

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Rufforth with Knapton Neighbourhood Plan

Non-Technical Summary

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been carried out to inform the Rufforth with Knapton Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the NP'). Neighbourhood Groups use SEA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of Rufforth with Knapton and the quality of life of residents through the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 What is the Rufforth with Knapton Neighbourhood Plan?

The NP presents a plan for Rufforth with Knapton in the period to 2033. Prepared to be in conformity with the emerging City of York Local Plan, the NP sets out a vision, objectives and a range of policies for the Rufforth with Knapton area. These relate to a range of topics, including, but not limited to, housing, the built environment, the historic environment, community services, open space and transport. The vision and aims of the NP are as follows:

1.2.1 Vision

“To sustain the distinctive rural character and identity of the Parish, whilst encouraging a vibrant environment and community for families and people of all ages to live and work within a thriving local economy.”

1.2.2 Aims

- To protect the Green Belt.
- To ensure all new development maintains the physical separation of the Parish from the City of York.
- To ensure Rufforth is surrounded by green fields outside the ring road and that Knapton and Boroughbridge Road area are protected from coalescence with City of York.
- To support appropriate small scale residential development that meets local needs and is designed to enhance the character of the villages in which it is to be built.
- To encourage a mix of housing suitable for families and people of all ages. In particular, to enable young people to remain in the Parish if they so wish.
- To encourage a thriving rural economy by supporting agriculture and small scale commercial development where possible, including through the conversion of existing buildings.
- To support and enhance facilities and services to meet local need.
- To protect, improve and, where necessary, extend the current network of footpaths and cycle ways to ensure good links between villages and in to the countryside.

1.3 Purpose of this Non-Technical Summary and Environmental Report

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) seeks to provide a clear, accessible overview of the SEA process and findings for the NP. It provides a summary of all the key information presented in the Environmental Report.

The Environmental Report, which accompanies the current consultation version of the NP, is the second document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (April 2017), which includes information about Rufforth with Knapton's environment, community and economy.

The purpose of the Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the NP and alternatives; and
- Provide an opportunity for statutory consultees, interested parties and the public to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.

The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the NP and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes;
- Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and key sustainability issues;
- The SEA Framework of objectives and appraisal questions against which the NP has been assessed;
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the NP;
- The likely significant effects of the NP in environmental terms;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the NP; and
- The next steps for the NP and accompanying SEA process.

1.4 Structure of the Environmental Report/ this NTS

SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

1. What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?
 - i.e. in the run-up to preparing the Draft Plan.
2. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?
 - i.e. in relation to the proposed Draft Plan.
3. What are the next steps?

Each of these questions is answered in turn below. Firstly though there is a need to set the scene further by answering the question 'What's the scope of the SA?'

1.5 What is the scope of the SEA?

1.5.1 Key sustainability issues

Drawing on the detailed review of the sustainability context and baseline data (see Appendix B of the Environmental Report), the SEA Scoping Report was able to identify a range of sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of SEA. It should be noted that the scoping stage found that there were no key issues in relation to air quality and this theme could therefore be scoped 'out' of the SEA process. The key issues identified at the scoping stage are set out below and presented under seven themes:

1.5.1.1 Biodiversity

- The NP area contains an Ancient Woodland to the south east of Rufforth Airfield.
- There are a number of priority habitats, including deciduous woodland and traditional orchards within the NP area.

1.5.1.2 Climate Change

- An increase in the built footprint of the Rufforth with Knapton NP area (associated with the delivery of new housing and employment land) has the potential to increase overall greenhouse gas emissions and surface water runoff.

- Per capita greenhouse gas emissions at the York level are lower than the Yorkshire and the Humber and England averages. Furthermore, the York per capita total value is falling at a faster rate than the Yorkshire and the Humber and national average. Nevertheless, it is still well above the per capita value envisioned for 2050 by the Committee on Climate Change (2 t CO₂/e).
- Flooding is an issue for the Rufforth with Knapton NP area. This risk is likely to increase in line with predicted increases in winter precipitation as a result of climate change.
- The NP should seek to increase the Parish area's resilience to the effects of climate change through supporting adaptation to the risks associated with climate change.

1.5.1.3 Historic Environment and Landscape

- There are six Grade II listed buildings within the NP area.
- New development has the potential to lead to beneficial or adverse effects on the historic environment, including through affecting the setting of cultural heritage assets and landscape/village quality.
- New development could lead to pressures on non-designated sites and landscapes, including from the loss of key built and natural features.

1.5.1.4 Land, Soil and Water Resources

- The Rufforth with Knapton NP area contains Grade 2 and 3 agricultural land which should be retained if possible.
- Regional water supply deficits may grow under the effects of climate change.
- Most of the Rufforth with Knapton NP area is designated a groundwater and surface water Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.

1.5.1.5 Population and Communities

- Since 2001 the population of Rufforth with Knapton NP area has grown at a faster rate than the national average.
- The NP area has a lower proportion of people in the 16-24 and 25-44 age groups than the national average and a higher proportion of residents within the 45-59 and 60+ age groups than the national average.
- When compared to other areas there is little deprivation within the NP area. However, there are pockets of deprivation through geographical and housing barriers¹.
- Like many other areas of the UK, the NP area is shown to have an ageing population. The population of the Rufforth with Knapton NP area demonstrates a strong skew towards older people relative to the national average.
- Unemployment is currently low compared to the national average.
- Growth is expected to continue and provide employment to a growing population. However, the lack of employment opportunities within the Parish means that transport connections will be a critical factor in the sustainability of any growth.

1.5.1.6 Health and Wellbeing

- More people within the NP area identify as being in 'very good' health than the district, regional and national averages.
- There is also a slightly lower prevalence of disability in the Rufforth with Knapton NP area than the national average.

¹ 'Geographical barriers' relate to the physical proximity of local services, and 'housing barriers' includes issues relating to access to housing such as affordability.

- The population age structure of the Rufforth with Knapton NP area shows a greater proportion of older people and this has the potential to affect the prevalence of both health and disability within the area in the future.
- The Rufforth with Knapton NP area is dependent on other areas' local service centres for many services; this situation is unlikely to change due to the population of the Parish and its proximity to external services and facilities. It will be important to improve links to these external facilities/services where possible. Existing facilities are highly valued and should be kept or improved where possible.

1.5.1.7 Transportation

- There are no mainline or branch line railway stations present in the NP area.
- A small number of residents walk or cycle to work, although in both cases the proportion doing so is higher than the regional and national average. Both modes of transport should be encouraged, facilitated and supported through future development.
- There are regular bus services to York and Wetherby, the former of which has a major railway station connected to London and major northern cities like Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle.
- Ownership of multiple cars is very high. New development areas should be situated in accessible locations which limit the need to travel by private car.

1.5.2 SEA Framework

The issues identified above were then developed into an 'SEA Framework' of objectives and assessment questions that are set out in Table 1 below. This SEA Framework acts as a guide for the assessment of the NP.

Table 1: SEA Framework

SEA topic	SEA Objective	Assessment questions (Will the option/proposal help to.....)
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance the NP area's biodiversity.	Protect and enhance the Ancient Woodland and priority habitats within the NP area? Ensure that development respects biodiversity of any quality and seeks to enhance the quality, quantity and connectivity of all habitats?
Climatic Change	Promote climate change mitigation in the Neighbourhood Area.	Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? Increase the number of new developments meeting sustainable design criteria? Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
	Support the resilience of the NP area to the potential effects of climate change.	Ensure that no development takes place in areas at highest risk of flooding, and ensure that sufficient mitigation is planned for development in areas at risk, taking the likely effects of climate change into account? Improve green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? Sustainably manage water run-off, ensuring that the present or future risk of flooding is not increased (either within the NP area or downstream) and where possible reduce flood risk? Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the plan area?
Historic	Conserve and enhance the NP	Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural

environment & landscape	area's historic environment, heritage assets, and their settings.	or historic interest?
		Support the integrity of the historic setting of key buildings of cultural heritage interest and scheduled monuments? Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment? Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest?
	Conserve and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.	Conserve and enhance landscape and village character features?
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient use of land	Promote the use of previously developed Land? Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which includes Grade 2 and 3a agricultural land within the NP area?
	Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	Minimise water consumption? Minimise impacts on water quality?
Population and communities	Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high quality community services and facilities	Promote the development of a range of high quality accessible community facilities? Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities? Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents? Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities including specialist services for disabled and older people? Ensure adequate school and leisure facilities for children including sports fields and recreational space?
	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures	Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? Meet the needs of ALL sectors of the community? Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in constructions? Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	Reduce the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development? Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel? Enable transport infrastructure improvements? Facilitate working from home and remote working?

2. Plan-making/ SA up to this point

2.1 Developing reasonable alternatives for the Neighbourhood Plan

A key element of the SEA process is the consideration of 'reasonable alternatives' for the NP. A neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with and support the strategic development needs set out in the Local Plan. As a starting point, it is therefore important to set out what is being proposed through the City of York Local Plan as this will have an influence on the consideration of alternatives through plan-making and the SEA for the NP.

Currently there is no up to date adopted Local Plan; the 2005 City of York Draft local plan is still used as the basis for development management decisions. City of York Council (CYC) is in the process of producing a new Local Plan. A Preferred Sites Document went out for citywide public consultation in 2016. The document sets out CYC's revised housing and employment quanta as well as an updated portfolio of sites to meet housing and employment demands within York. In this portfolio of sites, the following are included within the Rufforth with Knapton Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA):

- H38 Land Rear of Rufforth Primary School, Rufforth - 33 dwellings
- H53 Land at Knapton Village - 11 dwellings

It is understood that the next iteration of the Local Plan will be published for consultation later in 2017.

2.1.1 The amount of housing

With regard to the amount of housing to be provided by the NP, it has been concluded at this stage that there are no reasonable alternatives to test. This is due to the fact that there is an absence of any other inputs from which to generate a number to test (e.g. no indicative figure from an adopted or emerging Local Plan or a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for the NPA. It might be feasible to assess theoretical alternatives but the value this would provide is limited.

AECOM are mindful to follow direction from the Planning Inspectorate (2007) that "*meaningful options should be developed...*" Although the NP needs to be in general conformity with the CYC Local Plan, bearing in mind the Planning Inspectorate advice it is sensible to test alternatives, in this case alternative capacity led options (remembering that the Local Plan may allocate land for up to around 40 dwellings as per the Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016) which proposed two allocations (H38 and H53)).

2.1.2 Sites

In June 2015 the Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG) carried out a survey to gather the views of residents, businesses and landowners within the NPA. A questionnaire was circulated to all 427 households and a letter sent to all land owners within the plan area calling on them to submit potential sites for development. A follow up letter was sent to all land owners in February 2016, asking them again to submit any potential sites that should be considered through plan-making.

The call for sites in June 2015 and February 2016 identified nine potential sites for development within the NPA, which are illustrated in the figures below. This included the two sites proposed as allocations through City of York's Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016).

Figure 1: Sites identified within and around Knapton

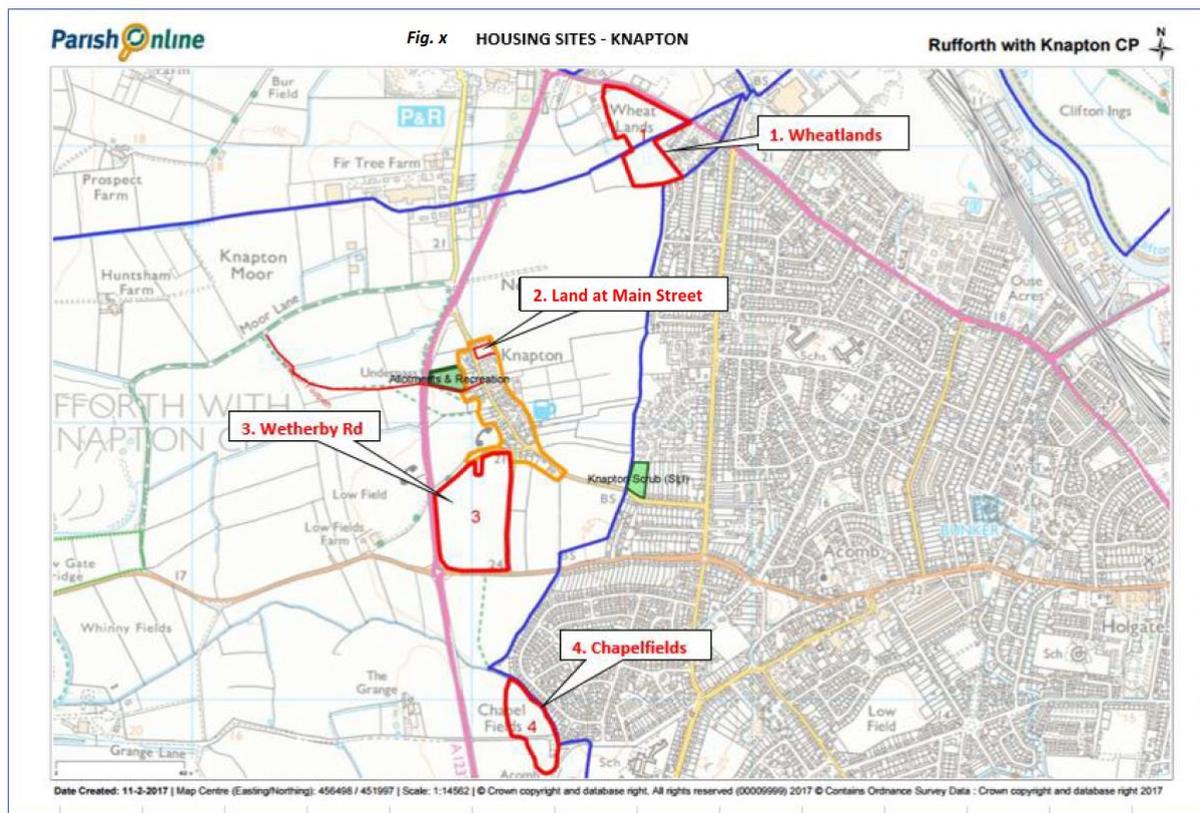
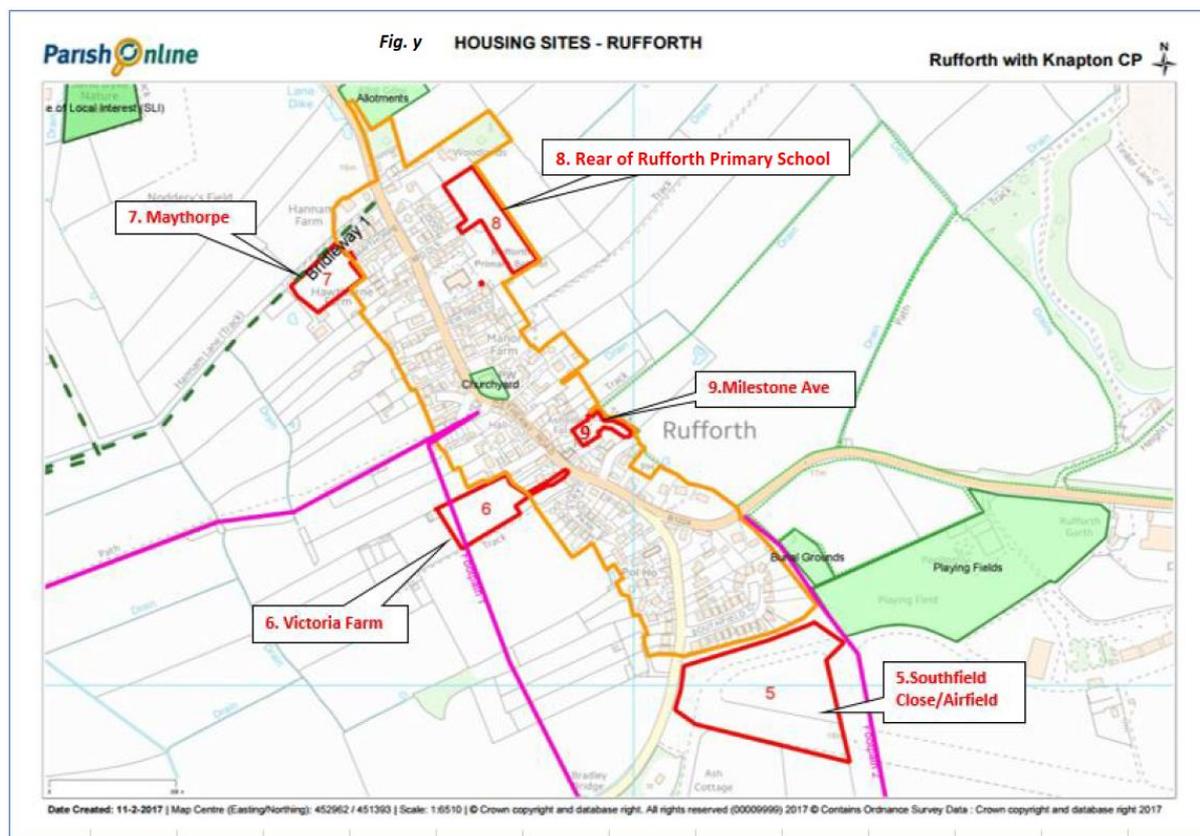


Figure 2: Sites identified within and around Rufforth



Each of the nine sites were considered by the NPG in turn, to determine if they could be considered a reasonable site option and therefore warranted further consideration through more detailed Site Selection Criteria (SSC) and the SEA. An important consideration that has informed the decision of which sites should be progressed for further assessment is the emerging Local Plan, in particular the draft Green Belt and proposed settlement boundaries/ village envelopes.

York is one of only several authorities where a draft GB was identified for the purposes of conserving the historic character and setting of the city. Whilst the general extent of the draft GB was identified in the former RSS and is retained as applicable policy for York, the emerging Local Plan will be setting detailed GB boundaries for the first time. It is understood that work is currently ongoing to look at the parcels of land around York to understand their significance and contribution against the GB purposes, as set out in the NPPF.

The emerging Local Plan documents to date (Preferred Options in 2013 and Publication Draft in 2014) both identified the villages of Rufforth and Knapton as being ‘washed over’ by the draft GB. Policy GB2 of the Publication Draft Local Plan (2014) suggested that development would only be permitted within the built up area of these villages and if it constituted limited infilling. Furthermore, development would only be permitted if it did not prejudice the openness of the draft GB. The settlement boundaries identified through the emerging Local Plan documents are supported by the NPG through the interim settlement envelopes.

It is important to note that the draft GB boundaries within the NP area can only be altered through the emerging Local Plan. This means that the NP cannot seek to extend the draft GB boundaries or allocate areas of land for development within it.

The table below sets out the reasons for why site options identified through the call for sites in 2015 and 2016 have either been rejected or progressed for further consideration through the NPG’s SSC and the SEA.

Table 2: NPG’s reasons for progression or rejection of site options to the SSC and SEA

Site	Comments	Reject/ Progress to SSC and SEA?
1. Wheatlands	<p>Site is situated adjacent to the city and falls within both the Rufforth with Knapton Parish and Poppleton Parish. Site was proposed as an allocation (ST29) in the Local Plan Publication Draft in 2014 for 135 dwellings; however, it should be noted that this proposed allocation was objected to by both Parish Councils. The site was subsequently rejected by CYC and not identified as an allocation within the Preferred Sites Consultation Document in 2016. CYC’s reasons for rejection are as follows:</p> <p><i>“Following further technical officer consideration it is considered that the site provides an important role in the setting of York providing views over open countryside as you travel from York towards the A1237 along the A59. Although the site is partially contained with occasional tree planting and hedgerows along with existing residential properties to the east it has open fields to the southern boundary. The site provides a role in separating the urban edge of York from the village of Poppleton, preventing coalescence which has already been compromised on the opposite side of the road through the Manor School development. For these reasons it is considered to serve greenbelt purposes”²</i></p> <p>The site is situated within the draft GB and given its location adjacent to the city would not help to meet the housing needs of the villages within the NPA. Taking the above into account it was decided that this site should not progress for further consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Reject
2. Land at Main Street, Knapton	<p>Site is situated within the interim village envelope for Knapton but is within the draft GB. A planning application for the site was submitted and refused at the October 2016 planning committee meeting on the grounds of the site being within the draft GB. It is proposed as an allocation (Site H53 Land at Knapton Village) within the Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016), which stated: <i>“The site is outside of</i></p>	Progress to SSC and SEA

² CYC (2016) Preferred Sites Consultation, Pg. 184. Available online: https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/3333/local_plan_preferred_sites_consultation_documents

Site	Comments	Reject/ Progress to SSC and SEA?
	<p><i>environmental constraints (1-3 as detailed in the methodology) and has a willing landowner. This is a small site in a small village, and the site is well contained. There are established boundaries on 3 of the 4 sides, including Knapton Main Street (and established hedge) to the west, Back Lane (and established hedge) to the east and a residential property (and hedge) to the north. However, the boundary to the eastern side (with the adjacent agricultural field) only consists of a post and wire fence. It is considered that the site will provide defensible greenbelt boundaries and provides limited infill to the existing settlement form”³.</i></p> <p>While it is acknowledged that this site is within the draft GB it is also proposed as a site allocation within the Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016). Taking this into account, it was decided that this site should progress for more detailed consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	
3. Wetherby Road, Knapton	<p>The site was proposed as an allocation for Show People in the Local Plan Preferred Options (2013) but was objected to by the Parish Council. It was then rejected by CYC in 2014 through the Further Site Consultation Document (2014) as it failed Criteria 4 of the Council’s site selection method (access to services and transport).</p> <p>The site is situated outside the interim village envelope and within the draft Green Belt. Taking these factors into account it was decided that this site should not progress for further consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Reject
4. Chapelfields	<p>Site considered by CYC and rejected in 2013 and then in 2014 for the following reason: <i>“The site previously failed due to landscape comments. These comments still stand as development in this area is considered to undermine the setting of the city and also, be in an unsustainable location. The rural edge of the city would be lost as a result of development which is experienced on the approach along the A1237. The ring road has a tall hedge but new landscaping would not provide sufficient mitigation for loss of openness that contributes to the setting of the city. (Some extensions of Chapel Fields may be viable but not the extent proposed in the submitted material)”⁴.</i></p> <p>It is important to note that the site submitted through the NP call for sites is much smaller than that previously considered by CYC in 2013 and 2014. However, the reduced site is still situated within the draft GB and given its location adjacent to the city would not help to meet the housing needs of the villages within the NPA. Taking the above into account it was decided that this site should not progress for further consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Reject
5. Southfield Close/Rufforth Airfield	<p>The site was considered by CYC in 2013 and rejected as it failed Criteria 4 of the Council’s site selection method (access to services and transport). It was then reconsidered by CYC in 2014 and rejected through the Further Sites Consultation (2014) for the following reason: <i>“A landscape assessment is required. Site would be a large extension to Rufforth Village which has limited local services and is served by limited sustainable transport options. Further impact of the adjacent airfield would also be required”.</i></p> <p>The site is situated outside the interim village envelope and within the draft GB. Taking these factors into account it was decided that this site should not progress for further consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Reject
6. Victoria Farm, Rufforth	<p>This is a new site that has not previously been considered through CYC’s site selection method. The majority of the site is situated outside the interim village envelope and within the draft GB. Access to the site would necessitate the removal of the tree which is the subject of a preservation order and is viewed by residents as being central to the character of the village.</p> <p>Taking the above into account it was decided that this site should not progress for further consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Reject

³ CYC (2016) Preferred Sites Consultation, Pg. 165. Available online: https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/3333/local_plan_preferred_sites_consultation_documents

⁴ CYC (2014) Further Sites Consultation. Appendix 2, Pgs. 163 & 164. Available online: https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/1133/further_sites_consultation_report_2014_and_technical_appendices

Site	Comments	Reject/ Progress to SSC and SEA?
7. Maythorpe, Rufforth	<p>This is a new site that has not previously been considered through CYC's site selection method. It is situated outside the interim village envelope and within the draft GB. Access to the site would be through a strip of land owned by a separate land owner and there is currently no agreement in place.</p> <p>Taking the above into account it was decided that this site should not progress for further consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Reject
8. Land at rear of (RO) Rufforth Post Office	<p>Site is situated within the interim village envelope for Knapton, is not within the draft Green Belt and is proposed as an allocation (Site H38 Land Rear of Rufforth Primary School) within the Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016). <i>"The site is outside of environmental constraints (1-3 as detailed in the methodology) and has a willing landowner. The site is well contained with clearly defined boundaries including existing residential properties and tall/extensive hedgerows. The site represents a modest infill to the existing settlement limits of Rufforth Village and will allow for clearly defined green belt boundaries relating well to the existing built form of the village"</i>.⁵</p> <p>Taking the above into account it was decided that this site should progress for more detailed consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Progress to SSC and SEA
9. Milestone Avenue, Rufforth	<p>This is a new site that has not previously been considered through CYC's site selection method. It is situated within the interim village envelope and outside the draft GB. It was decided to progress this site for further consideration through the SSC and SEA.</p>	Progress to SSC and SEA

2.2 Assessment of reasonable alternatives

To support the consideration of the suitability of the three reasonable site options, the SEA process has involved an appraisal of the key environmental constraints and opportunities present at each of the sites and potential effects that may arise. In this context, the sites have been considered in relation to the SEA Framework of objectives and decision making questions developed during SEA scoping (Section 2) and the baseline information assembled (see Appendix B).

Each site option was assessed against the SEA topics and framework identified through the scoping stage (Section 2). A qualitative assessment was carried out which evaluated the 'likely significant effects' of each site option with respect to the baseline, guided by the sustainability objectives and assessment questions developed through scoping. The assessment was undertaken using professional judgment, supported by the baseline information and wider evidence where relevant.

Table 1: Significance Key

Symbol	Likely significant effect on the SEA Topic
++	Likely to have a significant positive effects
+	Likely to have a minor positive effect
0	Neutral effect
?	Uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine effect on the SEA framework.
-	Likely to have a minor negative effect
--	Likely to have a significant negative effect

⁵ CYC (2016) Preferred Sites Consultation, Pg. 163. Available online: https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/3333/local_plan_preferred_sites_consultation_documents

The assessment of the site options is presented in the table below and provides an indication of each site's sustainability performance in relation to the seven SEA topics.

Table 4: SEA of site options

SEA topics	Site 2: Main Street, Knapton	Site 8: RO Rufforth Primary School	Site 9: Milestone Avenue, Rufforth
Biodiversity	0	0	0
Climate change	+	-	?
Historic Environment and Landscape	-	-	-
Land, Soil and Water Resources	-	-	-
Population and Community	+	+	+
Health and Wellbeing	+	++	+
Transport	-	-	-

2.3 Developing the preferred approach

The work on sites set out above has identified three reasonable site options that could help to deliver around 40 dwellings within the NPA. The findings of the NPG's SSC and the SEA demonstrated that there are some minor differences between the three sites but nothing that significantly differentiates between them in terms of sustainability performance.

Informed by the work on sites and taking into account the Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016), the NPG decided to progress with and allocate all three of the reasonable site options within the emerging draft NP. In terms of the amount of housing that each site could deliver during the life of the NP, a number of factors were taken into consideration by the NPG. These included the size of each site, discussions with landowners, density of existing development within the village, availability of services and the rural character of the villages.

The sites to be supported through the NP are as follows:

- RK H1: Land at rear of Rufforth Primary School (approx. 28 dwellings);
- RK H2: Milestone Avenue, Rufforth (approx. 9 dwellings)
- RK H3: Land at Main Street, Knapton (up to 4 to 5 dwellings)

The draft NP is proposing a slightly reduced quantum of development to be delivered at sites RK H1 (Land at rear of Rufforth Primary School) and RK H2 (Land at Main Street, Knapton) compared to the Local Plan Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016). The reasons for this are as follows:

- RK H1 (Land at rear of Rufforth Primary School) - Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016) proposes 33 dwellings and the draft NP proposes approx. 28 dwellings. The number of dwellings to be delivered was arrived at through discussions with the landowner. The draft NP seeks for development to provide a rear pedestrian entrance to the primary school in order to ease existing parking pressure on the surrounding roads and provide for safer access. This reduces the number of dwellings that could be delivered on the site.
- RK H3 (Land at Main Street, Knapton) - Preferred Sites Consultation Document (2016) proposes 11 dwellings and the draft NP proposes up to 4 or 5 dwellings. Back Lane is extremely narrow and the site is situated on a blind corner; therefore, traffic considerations limit the number of dwellings that could be delivered on the site. Furthermore, the planning application submitted for the site in 2016 was for only 4 dwellings.

The NPG considers that the sites and level of development proposed above strikes a balance between meeting local housing need, the sustainability of local services, retaining the rural character of the villages and minimising potential negative impacts that might arise. In terms of meeting needs, the NPG were strongly influenced by the age profile in the Parish and the need to encourage more families with young children to the NPA to ensure sustainability of valued services and amenities. As a result, a key objective in the plan is to provide a mix of new homes within the Parish and the site allocations above will help to achieve this.

3. Appraisal of the current version of the Neighbourhood Plan

Utilising the SEA Framework of objectives and appraisal questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SEA, the SEA process assessed the policies put forward through the current consultation version of the ADLZNP. The SEA Report has presented the findings of the appraisal under the following themes:

- Biodiversity;
- Climate change;
- Historic environment and landscape;
- Land, soil and water resources;
- Population and community;
- Health and Wellbeing; and
- Transport.

The assessment found that the NP as a whole is likely to result in significant positive effects in relation to a number of SEA topics including biodiversity, the historic environment, population and communities as well as health and wellbeing. No significant negative effects are predicted, although the assessment has highlighted a number of instances where there is the potential for minor negative effects. The minor negative effects on land and soils cannot be avoided through the loss of green field land as a result of proposed allocations. The SEA does propose mitigation for other identified negative effects and also makes recommendations to help strengthen policies in order to enhance positive effects.

It will be the role of the Neighbourhood Plan Group to give consideration to ‘striking the best balance’ when finalising the plan for submission. However, the SEA recommends that a number of policy areas could be strengthened further in order to maximise sustainability outcomes. With regard to biodiversity, the SEA suggests that the NP should explicitly define the terms “*green routes*” and “*green infrastructure*” and also including reference to these within the relevant policies. While climate change adaptation is covered sufficiently by current policies, the NP could be strengthened with regards to climate change mitigation measures. For instance, Policy Rwk09 “design” could be improved by including requirements for energy efficiency measures in new build homes and extensions to enhance the positive effects for climate change mitigation.

Additionally, site allocation policies (RKH1, RKH2, and RKH) are all likely to have negative (albeit minor) effects on Transport objectives. The SEA recommends that these policies could be strengthened through inclusion of more stringent requirements on developers for contributing towards developing the active transport routes in the NPA.

4. Next steps

Subsequent to the current consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, the plan may be updated to reflect comments received. The Environmental Report will be updated to reflect any changes made to the plan as well as any comments received on the report itself.

The NP and updated Environmental Report will then be submitted to City of York Council for their consideration. The Council will consider whether the plan is suitable to go forward to independent examination in terms of the Rufforth with Knapton Neighbourhood Plan meeting legal requirements and its compatibility with the Local Plan.

