the likely significant effects of a plan or programme on economic and social factors, as well as environmental factors. Planning Practice Guidance¹ (PPG) clarifies that there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be subject to SA, but that SA can be used to demonstrate how the plan will contribute to sustainable development.

1.3 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have commissioned LUC to carry out SEA Screening of the Pre-Submission Draft version of the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan (January 2026) (hereafter referred to as the Neighbourhood Plan) in order to determine whether an assessment is required under European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), transposed into UK law through the SEA Regulations².

1.4 In October 2023 the Levelling up and Regeneration Act received royal assent, setting out detailed reforms to the planning system. Amongst other things, the Act allows for the replacement of the current SEA regime with a new requirement for an Environmental Outcomes Report. The specific requirements will be set out in forthcoming regulations, along with information about transition arrangements; however at present the requirement for SEA remains as set out in existing legislation.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633), as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit)

Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232). It should be noted that the purpose of the amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the European Union. No substantive changes are made to the way the SEA regime operates.

Chapter 2

SEA Screening

Scope of the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Shimpling Parish Council has prepared a Pre-Submission Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan for consultation.

2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan covers the entire Parish of Shimpling, which was designated as a Neighbourhood Area by Babergh District Council in October 2023. The Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Draft Plan (January 2026) includes a vision for the long-term future of Shimpling along with 11 objectives, through which the vision will be achieved:

- 1.** The scale and location of new development will be in keeping with the rural setting of Shimpling.
- 2.** Shimpling's housing growth will be commensurate with the level of services and facilities in the village.
- 3.** New housing will be tailored to meet the needs of local residents.
- 4.** The impact of development on the natural environment will be minimal and biodiversity levels will be improved.
- 5.** The rural setting of the village will be maintained.
- 6.** Recognise and protect the historic importance of buildings, features and character areas.
- 7.** Maintain and enhance a strong rural identity and sense of place for the parish, through environmentally sustainable and sensitive small-scale development.
- 8.** Ensure new development is designed to reflect local character and incorporates measures that reduces environmental impact.
- 9.** Retain existing facilities and encourage the provision of new services and facilities.
- 10.** Reduce the impact of through traffic in the village.
- 11.** Improve safety and routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out 17 policies (SPG1-17) to realise and deliver the vision for Shimpling, along with 11 Community Actions. These actions identify matters of local concern raised in the Residents' Survey but

do not form part of the statutory Neighbourhood Plan and therefore are not subject to SEA Screening in this report.

2.4 The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for new housing or other built development. Policy SPG 1 – Development Location states that the Neighbourhood Area will accommodate development commensurate with the adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan – Part 1. The focus for new development will be within the defined settlement boundary where the principle of development is accepted. Policy SPG 2 – Housing Development states that within the settlement boundary there is a general presumption in favour of housing development comprising small infill dwellings where proposals meet certain criteria.

2.5 Other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan address topics including the natural environment, important views, flooding, services and facilities and public rights of way.

Baseline Information

2.6 This section summarises baseline information for the Parish of Shimpling.

Context

2.7 Shimpling is an historic village in the county of Suffolk, located in the north west of Babergh District approximately eight miles south of Bury St Edmunds.

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

2.8 There are no internationally designated sites within the Parish. There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) entirely within the Parish: Avey Wood and Hospital Grove which are part of the wider Kentwell Woods SSSI and two additional sites which cross the Parish boundary: Frithy and Chadacre Woods SSSI and Bavins and Ashen Wood SSSI. Much of the SSSIs comprise Ancient Woodland. There are no County Wildlife Sites in the Parish. There are some Priority Habitats in the Parish, primarily deciduous woodland, along with a small patch of traditional orchard.

Population

2.9 At the time of the 2021 Census, Shimpling had a population of 450 people. The 2021 Census indicates that 58% of the Parish's residents are economically active, with 40.7% being economically inactive.

2.10 The majority of the Parish's population falls within the 50-80 age bracket, which reflects trends found in many villages and Babergh District as a whole, which has an increasing proportion of elderly residents.

Human Health

2.11 In terms of the health of Shimpling residents, according to the 2021 Census, 85% of people in Shimpling classified

themselves as in 'very good' or 'good' health while 3.6% of people classified themselves as in 'bad' or 'very bad' health.

2.12 Shimpling has an ageing population which is likely to lead to more cases of residents suffering from age-related conditions such as dementia. There are no GPs located within Shimpling.

Soil

2.13 The Parish is comprised of lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with slightly impeded drainage. It is primarily classified as Grade 2 and Grade 3 Agricultural Land. It is not known whether the Grade 3 land is the high quality Grade 3a or lower quality Grade 3b.

Water

2.14 The majority of the Parish falls within Flood Zone 1. Chad Brook, part of the headwaters that run into the River Stour, runs through the Parish and as such the central section of the Parish falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3. There are also areas at risk of surface water flooding, however these are primarily away from the built up areas.

Air Quality and Climatic Factors

2.15 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) that have been declared within Shimpling, the closest being in the town of Ipswich.

2.16 Climate data are not available at Parish level, but within Babergh District as a whole, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of 45% were achieved between 2005 and 2023. This reduction was mostly due to progress in reducing emissions from domestic sources, closely followed by industrial and commercial sectors, with minimal progress on transport emissions. Transport makes the largest contribution to carbon emissions in Babergh District.

Material Assets

2.17 The Parish does not contain a large range of services and facilities due to its population size and the remote nature of the village. The Neighbourhood Plan provides a list of key community facilities that are located within Shimpling including:

- The village hall;
- The Bush public house;
- The playing fields; and
- The parish church of St. George.

2.18 The Parish is not well served by public transport options, with only one daily bus service to Bury St Edmunds.

2.19 The Parish contains an established network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) which mostly radiate out from the

village centre, along with several permissive paths designated by local landowners. The PRoW provide links to surrounding villages and opportunities to access the countryside.

2.20 The Neighbourhood Plan has identified four Local Green Spaces as set out in Policy SPG 10 – Local Green Spaces:

- Halifax Place Playing Field;
- Green between Shimpling Place and The Bush PH;
- Green at The Coalhouse; and
- Green between Shimpling House and Hayfields.

Cultural Heritage

2.21 Shimpling is an ancient farming settlement dating from the bronze age. There are 21 listed buildings across the Parish, including Church of St George which is Grade I listed. There is a high concentration of listed buildings located near The Street including a number of Grade II listed buildings such as the Shimpling Palace. Policy SPG 11 – Special Character Area of the Neighbourhood Plan designates the area along The Street as a Special Character Area to ensure proposals preserve and enhance the historical significance of the area.

2.22 None of these assets are on Historic England's 'Heritage at risk' register, and there are no Scheduled Monuments or Conservation Areas within the Parish.

Landscape

2.23 There are no designated landscapes within or near to the Parish, the nearest being Dedham Vale National Landscape which is around 14.6km to the south east.

2.24 The landscape of the Parish falls within three defined areas as identified in the Suffolk Landscape Appraisal: rolling valley farmlands, undulating ancient farmlands and ancient rolling farmlands. The rolling topography is a key part of the Parish's scenic distinctiveness.

2.25 Shimpling Parish Council commissioned a Landscape Appraisal in May 2025 which identified and divided the Parish into five distinct Character Areas, including:

- SHIMP1 – Shimpling Street
- SHIMP2 – Shimpling Park
- SHIMP3 – Chad Brook
- SHIMP4 – Mount Farm
- SHIMP5 – Chadacre Park

2.26 The Shimpling Parish Landscape Appraisal also reviewed the former 'Special Landscape Area' to identify whether there is evidence to designate it as a "valued landscape". As such, Policy SPG7 – Area of Local Landscape Value designates the majority of the Parish as an Area of Local Landscape Value.

2.27 Eleven important views have also been identified in the Neighbourhood Plan, which are addressed in Policy SPG 8 - Important Views.

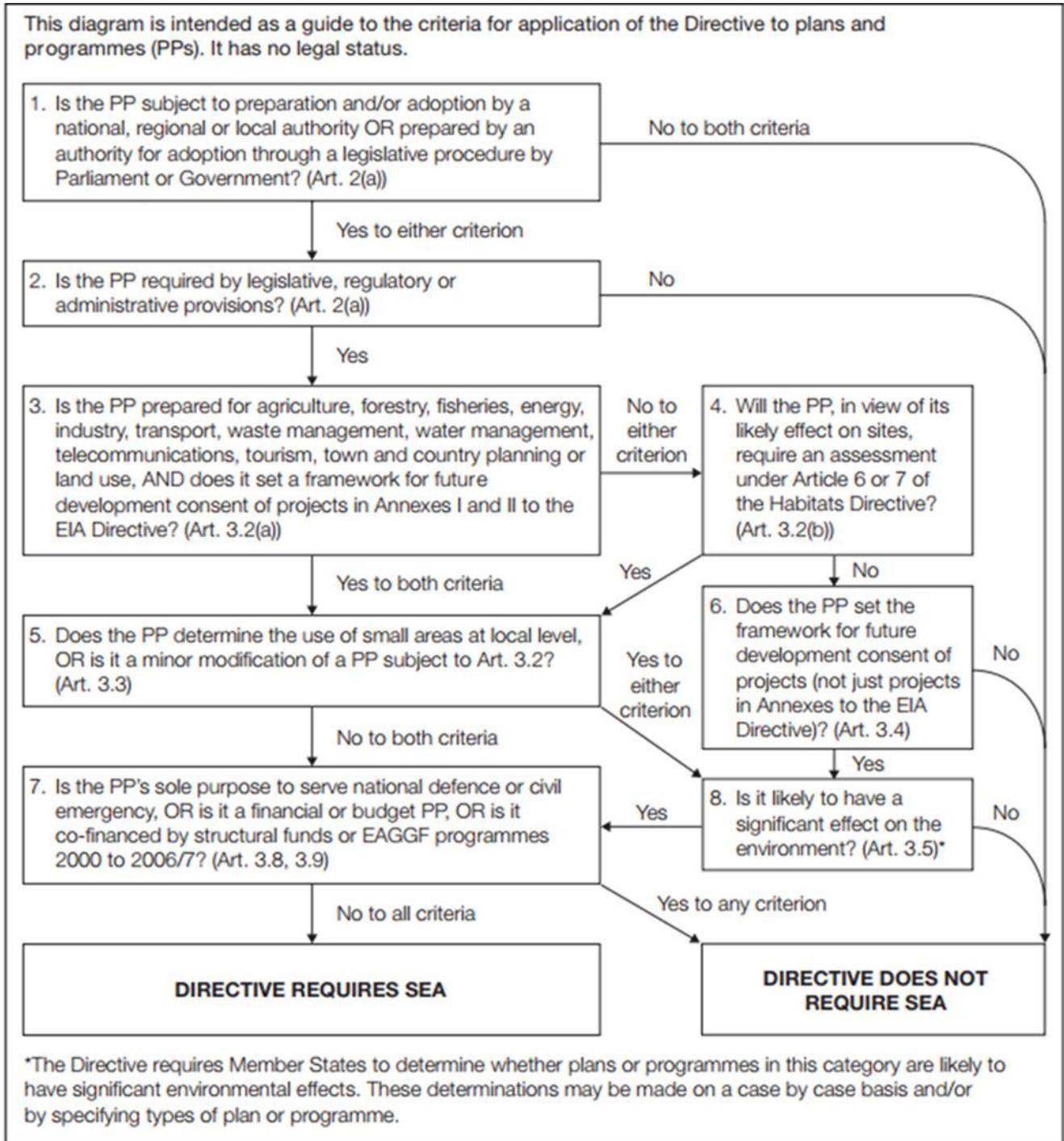
SEA Screening

2.28 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Pre-Submission Draft Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan (January 2026) requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

2.29 Figure 2.1 overleaf presents the flow diagram entitled 'Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes' which is taken from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive³, published in September 2005. This is a useful guide when considering whether a plan should be subject to SEA (The Practical Guide has been superseded by the Planning Practice Guidance; however it still provides a useful and relevant guide to the process to use in making SEA screening decisions).

³ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

Figure 2.1 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



2.30 Table 2.1 below presents the assessment of whether the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA. The questions in the first column are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Table 2.1 Application of SEA Directive to the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article 2(a))	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and will be adopted ('made') by the Local Authority (Babergh District Council) as part of the statutory development plan. Move to Q2.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))	No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. However, there is no requirement to produce a Neighbourhood Plan; it is an optional plan. Once made it will become part of the statutory development plan. Therefore, it should continue to be screened. Move to Q3.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a))	Yes & No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country planning and land use, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive. Move to Q4.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Article 3.2 (b))	No	Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening of the Neighbourhood Plan was undertaken separately on behalf of Babergh District Council and has concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Move to Q6.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article 3.4)	Yes	Although the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development, it includes policies which proposals for development within the Parish will be assessed against. Move to Q8.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5)	No	See Table 2.2. SEA IS NOT REQUIRED.

2.31 Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects. These are listed in **Table 2.2** below along with comments on the extent to which the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan meets these criteria.

Table 2.2 Likely Significant Effects of the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan

SEA Requirement	Comments
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:	
1. The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	<p>Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development in Shimpling, including in terms of design. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for residential or other forms of development.</p> <p>The previously adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identified Shimpling Street as a 'Hinterland Village' under Policy CS2: Settlement Pattern. The Policy stipulates that Hinterland Villages will accommodate some development to help meet the needs within them, although development will largely be directed to towns/urban areas (which includes the Ipswich Fringe) and then to the Core Villages. Policy CS3 made provision for 1,050 homes to be delivered at Core and Hinterland Villages over the Plan period to 2031.</p> <p>The adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 (Nov 2023) does not set out a settlement hierarchy. Following the examination of the Joint Local Plan it was decided that an up-to-date settlement hierarchy will now come forward in Part 2 of the Plan. However, in March 2025 a revised Local Development Scheme introduced the Councils' decision to not continue with a Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 2 Development Plan Document, but to produce a full Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Review. This is at an early stage in its development and is unlikely to be adopted for some time.</p>
2. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the local strategic framework (i.e. the adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 and saved policies from the previous local plans). The Neighbourhood Plan must also have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Neighbourhood Plan does not have influence over other plans. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for Shimpling Parish and will be used in conjunction with the adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 and the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Review (once adopted) to determine planning applications.</p>
3. The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	<p>One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.</p>
4. Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	<p>Baseline information relating to Shimpling Parish was described earlier in this report. Key issues of relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan are the presence of high-quality agricultural land in the Parish, land within Flood Zones 2 and 3, biodiversity assets including Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Priority Habitats, and designated heritage assets including a Grade I listed building.</p>
5. The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans	N/A

SEA Requirement	Comments
and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
6. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or other forms of development. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period up to 2037. Any effects of the Neighbourhood Plan are expected to be indirect (due to not allocating sites) but would be long-term and permanent.
7. The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>Cumulative effects could result from the Neighbourhood Plan in combination with development that takes place in the surrounding towns and villages, although the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or other forms of development.</p> <p>The previously adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identified Shimpling Street as a 'Hinterland Village' in the settlement hierarchy, anticipating that it will accommodate some development to help meet the needs within them. The adopted Part 1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan does not identify a minimum housing requirement for Shimpling.</p>
8. The transboundary nature of the effects.	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Shimpling Parish only. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers to transboundary effects on other EU Member States; therefore they are not relevant to this Neighbourhood Plan.
9. The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	There are no anticipated risks to human health or the environment from the Neighbourhood Plan.
10. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the entirety of Shimpling Parish. At the time of the last Census (2021), Shimpling had a population of 450 people.
<p>11. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ■ Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; and ■ Intensive land-use. 	Shimpling Parish is home to two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) as well as Priority Habitats including deciduous woodland and small areas of traditional orchard. Additionally, there are 21 listed buildings. The Parish contains Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land.
12. The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	There are no National Landscapes within or immediately surrounding Shimpling Parish, the closest being Dedham Vale National Landscape which is around 14.6km to the south east.

SEA Screening Conclusion

2.32 A screening assessment has been undertaken by applying the criteria from the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations to determine whether or not the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

2.33 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision and detailed planning policies to shape development in the Parish up to 2037 and decision makers will need to consider the criteria of these policies when determining future applications in the village. The Neighbourhood Plan does not directly impact on land use through the allocation of sites for housing or other forms of development.

2.34 On this basis, it is considered that the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, and full SEA is therefore not required.

Next Steps

2.35 This SEA screening opinion will be sent to the three statutory consultees (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) and will be reviewed as appropriate in light of any comments received.

LUC
February 2026