

Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion

Prepared by Cheshire East Council

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Introduction

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a way of ensuring the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before any such decisions are made. The need for environmental assessment of plans and programmes is set out in the EU Directive 2001/42/EC – known as the SEA Directive. Under this Directive, Neighbourhood Plans may require SEA – but this will depend on the content of each Neighbourhood Plan.

Cheshire East Council is legally required to determine whether Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan (A&MNDP) will require SEA, however; if it is concluded that an SEA is required, Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council are responsible for its production and it must form part of the material that is consulted on once the formal consultation stage is reached. The SEA Directive makes SEA a mandatory requirement for:

Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.

However, the main determining factor as to whether SEA is required on a Neighbourhood Plan is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. Those Neighbourhood Plans containing land allocations for development, which are not included in the local authority's plan, are likely to require SEA. Neighbourhood Plans which do not contain such allocations (or simply reflect allocations already identified as part of a local authority plan) are less likely to require SEA.

If SEA is required, Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council may wish to consider voluntarily expanding the scope so that it covers wider economic and social issues. This is the approach taken by Cheshire East Council, whereby SEA is included within the broader Sustainability Appraisal of plans. The advantage of undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal is that it can demonstrate the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan on social, economic and environmental factors and therefore demonstrate to an examiner that the Plan that has been prepared is the most sustainable given all alternatives.

Requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Where a neighbourhood plan could have significant environmental effects it may require a SEA.

Whether a neighbourhood plan requires SEA and (if so), the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft neighbourhood plan. SEA may be required for example when:

1. A neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
2. The neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by proposals in the plan
3. The neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with via a sustainability appraisal of the Local

Plan

Requirement for HRA

In the context of neighbourhood planning, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required where a Neighbourhood Plan is deemed likely to result in negative significant effects occurring on protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites), as a result of the plan's implementation. It is good practice to identify sites within 10-15km of the plan/project boundary and include them in a HRA.

The emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

The basic conditions require Neighbourhood Plans to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority. The Congleton Borough Local Plan was adopted in 2005. Some of the policies within the Local Plan have been 'saved', which means they are still used in determining planning applications. As policies become out of date through lack of conformity with the NPPF or where more up to date evidence is available, they can be given less weight for decision making purposes, particularly on strategic issues.

The emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) proposes strategic policies to address strategic matters across the sub-region. The CELPS was initially examined in autumn 2014. Subsequently, further work requested by the Inspector was undertaken. Proposed modifications to the CELPS are due to be examined in autumn 2015.

The emerging CELPS proposed modifications were subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal which included SEA. This ensured that no likely significant effects are expected to arise from the implementation of the CELPS.

NPPF para. 216 enables decision-takers to give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans (in accordance with certain criteria). The emerging strategic policies of the CELPS may therefore influence decision-taking prior to adoption.

Neighbourhood Plans are not required to conform to emerging plans. However, to ensure consistency between plans and to 'future proof' the A&MNDP it is advised that the SNNP seeks to achieve general conformity with the strategic policies of the emerging CELPS.

Legislative Background

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal is the [European Directive 2001/42/EC](#) which has subsequently been transposed into English law by the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#), or SEA Regulations. The government has produced guidance in relation to these regulations, entitled '[A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive](#)'.

Schedule 2 of the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#) makes provision in relation to the Habitats Directive. The Directive requires that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment. To achieve this, paragraph 1 prescribes a basic condition that the making of a neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site. Paragraphs 2 to 5 of the Schedule amend the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 so as to apply its provisions to neighbourhood development orders and neighbourhood plans. In particular, paragraph 4 inserts new regulation 78A which provides that a neighbourhood development order may not grant planning permission for development which is likely to have a significant

effect on a European site.

Schedule 3 of the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#) makes provision in relation to the [Environmental Impact Assessment \(EIA\) Directive](#). The Directive requires that EIA development must be subject to a development consent process. To enable this, Schedule 3 prescribes a basic condition that applies where development which is the subject of a proposal for a neighbourhood development order is of a type caught by the EIA Directive, and applies to the relevant provisions of the [Town and Country Planning \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) Regulations 2011\(3\)](#) ("the EIA Regulations") with appropriate modifications ([regulation 33](#) and paragraphs [1 to 4 and 6 of Schedule 3](#)). Paragraphs 5 and 7 to 13 of Schedule 3 correct errors in the EIA regulations.

This report focuses on screening for SEA and the criteria for establishing whether a full assessment is needed.

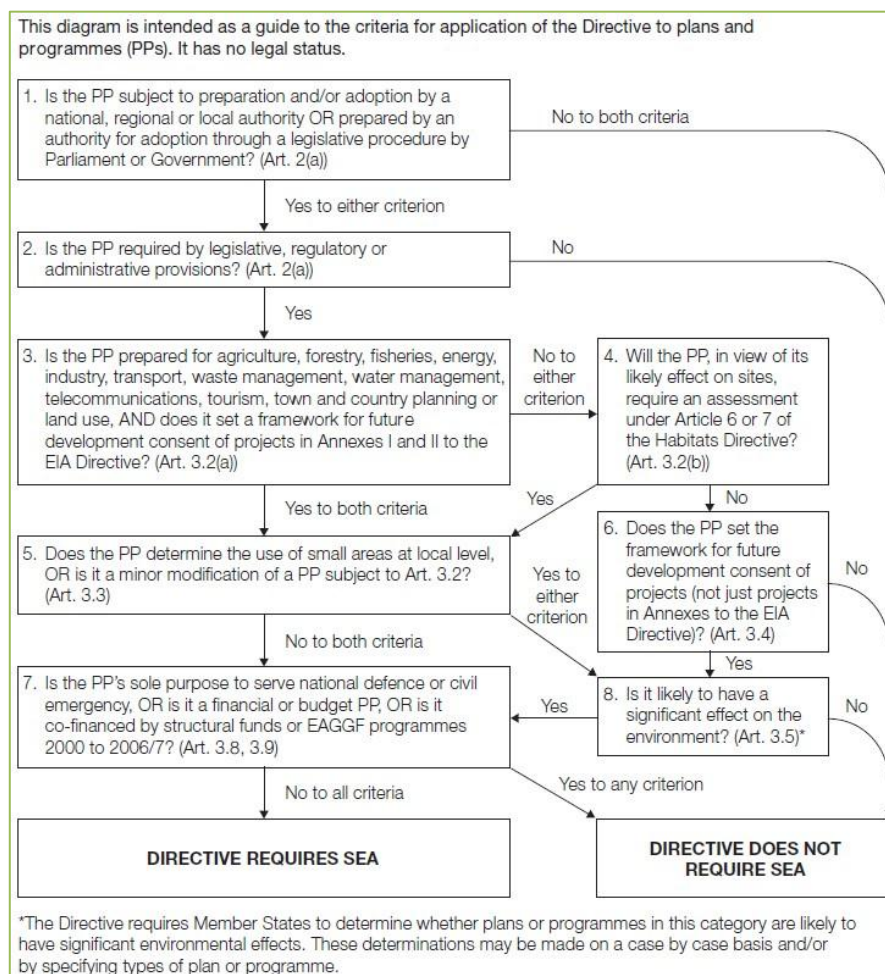
Screening Process

Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council has requested a SEA screening opinion of its Neighbourhood Plan. It is CEC's responsibility to assess whether the policies and proposals in Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have 'significant environmental effects'. The Plan does not have to be at a final draft stage to be assessed.

The screening opinion assessment is undertaken in two parts: the first part will assess whether the plan requires SEA (as per the flow chart which follows); and the second part of the assessment will consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from [Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive](#) and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (see section 5).

The three statutory consultation bodies (English Heritage, Environment Agency and Natural England) have been consulted to establish whether the Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA and whether the plan may have a 'significant environmental effect' on the environment. Should it be concluded that SEA is required Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council will need to undertake a SEA with a SEA Scoping Report exercise as the first stage.

The government guidance [‘A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’](#) sets out the following approach to be taken in determining whether SEA is required:



Summary of the Neighbourhood Plan

Summary	
Name of Neighbourhood Plan	Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council
Geographic Coverage of the	The Parish of Astbury and Moreton
Key topics/scope of Plan	To support delivery of small scale development, both residential and commercial. To sustain and improve local services and infrastructure; to enhance quality and character of natural and built environment.
Key Issues	Rural settlement role; Green Belt; Heritage designations including nationally listed assets; locally designated natural asset.
Summary of Screening opinion	
Name and job title of officer undertaking screening opinion	Tom Evans, Neighbourhood Planning Manager
Date of assessment	Sept-15
Conclusion of assessment	SEA is not required
Reason for conclusion	The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate specific sites for future development, and promotes criteria based policies that seek to shape future development proposals in a means that reduces and manages impact on the environment (both natural and built). Protection of designated assets is a core aim of the plan. Whilst the plan seeks to support rural enterprise it does so through a policy framework which seeks to balance development within the wider needs of the environment. There are no European designated sites located within the neighbourhood area, although there are locally and nationally designated sites both within and in proximity to the area. A European designated site is located within 15km of the neighbourhood area at Astbury and Moreton (identified in appendix 4). As a lower tier plan all development proposals will be subject to assessment against higher tier policies, plans and legislation that seek to protect locally, nationally and internationally designated sites. This includes the saved policies of the Congleton Borough Local Plan that are specifically relevant to heritage and natural asset within the neighbourhood area and beyond. The content and broad approach of the plan is not considered to have a significant effect on the environment, or a significant adverse effect on designated sites. Therefore SEA is not required.
Statutory Consultee	Summary of Comments
English Heritage	Pending
Environment Agency	Pending
Natural England	Pending

Screening Assessment

Assessment 1: Establishing the Need for SEA

Establishing the Need for SEA		
Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) 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? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The preparation and adoption of the NP is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The NP will be prepared by Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council (as the 'relevant body') and will be 'made' by Cheshire East Council as the local authority. The preparation of NPs is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012.
		GO TO STAGE 2
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	Whilst the NP is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will if 'made', form part of the Development Plan for the Borough. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive. Therefore despite there being no formal requirement for the production of Neighbourhood Plans it is prudent to continue the screening assessment to Stage 3
		GO TO STAGE 3
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste 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? (Art. 3.2(a))	N	The NP is being prepared for town and country planning, local transport and land use as it makes proposals to manage the development of land for housing and employment uses. As such, the NP contains a framework for future development consent of urban development projects (listed as 10(b) in Annex II of the EIA Directive). The NP does not specifically allocate any land for development purposes.
		GO TO STAGE 5
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))	N/A	NOT APPLICABLE. See HRA screening assessment.
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level OR is it a minor modification of a plan or programme subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The NP is expected to determine the use of small sites at a local level. The NP seeks to support and sustainably manage small scale development proposals. The location of new development, beyond what is identified as existing commitments, is not identified the plan. Specific policies on change of use are proposed.
		GO TO STAGE 8

6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	NA	NOT APPLICABLE
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget plan or programme, OR is it co- financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8, 3.9)	N	The NP does not fall into any of the criteria listed.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art 3.5)		See Assessment 2: Likely significant effects on the environment
	N	GO TO STAGE 7

Assessment 2: Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004. Characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan, having regard to:	Cheshire East Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
The degree to which the Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The NP would, if made, form part of the statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. The draft NP does not determine the specific location of development sites and seeks to establish criteria based approach to determination of residential and commercial development. The allocation of sites is left to higher tier plans. The NP sits within the wider framework of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), the Emerging CEC Local Plan Strategy (2014) (CBLP) and the 'saved' Local Plan policies contained within the Congleton Borough Local Plan 2005 (CBLP), therefore the projects for which this NP helps to set a framework are localised in nature and have limited resource implications.	N
The degree to which the Plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The NP is a lower tier plan and must be prepared in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework. It is therefore subject to conformity with higher tier plans and should be prepared in general conformity with any strategic 'saved' Local Plan policies held within the CBLP. Whilst the NP will only be tested against the adopted development plan, it is prepared within the context of the emerging Local Plan Strategy for Cheshire East and the Strategic Policies contained within this document. The NP should not significantly influence other plans and programmes, but may have a limited degree of influence over the formation of future strategic policies by determining the detailed aspects of emerging policies within the CELPS.	N
The relevance of the Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The NP is expected to work to protect and enhance the natural environment of the area with a wider policy framework including, but not limited to the NPPF, the saved policies of the Development Plan for Cheshire East Council and the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. The NP itself does directly address environmental issues in a general sense by emphasising policies which seek to protect asset from harm arising from development. In combination with other plans and legislation, it is considered that the NP will integrate environmental considerations and promote sustainable development in this location.	N

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004. Characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan, having regard to:	Cheshire East Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
Environmental problems relevant to the Plan.	The NP does not allocate specific sites for development purposes. Where relevant, future development proposals will need to consider the impact of the plan on flood risk, designated sites and other primary and secondary impacts on the environment.	N
The relevance of the Plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste managements or water protection).	The NP is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation, although it will need to take the impact of the Water Framework Directive into account.	N
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects of the Plan.	The NP is likely to have short-term effects resulting from activity associated with the development of small scale, unidentified and unallocated sites within the neighbourhood area for Astbury and Moreton.	N
	There may also be longer-term effects relevant to changes in land use which may be positive but on a limited scale may have a negative impact on environmental factors. The plan does not seek to establish a framework to address such issues and relies on higher tier plans and policies to deliver mitigation of such negative impacts.	N
	Where proposals are received to develop small scale sites in accordance with draft NP policies, such proposals will also be subject to national and local policies in regard to environmental protection and mitigation of impacts.	N
The cumulative nature of the effects of the Plan.	The NP does not seek to allocate sites that are not specifically detailed in the emerging Cheshire East LPS or already have planning permission granted. It is intended that the positive effects of the plan on the environment will have a positive cumulative benefit for the area.	N
The trans-boundary nature of the effects of the Plan.	There are not expected to be any significant trans-boundary effects.	N

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004. Characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan, having regard to:	Cheshire East Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	There are no significant risks to human health. Indeed, the NP is likely to improve human health through positive assertions on protection of natural assets, sustainable development principles and the introduction of local infrastructure policies.	N
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) by the Plan.	Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan covers the parish of Astbury and Moreton. The NP is likely to affect a resident population of approximately people over the life of the Plan across a large parish with a significant rural and agricultural character.	N
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected by the Plan due to: Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or intensive land use	The NDP does not directly allocate new development Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Area does contain significant natural and cultural heritage which policies within the plan seek to protect and enhance in accordance with higher tier plans. The NP sets out to deliver small scale new development and policies are included in the NP to specifically protect cultural heritage assets and the design/landscape characteristics of Astbury and Moreton. Given that the Borough is generally rural in nature, and Astbury and Moreton is set within a predominantly rural context and a wealth of biodiversity and natural habitats, most proposed development will have an impact on the environment in the wider sense, and in some cases in a specific, locationally based sense that has already been the subject of assessment through the granting of planning permission.	N
	The draft NP does not exceed environmental quality standards or limit values.	N
	No specific sites are identified for development purposes and therefore it is expected that development proposals will continue to make the best and most efficient use of land – not to intensively use the land for development. Future development proposals will be assessed against other policies within the Development Plan (which, in totality, should mitigate against the over-development of land).	N

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004. Characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan, having regard to:	Cheshire East Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
The effects of the Plan on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status.	There are Local Wildlife Sites, within the Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Plan Area and immediately adjacent to the Neighbourhood Area boundary. The plan does not allocate any new sites via the NP. Further proposals within the neighbourhood plan seek to enhance local protection. A SSSI is located outside of the neighbourhood plan area but in close proximity to the plan area. Development affecting this site has been assessed through other mechanisms and the neighbourhood plan is not consider to introduce any new adverse effects here.	N
	The plan seeks to protect landscape character. There are no landscapes within the neighbourhood plan area that are subject to protection status and as such, protection for such designations is relied on elsewhere in higher tier policies and legislation.	N
	There are no recognized areas or landscapes within the neighbourhood plan area and, given that no specific development sites have been identified in the NP, and that other higher tier policies and plans exist to protect such areas and landscapes, the effect of the draft NP policies is considered to be limited. A further detailed assessment of impact on such areas is included below in the HRA.	N
Assessment 2 Conclusion	The Astbury and Moreton NP is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment.	Directive does not require SEA

Screening Assessment: Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Development Plan

This section gives a brief description of the A&MNDP document and outlines the key objectives / policies and priorities.

The Habitat Regulations also require the cumulative effects with other plans or projects to be considered at the screening stage. This section, therefore also identifies the other plans and projects that it is considered could potentially act “in combination” with the A&MNDP to have “significant effects” on European sites.

Plan context

Astbury and Moreton is a rural parish and for the purposes of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) Settlement Hierarchy, falls within the category of ‘Other Settlements and Rural Areas’. Emerging Policies PG1 and PG2 of the CELPS set out the preferred development strategy and distribution of development for the Borough. The distribution of future development in the Borough is intended to be focused on the Key Towns of Crewe and Macclesfield and the 9 Key Service Centres. A small quantum of growth to meet local need and support the vitality of smaller centres and rural areas is outlined and identifies a need to deliver some 2950 homes and 8ha of employment land in Other Settlements and Rural Areas (outside of a large 61ha allocation at Wardle). This is a revised figure reached as through work undertaken during the suspension of the examination of the CELPS. The figure remains under review and may change.

The A&MNDP does not allocate specific sites for development and instead identifies a series of criteria based policies against which development proposals should be assessed within the neighbourhood area. Such criteria are designed to ensure the delivery of sustainable development to meet the objectives of the Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Plan.

Planning applications within the A&MNA will be assessed against the policies in the A&MNDP, the saved development plan policies and other material planning considerations, including the emerging CELPS.

As specific sites have not been identified in the A&MNDP or in the CELPS in this location, no assessment of potential development sites has been undertaken as part of the A&MNDP Process.

Aims of the Plan:

The A&MNDP document sets out how Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council intend to ensure the distinctive historic and rural character of Astbury and Moreton will be maintained and enhanced whilst supporting small scale residential and commercial development.

The A&MNDP contains a number of policies that will be used to ensure the delivery of the vision and objectives and guide individual development Management decisions. An assessment of these policies impact on European sites has been carried out and concludes that no likely significant adverse impact will arise.

Objectives

In order to deliver their vision, the Newbold Astbury and Moreton Parish Council has set out the following neighbourhood plan objectives:

- To deliver small scale housing growth, phased over the neighbourhood plan period, to meet the needs of local people with respect to size and price
- To encourage limited small scale sensitive development which protects and enhances the existing historic character, built form and landscape setting of the plan area
- To sustain and improve local services and community facilities to meet the changing needs of Astbury and Moreton over the period of the plan
- To strengthen and support economic activity in Astbury and Moreton that looks to employ and support local people
- To secure continuing improvements to local infrastructure and digital connectivity for the area
- To prioritise local distinctiveness in every element of change and growth
- To protect and enhance the quality and character of both the natural and built environment of the plan area
- To involve local people in the process of plan making, monitoring and delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan

SSSI within the neighbourhood area:

There are two SSSI's located within the neighbourhood area. An assessment of the Plan's impact on features of the SSSIs has been undertaken below at table 1 and table 2. The assessment concludes that no significant impact will arise from the policies contained in the neighbourhood plan or in combination with other plans and programmes.

Policies

The A&MNDP contains a number of policies that will be used to ensure the delivery of the above objectives and guide individual development management decisions. An assessment of these policies impact on European sites has been carried out and concludes that no likely adverse impact will arise. The full assessment and table of policies is included at Table 3 below:

Table 1: A&MNDP Assessment of impact on relevant SSSI: Roe Park

Designated Site	Qualifying Features	Potential Hazards	Potential Exposure to Hazard and Mechanism of Effect/Impact if Known	Potential In-combination Effects with other Plans and/or Projects	Screening Assessment
Roe Park SSSI	<p>Criteria 1 – Semi-natural ancient woodland (oak, both sessile and pedunculate <i>Quercus petraea</i> and <i>Q. Robur</i>; Downy birch <i>Betula pubescens</i>; rowan <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>; holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>; Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>; Alder buckthorn <i>Frangula alnus</i>)</p> <p>Criteria 2 – Acidic and free draining soils</p> <p>Criteria 3 – Ground flora (wavy hair-grass <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>; bilberry <i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>; heather <i>Calluna vulgaris</i>; bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i>; tufted hair-grass <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>; <i>Sphagnum</i> and <i>Polytrichum</i> mosses; opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage <i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>, wild angelica <i>Angelica sylvestris</i>, common valerian <i>Valeriana officinalis</i>; marsh hawk's beard <i>Crepis paludosa</i>)</p>	<p>Direct physical loss or damage to habitat; Contamination eg. introduction of heavy metals, pesticides, nutrients, air and water pollution, introduction of non-native species etc; Damage to habitats resulting from increased recreation pressure; Changes to Hydrology</p>	<p>Direct physical loss of habitat is almost certain not to occur. Policies in the A&MNDP seek to enhance and protect environmental concerns within the plan area.</p> <p>Contamination is highly unlikely to occur resulting from policies in the A&MNDP. A&MNDP Housing policies seek to limit new development to that already approved and support only small scale development proposals within the existing settlement. Risk of invasive species colonising the site as a result of garden escapes is limited.</p> <p>Public access is possible through public rights of way. Therefore damage due to increased recreational pressure is possible, however the limited proposals within the A&MNDP mean this is unlikely to be significant.</p> <p>Potential changes to hydrology are limited. Hydrological links arising within the neighbourhood area are very limited. Policies to positively manage the environment within the neighbourhood plan area will assist in maintaining more natural ground water levels in the wider area</p>	<p>New housing, increased tourism and improved access to the countryside resulting from policies of other plans including the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and the granting of permissions outside of any plan process could have in-combination effects resulting from increased recreational pressures on the SSSI.</p> <p>Higher tier plans and policies, including policies within the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy seek to positively manage this change and ensure that potential hazards to the SSSI are managed.</p>	No likely significant effect

Table 2: A&MNDP Assessment of impact on relevant SSSI: Gannister Quarry

Designated Site	Qualifying Features	Potential Hazards	Potential Exposure to Hazard and Mechanism of Effect/Impact if Known	Potential In-combination Effects with other Plans and/or Projects	Screening Assessment
Gannister Quarry SSSI	Criteria 1 – Geological interest: Gannister Sandstone	<p>Direct physical loss or damage to habitat; Contamination eg. introduction of heavy metals, pesticides, nutrients, air and water pollution, introduction of non-native species etc; Damage to habitats resulting from increased recreation pressure; Changes to Hydrology</p>	<p>Direct physical loss of habitat is almost certain not to occur. The Policies in the A&MNDP seek to enhance and protect environmental concerns within the plan area. However, policies are included that do support local enterprise and that do not reference protection for geodiversity. Whilst higher tier plans do ensure assessment of impact is necessary in development proposals, the neighbourhood plan may benefit from including a policy specifically addressing this issue.</p> <p>Contamination is highly unlikely to occur resulting from policies in the A&MNDP. A&MNDP Housing policies seek to limit new development to that already approved and support only small scale development proposals within the existing settlement. The site is at significant distance from the main settlement of Astbury where development is limited to.</p> <p>Public access is possible through public rights of way. Therefore damage due to increased recreational pressure is possible, however the limited proposals within the A&MNDP mean this is unlikely to be significant.</p> <p>Potential changes to hydrology are limited. Hydrological links arising within the neighbourhood area are very limited. Policies to positively manage the environment within the neighbourhood plan area will assist in maintaining more natural ground water levels in the wider area</p>	<p>New housing, increased tourism and improved access to the countryside resulting from policies of other plans including the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and the granting of permissions outside of any plan process could have in-combination effects resulting from increased recreational pressures on the SSSI.</p> <p>Higher tier plans and policies, including policies within the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy seek to positively manage this change and ensure that potential hazards to the SSSI are managed.</p>	No likely significant effect

Table 3: Assessment of A&MNDP Policies

NDP Objective	NDP Policy	Effect on Environment
Housing	P-1 Scale of Housing Development	1A. No negative effect
	P-2 Housing to meet local needs	1A. No negative effect
	P-3 Design	1A. No negative effect
	P-4 Parking	1A. No negative effect
Local Economy	P-5 New Business	1A. No negative effect
	P-6 Loss of Employment Sites and Community Facilities	1A. No negative effect
	P-7 Use of Rural Buildings	1A. No negative effect
	P-8 Scale, Design and Amenity	1B. No negative effect
Landscape and Environment	P-9 Open Space within the Settlements	1B. No negative effect
	P-10 Countryside and Open Views	1B. No negative effect
	P-11 Woodland, Trees, and Hedgerows	1B. No negative effect
	P-12 New development in the open countryside	1B. No negative effect
	P-13 Extensions and Alterations to existing buildings in the open countryside	1B. No negative effect
	P-14 Environmental Sustainability of Buildings	1B. No negative effect
	P-15 Agricultural Buildings	1B. No negative effect
	P-16 Buffer Zones and Wildlife Corridors	1B. No negative effect
	P-17 Historic Environment	1B. No negative effect
	P-18 Footpaths	1B. No negative effect
Transport and Communications	P-19 Fibre to Premises	1C. No negative effect
	P-20 Traffic	1C. No negative effect
	P-21 Parking	1C. No negative effect
	P-22 Public Rights of Way	1C. No negative effect
	P-23 Traffic in the Conservation Area	1C. No negative effect
	P-24 Built Environment	1B. No negative effect
Local Character	P-25 Landscape Quality	1B. No negative effect
	P-26 Extensions and Alterations to Existing Buildings	1B. No negative effect
	P-27 Replacement Development	1B. No negative effect
	P-28 Backland Development	1B. No negative effect
	P-29 Neighbourhood Plan Boundary Signs	1B. No negative effect
Community Infrastructure	P-30 Existing Facilities	1C. No negative effect
	P-31 Contributions to Community Infrastructure	1C. No negative effect
Category	Description	
1A. No negative effect	Policy will not lead to development. For example it relates to design or other qualitative criteria, or it is not a land-use planning policy.	
1B. No negative effect	Policy intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on a European Site.	
1C. No negative effect	Policy would have no effect because no development could occur through the policy itself, the development being implemented through other policies in the same plan, which are more specific and therefore more appropriate to assess for their effects on European Sites and associated sensitive areas.	
1D. No negative effect	Policy is similar to, or compliant with, the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy policy which has been assessed as having no negative effects by a HRA/SA.	
2. No significant effect	No significant effect either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, because effects are trivial, minimal or mitigated through other policies in combination.	
3. Likely significant effect alone	Policy could indirectly affect a European Site, because it provides for, or steers, a quantity or type of development that may be very close to it, or ecologically, hydrologically or physically connected to it, or it may increase disturbance as a result of increased recreational pressure.	
4. Likely significant effects in combination	The policy alone would not be likely to have significant effects but if the effects are combined with the effects of other policies or proposals provided for or coordinated by the relevant plans or projects the cumulative effects would be likely to be significant.	

Screening Conclusion

The Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Plan includes policies that support the delivery of existing development sites that have already secured permission and been tested for impacts through the planning system. The plan introduces:

- Policies to manage the sustainable delivery and redevelopment of small scale sites
- Policies to manage the change of use of rural enterprises
- Policies to protect the setting and character of existing heritage assets
- Policies to enhance protection of the natural environment

The A&MNDP also seeks to ensure that any new development is addressed sensitively in the context of evidence prepared in relation to natural, heritage and landscape assets.

Although there are no designated sites within the Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Area, there are sites within a 15km area of the plan. A local HRA was undertaken to assess the impact of the plan on these sites and concludes that no significant adverse effect is likely to arise from policies contained in the A&MNDP. For these reasons it is considered that the A&MNDP does not have a significant effect on the environment and is not required to be subject to SEA. This conclusion has been reached based on the following basis:

- The Screening Opinion Assessments demonstrate that SEA is not necessary; and
- The Habitats Regulations Assessment demonstrates that no significant negative impact on designated European sites will arise as a result of the Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Plan either alone or in combination with other plans and programmes.

It is important to acknowledge that this screening opinion is a 'snapshot in time' and that if the issues addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan should change then a new screening process will need to be undertaken to determine whether an SEA will be required.

As a result of the Screening Assessment, it is concluded that there are no significant environmental effects likely to arise as a result of the Astbury and Moreton Neighbourhood Plan in its current form. As such, A&MNDP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken. However, it is important to remember that this screening opinion is a 'snapshot in time' and that if the issues addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan should change then a new screening process will need to be undertaken to determine whether an SEA will be required.

Assessment 3: Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Screening Assessment determined that the A&MNDP does not have a significant effect on the environment, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, and therefore no further assessment is required.

Appendix 1: Responses from Statutory Bodies

PENDING

Appendix 2: Relevant Plans and Projects

Document	Summary of content, objectives and targets (taken from Cheshire East Local Plan Draft Sustainability Appraisal: Scoping Report, 2012)	Potential in-combination effects on European Sites
Regional Housing Strategy for the North West	The objective of this document is to create a region that is working together to deliver a housing offer that will promote and sustain maximum economic growth within the region. It also aims to make sure that all residents can access a choice of good quality housing in successful, secure and sustainable communities	This strategy could potentially have adverse in-combination effects if new housing sites are located in close proximity to European sites. This could result in increased disturbance (i.e. noise, visual) or physical damage (i.e. vandalism, trampling).
Cheshire Means Business	<p>This document outlines the purpose and objectives of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Economic Partnership. The vision of the partnership is ""To make Cheshire and Warrington quite simply the best place to do business in the United Kingdom. We will provide the ideal environment for businesses to grow: access to the right skills; supportive and efficient public services; effective infrastructure and utilities; and a beautiful part of the country for people to enjoy."</p> <p>The purpose of the partnership is to set the policies and oversee the delivery of private sector-led functions, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating growth through the provision of housing and employment sites, utilities, infrastructure and a planning application support service. • Assisting investment in and development of new and growing businesses through business support of targeted sectors, incubation facilities, signposting best practice in start up, innovation, managing growth and exporting, including connecting business with government. • Providing the skills and local intelligence needed by new and growing businesses to accelerate their growth and to provide the information to Local Authorities so they can shape their services to meet business needs. • Promoting Cheshire and Warrington as a great place to live, work, study and visit. • Supporting the transition to a low carbon economy by identifying and promoting the opportunities it creates for our businesses. 	This strategy could potentially have adverse in-combination effects if new housing sites are located in close proximity to European sites. This could result in increased disturbance (i.e. noise, visual) or physical damage (i.e. vandalism, trampling).
Cheshire Sub- Regional Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2009 to 2012	<p>This document sets out a new Sub- Regional Housing Strategy for Cheshire. It describes how the strategy has been developed and is intended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a framework for the future of housing in Cheshire and identify sub-regional priorities. • Show the crucial roles played by partnerships in delivering and improving housing and housing services in the sub-region. • Illustrate the links between this strategy and other key national and regional policies and strategies. 	This strategy could potentially have adverse in-combination effects if it proposes residential developments in close proximity to European sites. This could result in increased disturbance (i.e. noise, visual) or physical damage (i.e. vandalism, trampling).

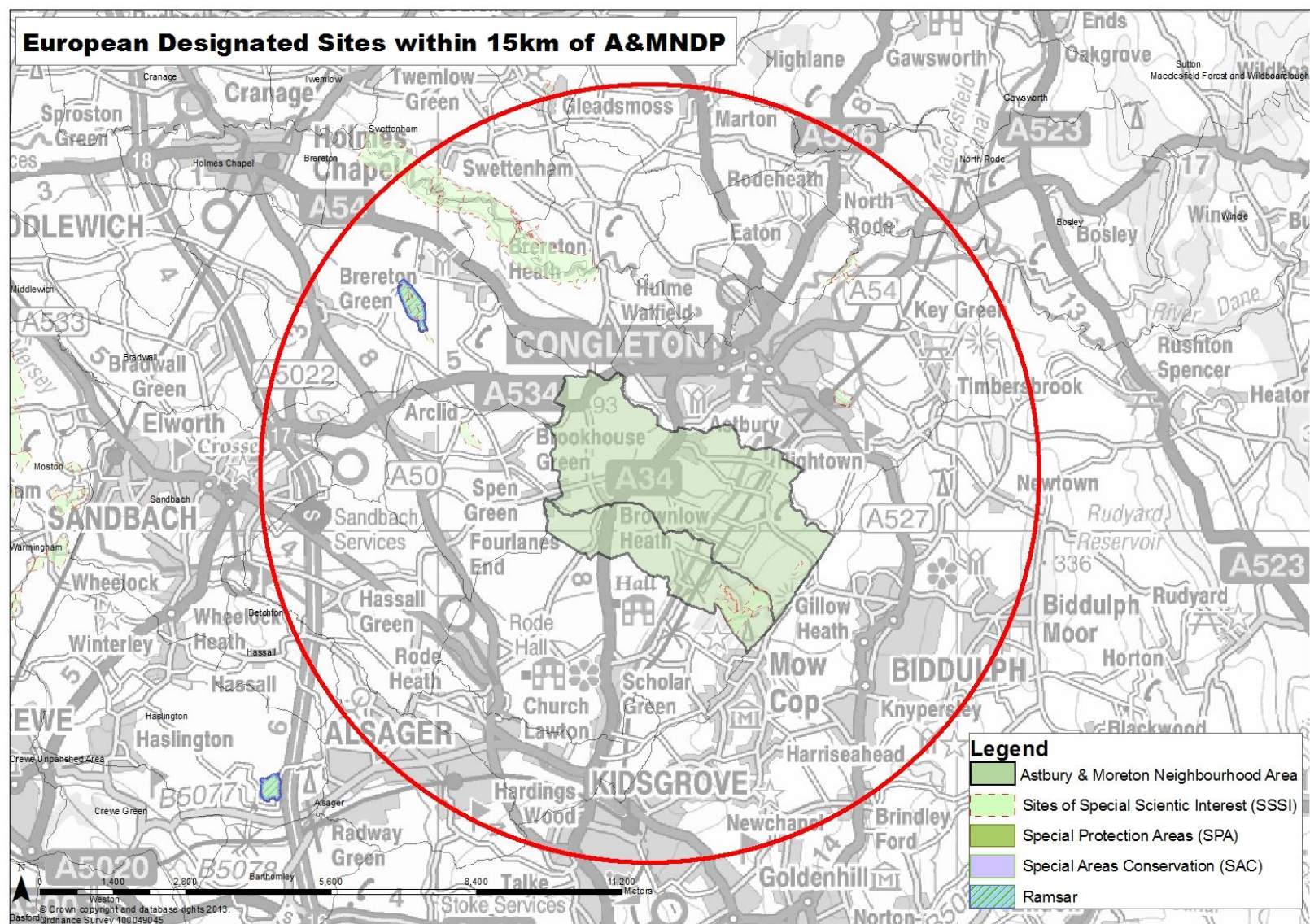
Corporate Plan 2010 to 2013 - Cheshire East Council	<p>The Corporate Plan for the period 2010 to 2013 defines the Corporate Objectives. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give the people of Cheshire East more choice and control around services and resources; To grow and develop a sustainable Cheshire East; To improve life opportunities and health for everybody in Cheshire East; To enhance the Cheshire East environment; and To be an excellent Council and work with others - to deliver for Cheshire East. <p>Key, relevant actions to deliver those objectives include: Promote major regeneration of Macclesfield and Crewe; maximise developer contributions to improve infrastructure, culture, leisure and green spaces; Meet targets in relation to the provision of affordable housing; Reduction in carbon emissions; Thriving and prosperous market towns; and Growth in the Cheshire East economy and the visitor economy.</p>	The objectives of the Corporate Plan are compatible with those of the Local Plan Strategy and are unlikely to result in in-combination effects.
Cheshire East Local Transport Plan and Implementation Plans	This Local Transport Plan is a strategic plan for the development of transport within Cheshire East over the period 2011 to 2026, outlining how transport will contribute to and support the longer-term aspirations of the borough. The plan for implementation of the Transport Plan is set out in the Cheshire East Local Transport: Implementation Plan	The Local Plan Strategy supports schemes outlined within the Transport Plan and is therefore unlikely to result in in-combination effects.
Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026	<p>The Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan was developed to assess: the extent to which the local rights of way network meets the present and future needs of the public; the opportunities provided by the local rights of way network for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the Local Authority's area; and the accessibility of local rights of way for blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.</p> <p>The plan also contains a statement of the actions that the authority proposes to take for the Management of local rights of way, and for securing an improved network of local rights of way.</p>	The aim of this plan is to maintain and improve the provision of green infrastructure within the county, the connectivity of the network, the provision for cyclists and horse riders and the network's accessibility for all users, including those with a disability. Improvements to and expansion of the Rights of Way network, if located in close proximity to European sites, could result in in-combination effects through increased visitor numbers which may result in adverse impacts such as disturbance (i.e. noise, visual) or physical damage (i.e. vandalism, trampling).
Cheshire East Housing Strategy: Moving Forward 2011 to 2016	<p>This Housing Strategy sets out Cheshire East's long term housing vision for the Borough..</p> <p>The housing vision of the document is that housing supports the creation of balanced and sustainable communities, where all residents can achieve independent living in good quality, affordable homes that are appropriate to their needs</p>	The objectives of the Housing Strategy are compatible with those of the Local Plan Strategy and are unlikely to result in in-combination effects.
Local Air Quality Strategy for Cheshire East Council: 2011-2015 and Action Plan	<p>This strategy outlines high level, broad commitments across the Council aimed at improving air quality.</p> <p>The Action Plan outlines measures to make sure that air quality work undertaken within the Borough is coordinated at a strategic level. The current action plan addresses poor air quality in the following areas: M6 Cranage; West Road, Congleton; A34 to A54, Rood Lane, Congleton; A534 Hospital Street, Nantwich; A34 Lower Heath, Congleton; A5022/A534, Astbury and Moreton; and A556 Chester Road, Mere. The Action Plan focuses on these areas and the impact of nitrogen dioxide from transportation sources.</p>	This Strategy and Action Plan aims to improve air quality across the County and identifies specific areas where poor air quality is to be addressed. In general the Local Plan Strategy is compatible with this Strategy and Action Plan as it aims to reduce travel by improving connectivity, public transport and green infrastructure, which should reduce traffic emissions. This strategy may therefore reduce the impact of atmospheric deposition on European sites.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategic Framework	<p>The purpose of this strategic document is to set the context within which Cheshire East Council will support the Visitor Economy to 2015 and beyond. This document sets out the strategic framework within which the Council intends to operate, whether in its own activity, in partnership or in the context of regional/sub-regional priorities.</p>	<p>Key aims of this Strategic Framework are to develop a Visitor Economy with a value of £818m by 2015 and increase visitor numbers to Tatton to 1m by 2015. The approach to achieve these aims will involve Cheshire East focusing on its events, its attractive towns and towns, its countryside and gardens, and its heritage. Promotion of the countryside as part of the visitor economy by this strategy and the Local Plan Strategy could therefore result in adverse in- combination effects on nearby European sites as a result of increased visitor pressure. For example, the Tatton/Knutsford/Jodrell area is identified as a key hub for developing the visitor economy and being located in close proximity to Rostherne Mere Ramsar and Tatton Meres SSSI (part of the Midland Meres & Mosses Phase 1 Ramsar) may suffer from increased visitor pressure. This strategic framework however, does recognise that the protection and enhancement of the County's natural assets, such as the Meres and Mosses is a fundamental requirement in defining the quality of experience that visitors seek.</p>
Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan 1999	<p>This Plan provides planning advice on where mineral development can take place. It covers both Cheshire East and Cheshire West & Chester Boroughs. Together, these Boroughs contain a variety of minerals including salt, construction sand and silica sand which are important to the regional and national economy.</p> <p>A philosophy of sustainable development underpins the Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan. This philosophy looks at conserving the County's environment and natural resources for the benefit of future generations.</p> <p>The Plan proposes that future working of salt, silica sand and sand and gravel should come from limited areas of the County and that detailed policies will minimise the impact of all mineral working by enabling rigorous monitoring of site operations and ensuring a positive restoration of sites on set timescales for both phasing and completion.</p>	<p>Both the Local Plan Strategy and the Minerals Plan identify the need for Cheshire East to provide an adequate and steady supply of minerals in support of sustainable economic growth.</p> <p>The Local Plan Strategy has recognised that, for all mineral extraction, it is essential that workings do not give rise to any unacceptable adverse impacts on the natural environment and therefore detailed policies will be brought forward through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document setting out criteria against which all mineral related planning proposals will be assessed, consistent with national policy and guidance.</p>
Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan 2007	<p>This Replacement Waste Local Plan attempts to achieve a more sustainable approach to waste Management within Cheshire. The Plan aims to fulfil this purpose in two ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) by establishing policies against which planning applications for the development of waste Management facilities will be assessed. b) by identifying sites which are considered suitable 'in principle' for a waste Management use in order to enable the development of an adequate network of waste Management facilities. 	<p>The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy states that to achieve the sustainable Management of waste in Cheshire East, the Council will prepare a Waste Development Plan Document (DPD) consistent with national waste planning policy. Policy will be set by the Waste DPD to ensure that the environment is protected through the prevention or reduction of the adverse impacts of the generation and Management of waste.</p>
Saved Policies from the Congleton Borough Local Plan, Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan and Macclesfield Local Plan	<p>Saved policies are planning policies from local plans that remain part of the statutory development plan for Cheshire East and can still be used in determining planning applications. Currently, these Local Plans have saved policies that apply within part of the Cheshire East area. Saved policies in these documents will continue to be used until they are replaced by new policies in the Cheshire East Local Plan.</p>	<p>The saved policies of these Local Plans are compatible with those of the Local Plan Strategy and are unlikely to result in in-combination effects.</p>

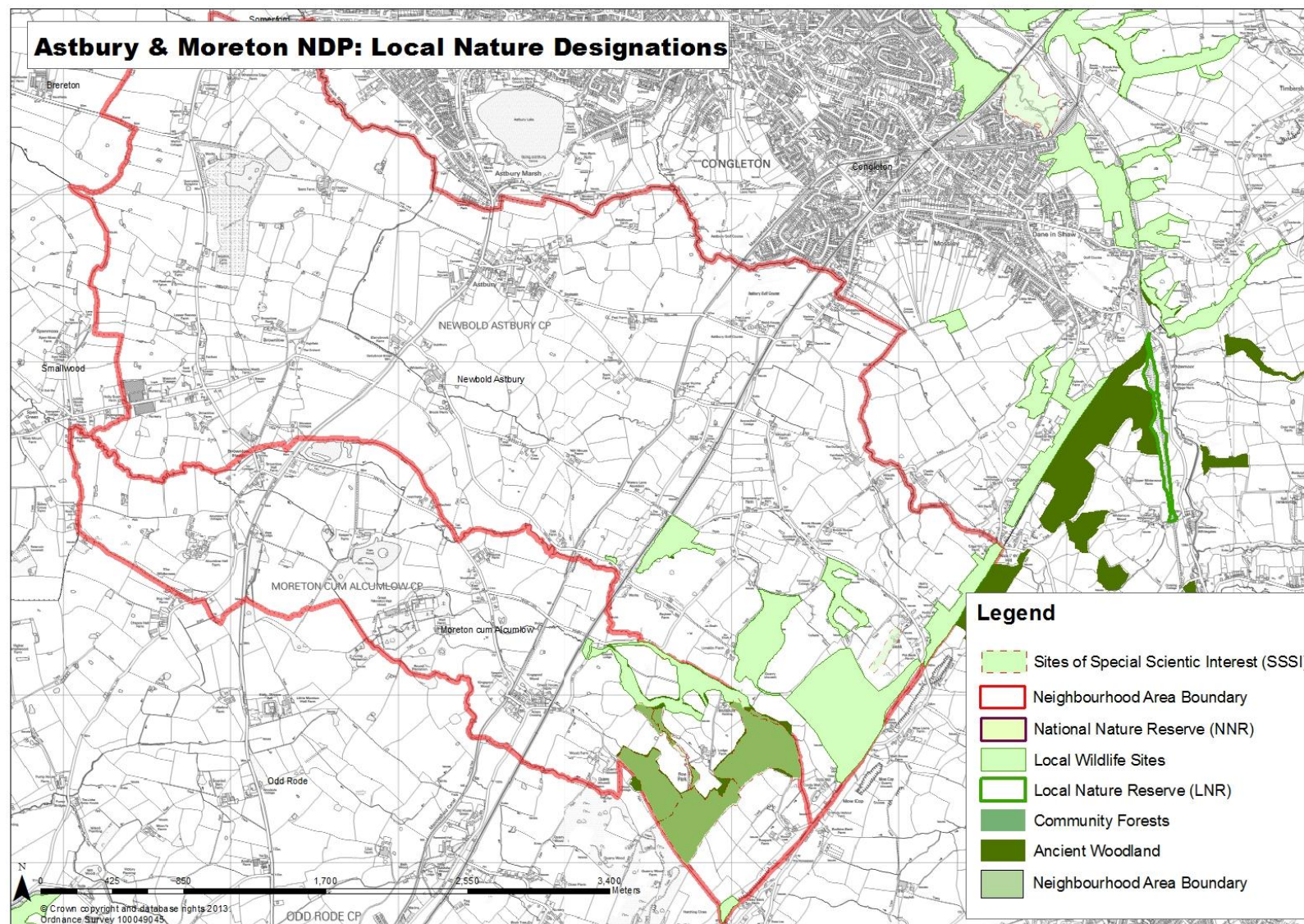
<p>United Utilities Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2013</p>	<p>This plan describes in detail United Utilities' assessment of the available water supplies and the demand for water by their customers over the 2015-2040 period. The plan also sets out their proposed strategy for water resources and demand Management to ensure they have adequate water supplies to serve their customers.</p>	<p>United Utilities is the principal water provider for Cheshire East and such provision is covered by the Integrated Resource Zone which serves 6.6 million people in South Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and most of Cheshire. Development of new housing and employment land within Cheshire East, as outlined in the Local Plan Strategy, could lead to increased demand for water. Increased levels of abstraction could significantly affect the levels of flow in the River Dee and hence result in significant effects on qualifying features. The United Utilities Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2013 provides a comprehensive statement of their water supply and water demand forecasts over the period to 2040. It also describes the resulting supply-demand balances and the actions they propose to take as part of their preferred strategy to achieve water supply reliability standards for their customers. The Water Resources Management Plan states that the water available for use in the Integrated Resource Zone is expected to reduce by about 50 Ml/d between 2015/16 and 2019/20. However, demand is also expected to reduce and therefore no supply deficit is forecast for the Integrated Resource Zone, a surplus of between 90 Ml/d and 45 Ml/d will be maintained throughout the planning period.</p>
<p>The Weaver and Dane Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS)</p>	<p>This Strategy sets out how water resources are managed by the Environment Agency in the Weaver and Dane area. It provides information about where water is available for further abstraction and an indication of how reliable a new abstraction licence may be.</p>	<p>Development of new housing and employment land within Cheshire East, as outlined in the Local Plan Strategy, could lead to increased demand for water abstractions. However, as stated in the CAM, the Environment Agency has assessed the effects of existing abstraction licences and will assess all new applications to make sure they are not impacting on internationally important nature conservation sites.</p>
<p>The Dee Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS)</p>	<p>This Strategy sets out how water resources are managed by the Environment Agency in the Dee catchment. It provides information about how much and where water is available for further abstraction.</p>	<p>Development of new housing and employment land within Cheshire East, as outlined in the Local Plan Strategy, could lead to increased demand for water abstractions. The River Dee is an important resource for public water supply and used to supply the homes of more than two million people. Because of the over-riding need to protect this supply, more water is not available for abstraction from the River Dee (or its tributaries) upstream of Chester Weir, when the river is being regulated. Some additional water may be available during wetter periods, but abstractors would be required to stop taking water as soon as the river flow dropped again. The Environment Agency may also have to place special conditions on any new licences granted to safeguard the wildlife and conservation interest of the River Dee.</p>

Local Plans and Core Strategies of adjacent Authorities (Cheshire West and Chester; Peak District National Park, High Peak; Manchester; Newcastle- under-Lyme; Stockport; Shropshire; Staffordshire Moorlands; Stoke-on-Trent; Trafford; and Warrington Council's)	These documents contain the development plan for the relevant adjacent area. They will specify a vision, objectives and policies for each area.	There is the potential for adverse in-combination effects, particularly in boundary areas. If projects (i.e. developments, infrastructure construction) proposed in the Local Plan Strategy are located in relatively to close proximity to those proposed by the Local Plans and Core Strategies of neighbouring authorities, adverse effects may arise if there are cross-boundary or nearby European sites.
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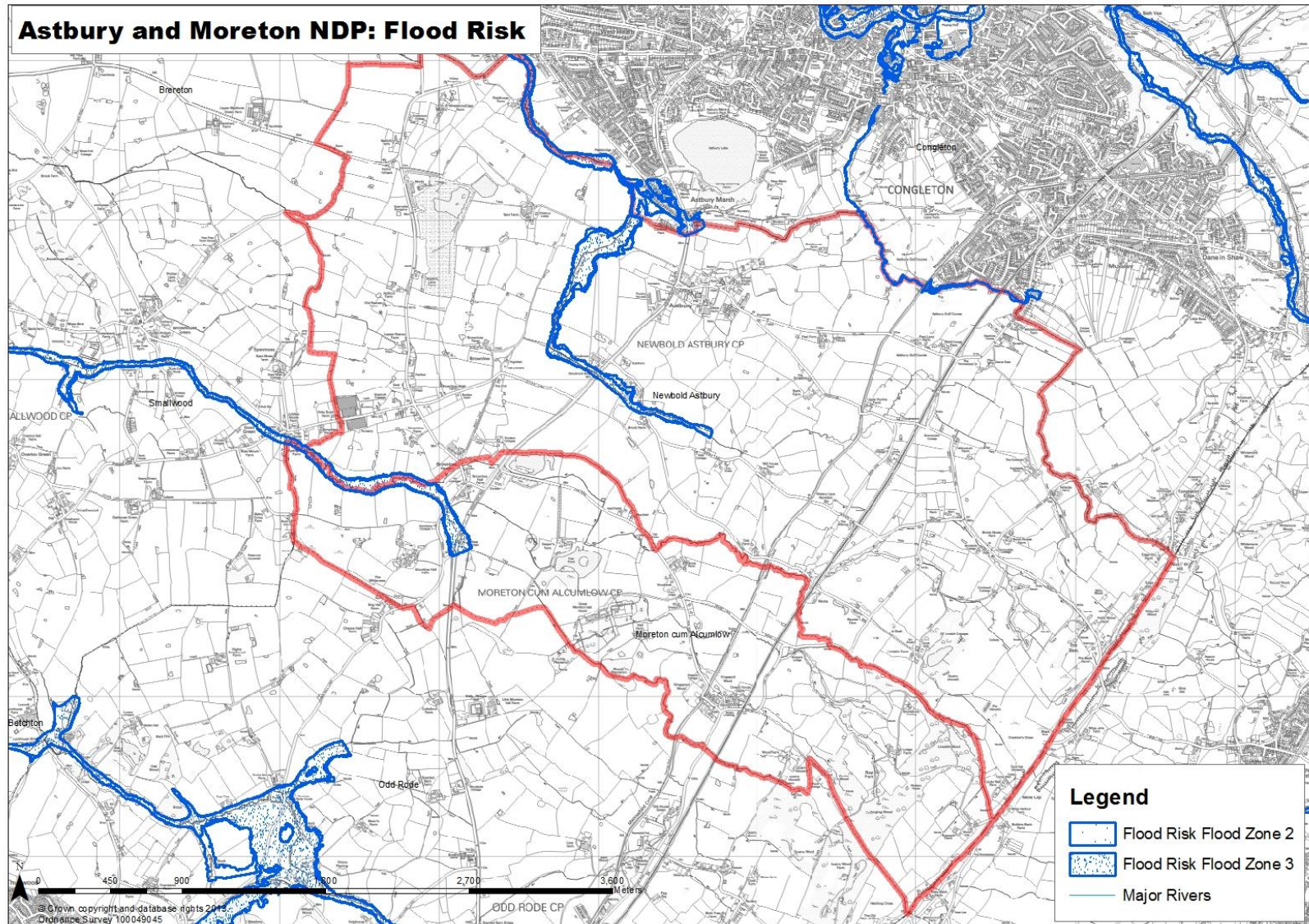
Appendix 3: Location of European Sites in Relation to A&MNDP



Appendix 4: Local Nature Designations



Appendix 5: Flood Risk



Appendix 6: Heritage Assets Designations

