

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Firepool Masterplan

Environmental Report

November 2022



LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY



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Environmental Report

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Contents

Non-Technical Summary.....	1
1 Introduction.....	7
1.1 Preface	7
1.2 The SEA process	8
1.3 Best practice guidance.....	8
1.4 The Firepool Masterplan Document.....	9
1.5 Purpose of this report.....	13
1.6 Meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations	13
2 SEA Screening.....	15
2.1 Screening.....	15
2.2 Consultation.....	16
2.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment.....	17
3 SEA Scoping.....	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 Policies, plans and programmes review.....	18
3.3 Baseline data and key sustainability issues	18
3.4 The SEA Framework	21
3.5 Consultation.....	22
4 Methodology.....	25
4.1 Approach to assessment	25
4.2 Appraisal process.....	25
4.3 Significance.....	26
4.4 Impact sensitivity.....	27
4.5 Impact magnitude	27
4.6 Predicting effects.....	28
4.7 Assessment assumptions	28
4.8 Limitations.....	35
5 Reasonable Alternatives.....	36
5.1 Overview.....	36
5.2 Identifying reasonable alternatives.....	36
5.3 Describing the reasonable alternatives.....	37
5.4 Evaluating the reasonable alternatives.....	41
5.5 SEA Objective 1 – Air Quality	42
5.6 SEA Objective 2 – Biodiversity	44
5.7 SEA Objective 3 – Climate change	46
5.8 SEA Objective 4 – Historic environment	48
5.9 SEA Objective 5 – Landscape	50
5.10 SEA Objective 6 – Population and material assets.....	52
5.11 SEA Objective 7 – Water	54
6 The Preferred Approach.....	56
6.1 Selection of reasonable alternatives.....	56
6.2 Preferred option.....	56
6.3 Mitigation considerations.....	58
6.4 Residual effects and recommendations.....	60

7	Monitoring.....	63
7.1	Monitoring proposals.....	63
8	Conclusion and Next Steps.....	65
8.1	Overview.....	65
8.2	Next steps	66
8.3	Commenting on the Environmental Report.....	67
	Appendix A: SEA Framework.....	1
	Appendix B: Plans, Policies and Programmes Review	1

Tables

Table 1.1:	Proposed development within the Firepool Masterplan.....	10
Table 1.2:	Requirements of the SEA Regulations.....	13
Table 2.1:	Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Screening Report	16
Table 3.1:	Key sustainability issues and evolution without the Masterplan	19
Table 3.2:	Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Scoping Report.....	22
Table 4.1:	Guide to scoring significant effects	26
Table 4.2:	Geographic scales of receptors	27
Table 4.3:	Impact magnitude	28
Table 4.4:	Assumptions for the SEA Objectives	29
Table 5.1:	Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 1: Air Quality)	43
Table 5.2:	Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 2 - Biodiversity)	45
Table 5.3:	Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 3: Climate change)	47
Table 5.4:	Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 4: Historic environment)	49
Table 5.5:	Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 5: Landscape)	51
Table 5.6:	Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (Population and material assets)	53
Table 5.7:	Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (Water).....	55
Table 6.1:	Summary of identified impacts by SEA Objective.....	56
Table 6.2:	Summary of mitigation measures by SEA Objective	58
Table 6.3:	Summary of identified residual effects by SEA Objective.....	60
Table 6.4:	Recommendations to further improve sustainability of the Masterplan	61
Table 7.1:	Proposals for monitoring adverse sustainability impacts of the Masterplan.....	64

Figures

Figure 1.1:	Proposed Firepool site boundary	12
Figure 5.1:	Firepool Masterplan for Reasonable Alternative 1 (source: Firepool Masterplan Framework Revision R by Ihc).....	38
Figure 5.2:	Draft Firepool Masterplan for Reasonable Alternative 2 (Source: Firepool Masterplan Design Report: AHR).....	39
Figure 5.3:	Reasonable Alternative 3 with the current Firepool boundary line and site composition.....	40

Acronyms

AA	Appropriate Assessment
ACS	Adopted Core Strategy
ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
ER	Environmental Report
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GI	Green Infrastructure
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LPA	Local Plan Authority
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
NBN	National Biodiversity Network
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPP	Plan, Policy and Programme
PRoW	Public Right of Way
RA	Reasonable Alternative
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SADMP	Somerset West and Taunton Site Allocations and Development Plan
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
SWT	Somerset West and Taunton
TDCS	Taunton Deane Core Strategy
TTCAAP	Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan
TVIA	Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

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Non-Technical Summary

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

- N1. Lepus Consulting has prepared this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report (ER) of the Firepool Masterplan on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council. SEA is the process which informs and influences the preparation of the Masterplan to help optimise the environmental performance of the plan.

Purpose and content of the Environmental Report

- N2. This SEA document is known as an Environmental Report and has been prepared to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations¹.
- N3. The ER has been prepared to comply with procedural aspects of the SEA Regulations, whereby *“the requirement for environmental assessment also applies to other plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects if they are the subject of a determination under regulation 9(1) that the plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects (regulation 5(4); Article 3.4 of the Directive)”*.
- N4. This ER accompanies the latest version of the Draft Masterplan (received by Lepus 20th September 2022) and follows on from the SEA Screening Report (Final Draft available September 2022) and Scoping Report (September 2022).
- N5. The purpose of this ER is to:
- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effect of the Masterplan on biodiversity; climate change; cultural heritage; landscape and; water resources.
 - Suggest measures by which any negative effects could be mitigated;
 - If appropriate, make recommendations to improve the environmental performance of the Masterplan; and
 - Provide an effective opportunity for statutory consultees, interested parties and the public to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process that has been carried out to date.

¹ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date Accessed: 16/10/22]

N6. The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Masterplan and its relationship with other relevant plans, programmes and strategies.
- Details of the methodology used to prepare the assessment;
- Identification, description and evaluation of reasonable alternatives to the Masterplan;
- The likely significant environmental effects of the Masterplan; and
- The next steps for the SEA.

The Scope of the SEA

N7. The Firepool Masterplan SEA and HRA Screening report² was prepared by the LPA in September 2022. The screening opinion recommended that the Firepool Masterplan should be screened in for full SEA and HRA. Following consultation on this report, the conclusion that SEA was required was agreed on with the three statutory bodies: Historic England, the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England, as well as the local planning authority, SWT Council.

N8. The Scoping Report also identified relevant policies, plans, and programmes (PPPs) and baseline information relating to environmental issues in the area. The scoping document set out an SEA Framework, against which the Masterplan was to be assessed. The SEA Framework included indicators and decision-making criteria for the relevant SEA Objectives. The SEA screening and scoping documents have been consulted on with the statutory consultees (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England).

Assessment of reasonable alternatives

N9. The assessment of reasonable alternatives refers to the plan-making stage of exploring options, where the SEA process is required to identify, describe and evaluate reasonable alternatives. The Council started the plan-making process of the Masterplan with the identification of potential options regarding development of the Firepool site. A total of three reasonable alternatives were considered, relating to minor differences in the layout of the proposed development, as follows:

- The employment and retail-led option;
- The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal; and
- The 'do nothing' option.

² Somerset West and Taunton Council (2022) Firepool Masterplan and Design Guidance Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/3513/firepool-masterplan-and-design-guidance-screening-report.pdf> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

-
- N10. Each reasonable alternative was appraised in the SEA Reasonable Alternatives Assessment (see **Chapter 5**).
- N11. The assessment of reasonable alternatives (RA) concluded that potential negative impacts would be expected to some extent in relation to the development of Firepool, regarding the following SEA topics:
- **Air** – for RA1 and RA2 a minor negative impact was identified in relation to potential increases in air pollution and site end users in proximity to a main road.
 - **Biodiversity** – for RA1 and RA2, a minor negative impact was identified with respect to potential adverse impacts associated with light pollution, phosphate loading, reductions in air quality and recreational pressure to the Children’s Wood LNR.
 - **Climate change** – Under RA1 and RA2, the introduction of at least 200 and 400 new dwellings and employment and retail space respectively would be likely to cause an increase in energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages, to some extent, resulting in a minor negative impact on climate change. RA1, RA2 and RA3 would also potentially result in a minor adverse effect on flooding.
 - **Historic environment** – a minor negative impact was associated with RA1 and RA2 as both have the potential to adversely impact the views and settings associated with Listed Buildings in proximity to the Masterplan area.
 - **Landscape** – RA1 and RA2 both have the potential to adversely impact views from the Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB.
 - **Population and material assets** – Under RA1 the introduction of 200 new dwellings and employment and retail space, and RA2 with the introduction of at least 400 new dwellings and employment and retail space would be likely to increase waster generation.
 - **Water** – RA1 and RA2 would be expected to make positive contributions towards the protection and enhancement of river corridors and seek to protect water quality, and set out requirements for SuDS schemes. However, a minor negative impact in line with the precautionary principle was given for the potential implications of the development on water resources and water supply.
- N12. Assessment of reasonable alternatives identified that the three reasonable alternatives perform similarly in the SEA, with RA2 performing best overall.

Preferred Option

- N13. The Council are pursuing the approach as set out in the latest Firepool Masterplan, based on the various findings and documents comprising their evidence base and the adopted Somerset West and Taunton Local Plan policies. The preferred approach which is proposed within the Masterplan has been appraised in **Chapter 6**.

Assessment of Significant Effects

- N14. The assessment of the preferred option, prior to mitigation considerations, identified potential for adverse effects attributed to the following SEA topics:

- **Air** – due to increased emissions associated with vehicles and the site’s proximity to the A3038;
- **Biodiversity** – primarily related to potential adverse air quality, light pollution and recreational impacts on the Children’s Wood LNR, potential for adverse impacts on phosphate loading associated with Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar, and potential adverse effects on bat habitats associated with Hestercombe House SAC;
- **Climate change** – due to potential flood risk, and increased energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages associated with the development of dwellings, offices and retail developments;
- **Historic environment** – potential to affect the setting and view of heritage assets in proximity to the Masterplan site;
- **Landscape** – potential to impact views from Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB;
- **Population and Material Assets** – in terms of potential effects on waste generation and management, arising from the proposed development at Firepool; and
- **Water** – in terms of potential effects on water supply/resources arising from the proposed development.

Mitigation

- N15. To meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations, the ER must provide details of the mitigation measures envisaged to help prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment which could occur due to the implementation of the Masterplan, as well as monitoring recommendations.

- N16. The Masterplan would be anticipated to result in a range of positive effects including the opportunity to provide new homes, community facilities and pedestrian routes for the enjoyment

of current and future residents, as well as having the potential to deliver enhanced multi-functional GI and biodiversity net gain.

N17. As there is the potential for adverse impacts on the environment following the implementation of the Masterplan, the mitigation considerations are presented within **Table 6.2**.

N18. Various provisions proposed within the Masterplan and policies outlined in Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TTCAAP) would help to ensure that future development takes into account the surrounding built and natural environment, historic assets and landscape character. These measures include:

- **Air** – incorporation of new GI to improve air quality management.
- **Biodiversity** – in accordance with various TTCAAP³ policies and Masterplan objectives, development plans are expected to seek to retain existing and encourage new biodiversity, deliver biodiversity net gain, and incorporate new GI funded by new developers.
- **Climate change** – policy ED 5 of the TTCAAP and policy DM5 of the Core Strategy seek to combat climate change through new development by promoting efficient and renewable energy, incorporates open spaces and GI, and utilising developer contributions to transport alternatives. The Masterplan is designed around the three goals of the SWT Climate Emergency Strategy.
- **Historic environment** – in accordance with TTCAAP policies Fp 3 and Fp 4, the development should seek to conserve or enhance the setting of various listed buildings in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- **Landscape** – the TTCAAP policies require mitigation for the landscape impact on the green wedge and public footpath alongside the River Tone, with various provisions to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment of the site.
- **Population and Material Assets** – the Masterplan seeks to provide capacity to manage and improve waste, pollution, transport and access to healthcare facilities in line with various TTCAAP policies.
- **Water** – the Masterplan seeks to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and sustainable surface water management in line with TTCAAP visions and objectives, in addition to the creation and development of rich, flood resistant habitats.

³ Taunton Deane Borough Council (2008) Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/1064/taunton-town-centre-area-action-plan.pdf> [Date Accessed 24/10/22].

Conclusions

- N19. Potential residual adverse effects have been identified in relation to:
- **Climate change** – it is not expected that the identified adverse impacts from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the large scale of proposed development would be fully mitigated and so a residual adverse impact would remain, to some extent;
 - **Water** – at this stage, the potential for increased pressure on demand for water resources and wastewater treatment cannot be ruled out.

Recommendations

- N20. Several recommendations have been made in this SEA report (see **Table 6.4**) to potentially enhance the sustainability of the proposals within the Masterplan or to provide further clarity regarding certain issues.

Next Steps

- N21. This ER will be subject to consultation with the statutory consultation bodies of Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency, and the public.

1 Introduction

1.1 Preface

- 1.1.1 Lepus Consulting is conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Firepool Masterplan on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 1.1.2 This document constitutes the SEA for the Masterplan and represents an Environmental Report (ER) as per the requirements of the SEA Regulations⁴. This represents Stage D of the SEA process according to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal⁵.
- 1.1.3 SEA is the process of assessing plans and programmes to *“provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment”*⁶.
- 1.1.4 A key objective of SEA is to promote a high level of environmental protection. The SEA is an objective assessment that helps to inform the identification of preferred options and the best way of implementing these with regard to environmental factors, but it does not necessarily dictate what these will be.

⁴ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date Accessed: 16/10/22]

⁵ MHCLG (2015) Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal: Strategic environmental assessment requirements for neighbourhood plans. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal#strategic-environmental-assessment-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

⁶ EU Council (2001) Directive 2001/42/EC. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

1.2 The SEA process

- 1.2.1 The European Union Directive 2001/42/EC or 'SEA Directive' applies to a wide range of public plans and programmes on land use, energy, waste, agriculture, transport etc. (see Article 3(2) of the Directive for other plan or programme types). The SEA procedure can be summarised as follows: an ER is prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment and the reasonable alternatives of the proposed plan or programme are identified. The public and the relevant environmental authorities are informed and consulted on the draft plan or programme and the ER prepared. Further details on methodology are explained in **Chapter 4**.
- 1.2.2 The SEA Directive has been transposed into English law by the SEA Regulations. Detailed guidance on these regulations can be found in the ODPM's publication 'A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive'⁷.
- 1.2.3 Under the requirements of the SEA Regulations, specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent of projects, must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 1.2.4 Where a Masterplan could have significant environmental effects, it may fall within the scope of the SEA Regulations and so would require an SEA.
- 1.2.5 Whether a Masterplan requires a SEA, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the Masterplan. An SEA may be required, for example, where:
- The Plan area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; or
 - The Plan may have environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through an SA of higher order plans.

1.3 Best practice guidance

- 1.3.1 A range of documents have been utilised in preparing the SEA of the Firepool Masterplan
- European Commission (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment⁸;

⁷ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

⁸ European Union (2001) SEA Guidance, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

- Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive⁹;
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁰;
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities & Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)¹¹; and
- Royal Town Planning Institute (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment, Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans¹².

1.4 The Firepool Masterplan Document

- 1.4.1 This ER regards the proposed content of the Masterplan, as set out in the latest version of the Draft Masterplan (received by Lepus 20th September 2022) and follows on from the SEA Screening Report (Final Draft available September 2022) and Scoping Report (September 2022).
- 1.4.2 Should the Masterplan be significantly refined in the future, for example as a result of further applications with different proposals, a re-screening of any significant amendments should be undertaken for the purposes of the SEA screening process.
- 1.4.3 The Firepool Masterplan will provide a framework for the development of the proposed site 'Firepool' allocated within the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TTCAAP), particularly policies Fp1 and Fp2. Firepool is a strategic site which is part of plans aiming to achieve a successful, high quality sustainable development with a sense of place which meets with requirements and aspirations of adopted policies, whilst accounting for the materially changed circumstances since policy for the site was adopted. The development of the Firepool site also responds to the aspirations of the local community and aligns with the Council's 'Vision for Taunton Garden Town'.

⁹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

¹⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

¹¹ Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) Planning Practice Guidance Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

¹² RTPI (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment. Available at: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2018/january/strategic-environmental-assessment-seasa-for-land-use-plans/> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

1.4.4 This strategic allocation is proposed to include the development of residential and non-residential elements, including the following uses set out in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1: Proposed development within the Firepool Masterplan

Development Elements	Within Redline Boundary	Block 3
Houses	77 dwellings	
Student Accommodation	18 dwellings	
Flats	344 dwellings	
Office	-	1,550m ² /82 employee at 1 per 19m ²
Leisure Park (including cinema)	Up to 4,500m ²	
F&B and Leisure	Up to 1,200m ²	
Nursery	60 pupils	
Health Hub	Up to 2,000m ²	
Hotel	120 rooms	
Music Venue	1,700 attendees	

1.4.5 The Masterplan takes the proposals from the adopted TTCAAP (October 2008)¹³ and outlines the aspirations of the area as well as responding to key issues that will influence the new development. The Masterplan will be a material consideration, which expands on policies set out by the LPA, to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications within the site.

1.4.6 The Masterplan expands upon the policy contained within the LPA and provides a framework to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications within proposed development Firepool site.

1.4.7 An SEA scoping report is a useful way of presenting information in order to establish a proportionate and relevant SEA process that informs the plan-making process effectively in a way in which the statutory bodies and the local authority agree.

¹³ Taunton Deane Borough Council (2008) Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan. Adopted Plan (October 2008). Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/1064/taunton-town-centre-area-action-plan.pdf> [Date Accessed: 15/10/22]

- 1.4.8 The Masterplan incorporates the requirements of various plans and policies, including:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021);
 - Planning Practice Guidance (June 2021);
 - Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006): Biodiversity Duty (sections 40 and 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006);
 - HM Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018);
 - Environment Act (2021);
 - Taunton Deane Biodiversity Action Plan (2008);
 - Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) and Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) Ecological Emergency Vision and Action Plan (EEVAP);
 - Somerset West and Taunton Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan (CNCR Action Plan, 2020);
 - Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2014;
 - Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011 – 2028;
 - Taunton Deane Town Centre Area Action Plan 2008; and
 - Other relevant Local Plan policies.
- 1.4.9 The plans and policies set out above require that development proposals protect the natural environment including internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity sites, and seek to ensure that ecological networks and Green Infrastructure (GI) assets are protected and enhanced, alongside delivering the required growth. The plans and policies above will help form decisions on site development for Firepool with considerations to the local area.
- 1.4.10 The site boundary for Firepool Masterplan site is shown in **Figure 1.1**. The site comprises approximately 6.5ha of previously developed land and lies in the centre of Taunton.

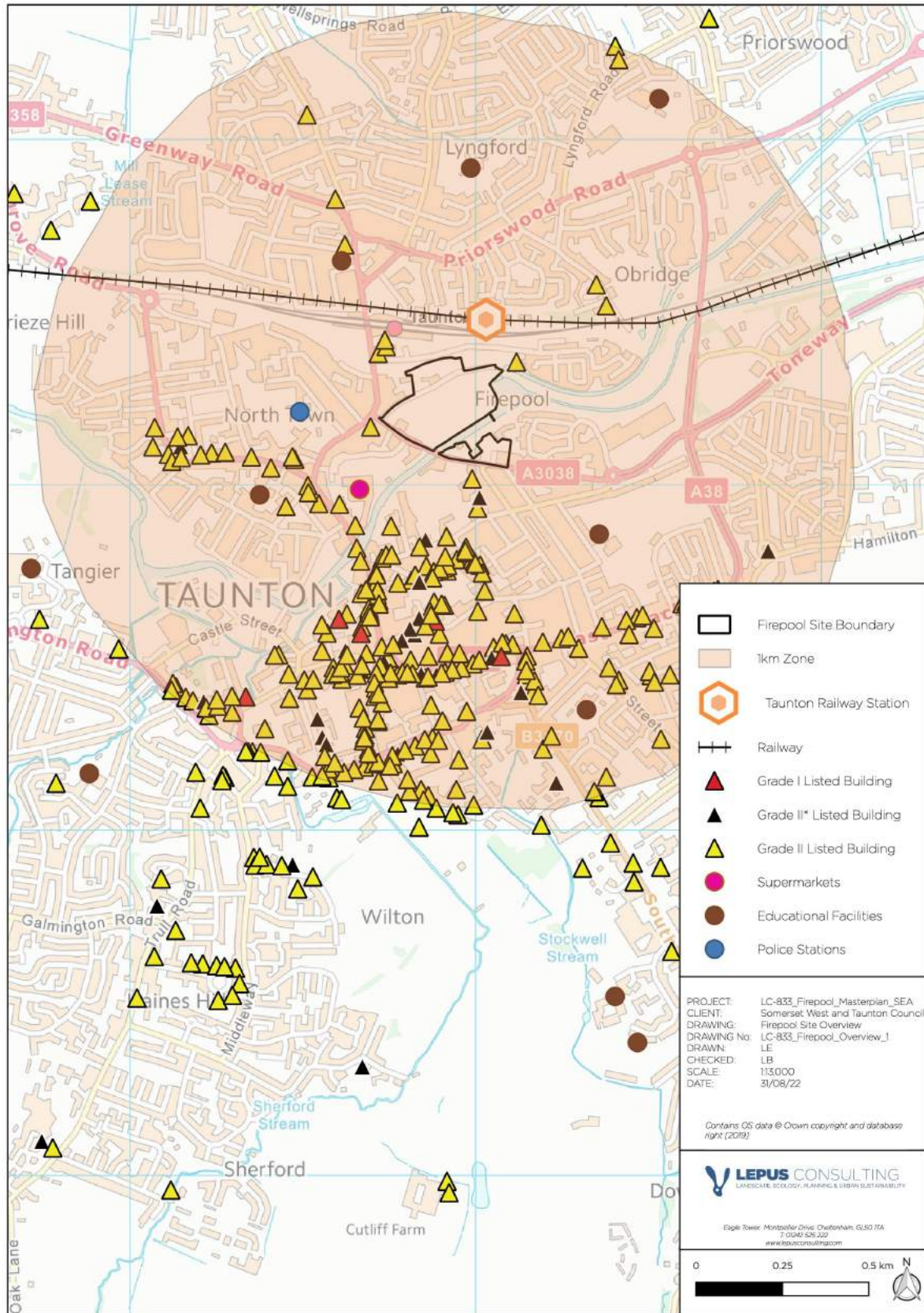


Figure 1.1: Proposed Firepool site boundary

1.5 Purpose of this report

- 1.5.1 This report has been prepared to help inform the preparation of the Firepool Masterplan. It is not the role of the SEA to decide which is the most appropriate form of the Masterplan, but instead to provide an assessment of the Plan and any reasonable alternatives which should be given due consideration in the decision-making process and identify best performing options.
- 1.5.2 Regulation 12 of the SEA Regulations¹⁴ states that the Environmental Report “*shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the environment of – (a) implementing the plan or programme; and (b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme*”.

1.6 Meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations

- 1.6.1 **Table 1.2** includes the requirements of the SEA Regulations and shows where they have been met within the SEA process.

Table 1.2: Requirements of the SEA Regulations¹⁵

Requirement for Environmental Report	Location
Include an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	See the SEA Scoping Report, and Environmental Report: Section 1.4. and Appendix B.
Include information on the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	See the SEA Scoping Report, and Environmental Report: Chapter 3.
Describe the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	See the SEA Scoping Report, and Environmental Report: Chapters 5 and 6.
Specify any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	See the SEA Scoping Report, and Environmental Report: Chapters 3, 5 and 6.
Consider the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	See the SEA Scoping Report, and Environmental Report: Chapters 5 and 6 and Appendix B.

¹⁴ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Regulation 12. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/regulation/12/made> [Date Accessed: 16/10/22]

¹⁵ Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations requirements checklist. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/580073/Strategic_Environmental_Assessment_Regulations_requirements_checklist.pdf [Date Accessed: 11/10/22]

Requirement for Environmental Report	Location
Assess the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, and cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.	Environmental Report: Chapter 5, 6, and Appendix C.
Give details of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment as a result of implementing the plan or programme.	Environmental Report: Chapter 6.
Give an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Environmental Report: Chapter 5 and section 6.1.
Include a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	Environmental Report Chapter 7.
Include a non-technical summary of the information provided.	Environmental Report: Non-Technical Summary

2 SEA Screening

2.1 Screening

2.1.1 The SEA Screening report¹⁶ (September 2022) reviewed the extent to which the Firepool Masterplan could potentially result in significant effects on the environment.

2.1.2 Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations¹⁷ requires that the SEA process should consider: “*the likely significant effects on the environment, ... on issues such as – (a) biodiversity; (b) population; (c) human health; (d) fauna; (e) flora; (f) soil; (g) water; (h) air; (i) climatic factors; (j) material assets; (k) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (l) landscape; and (m) the inter-relationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l)*”.

2.1.3 The Screening Report concluded that the Firepool Masterplan would be likely to have a significant environmental impact on the surrounding area and would therefore require an SEA in relation to:

- Air;
- Biodiversity (in particular, increased phosphate loading);
- Climate Change;
- Historic Environment;
- Landscape;
- Population and Material Assets; and
- Water.

2.1.4 It was not expected that new development outlined within the Firepool Masterplan would result in any significant adverse effects in relation to any of the other topics listed in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations.

¹⁶ Somerset West and Taunton Council (2022) Firepool Masterplan and Design Guidance Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/3513/firepool-masterplan-and-design-guidance-screening-report.pdf> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

¹⁷ SEA Regulations. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/schedule/1/made> [Date Accessed: 10/10/22]

2.2 Consultation

2.2.1 The SEA Screening Report was subject to consultation with the statutory consultees of the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. The responses received are summarised in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Screening Report

Consultee	Summary of Consultee Response
Environment Agency (27 th August, 2021)	<i>"It is noted that Somerset West and Taunton Council have applied the SEA/HRA Directive, and the Environment Agency can agree with their draft outcome of the screening."</i>
Natural England (9 th September, 2021)	<i>"We concur with your assessment that both SEA and Appropriate Assessment will be required."</i> <i>You have stated that the site is outside of the identified consultation zone of the Hestercombe House SAC. However, in common with most of Taunton, the site falls within the Bat Consultation Band C (link here).</i> <i>We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us."</i>
Historic England (3 rd September, 2021)	<i>"However, what the documents and our meeting identified was that the regime of building displacement and associated heights may have the potential to generate impacts upon the settings of offsite heritage assets. In particular, and by way of example, we were able to identify the important roles played by the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary Magdalene and Grade II* St James Church which are prominent features in the area whose presences can be seen and appreciated from a significant distance in many directions. It is therefore possible that their individual and collective settings could be extensive and complex and therefore affected or harmed by what is emerging. It will be important to ensure that the masterplan and design guidance are appropriately informed by the heritage significance of these assets to avoid such an eventuality in accordance with overarching policy for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment as exists in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Local Plan....The masterplan and design guidance therefore need to demonstrate with evidence that they are in conformity with such overarching policy and at the meeting we made the observation that such an evidence base appears to be lacking....the masterplan and design guidance documents need to be able to stand alone in providing a rationale for their proposals, either by demonstrably basing them on an original evidence base (such as possibly the 2017 Cotswold Archaeology report / Heritage Statement referred to at our meeting) or by cross referencing with previously approved proposals, such as the outline consent, to demonstrate that they took appropriate account of relevant considerations and that by reflecting them the latest proposals do also.... We agree with the conclusion of the SEA Screening Report that a full SEA is required. Such an exercise would require and help ensure that relevant heritage assets were identified, understood and appropriately informed the masterplan and design guidance. Such an exercise could also capture broader aspects of historic character, of the site and its context, to help the design agenda reflect that in creating a sense of place and the qualities of human scale and intimacy which are perhaps now more intrinsic to the regime of uses envisaged compared with previous proposals."</i>

2.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 2.3.1 In 2022, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)¹⁸ Screening of the Firepool Masterplan was undertaken by SWT Council as required under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)¹⁹.
- 2.3.2 The HRA Screening concluded that an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required due to the potential for likely significant effects associated with phosphate levels at Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar as a result of the development of Firepool site outlined within the Masterplan. It was deemed that the development outlined within the Masterplan may contribute to the existing unfavourable conditions and further prevent the site in achieving its conservation objectives.
- 2.3.3 The screening assessment undertaken by the Council concluded potential likely significant effects at Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar and Hestercombe House SAC from the Firepool Masterplan alone. Given alone impacts were identified, an in-combination assessment was not necessary at this stage of the HRA process.
- 2.3.4 Taking into consideration the high-level nature of the masterplan, the Council also concluded that individual development proposals within the site will likely need to be subject to project-level HRA screening and potentially AA as their detail is developed.

¹⁸ Somerset West and Taunton Council (2022) Firepool Masterplan and Design Guidance Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/3513/firepool-masterplan-and-design-guidance-screening-report.pdf> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

¹⁹ The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 SI No. 2017/1012, TSO (The Stationery Office), London. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents> as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22]

3 SEA Scoping

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The scoping stage represents Stage B of the SEA process, according to the strategic environmental assessment requirements²⁰. Scoping is the process of deciding the scope and level of detail of an SEA.
- 3.1.2 The purpose of scoping is to set the criteria for assessment (including the SEA Framework), establish the environmental baseline and include a review of relevant policies, plans and programmes (referred to as PPPs). The scoping process can also help to identify key environmental issues relevant to the Plan area, highlighting areas of potential concern.
- 3.1.3 The SEA Framework is presented in **Appendix A**. Drawing on the information gained from the earlier SEA screening exercise which concluded that the Masterplan would be likely to lead to a significant environmental impact in relation to the following topics: Air, Biodiversity, Climate change, Landscape, Population and material assets and Water.

3.2 Policies, plans and programmes review

- 3.2.1 A plan or programme may be influenced in various ways by other plans or programmes, or by external environmental protection objectives such as those laid down in policies or legislation.
- 3.2.2 The scoping exercise presented an analysis of the objectives of the key PPPs (including legislation) that are relevant to the Masterplan and the SEA assessment process, presented by their geographic relevance, from international to local level. The PPP Review is presented in **Appendix B**.

3.3 Baseline data and key sustainability issues

- 3.3.1 A key part of the scoping process is the collection of baseline data. The purpose of this exercise is to help identify key issues and opportunities facing the area which might be addressed by the Firepool Masterplan, and to provide an evidence base for the assessment.
- 3.3.2 Paragraph 016 of the PPG²¹ states that “*baseline information provides the basis against which to assess the likely effects of alternative proposals in the plan*”.

²⁰ MHCLG (2015) Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal: Sustainability appraisal requirements for local plans and spatial development strategies. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> [Date Accessed: 16/10/22]

²¹ MHCLG (2015) Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal: Strategic environmental assessment requirements for neighbourhood plans. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal#strategic-environmental-assessment-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans> [Date Accessed: 15/10/22]

3.3.3 The scoping exercise provided a review of existing environmental conditions within the Plan area and their likely evolution in absence of the Firepool Masterplan. **Table 3.1** provides an outline of the identified key sustainability issues and future evolution without the Masterplan, building on those identified in the Scoping Report.

Table 3.1: Key sustainability issues and evolution without the Masterplan

SEA Objective	Key Sustainability Issues	Future Evolution of the Baseline without the Masterplan
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development proposals outlined within the Masterplan must be designed in order to avoid any significant adverse impacts from pollution, including cumulative impacts, on any of the following: Human health and wellbeing, biodiversity, the effective operation of neighbouring land uses and the water environment. Development proposals outlined within the Masterplan should avoid exacerbating air pollution issues in existing AQMAs and should ideally contribute to air quality improvement measures in these areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local air quality will continue to benefit from legislative protection and local/national plans and programmes. Monitoring of air quality in the Masterplan area will continue. Without the Masterplan, it may be difficult to help ensure that development is not of a type, scale and location that could potentially have a major adverse impact on local air quality.
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to adversely impact the 'Hestercombe House' SAC due to the site being located entirely within an area, 'Consultation Zone C', where Lesser Horseshoe Bats may be found in relation to the SAC. Potential impacts attributed to phosphate loading on habitats and species associated with 'Somerset Levels and Moors' SAC and Ramsar. As the development will be situated adjacent to the River Tone, there is potential to adversely impact the habitats and species associated with the 'Tone and Tributaries' LWS, particularly otters, kingfishers, salmon and water voles. There is also potential to adversely impact the LNR 'Children's Wood' due to its close proximity to the Firepool site. The plan seeks to guide development within the development area, therefore, there is potential for adverse impacts on the SAC and LNR and its qualifying features arising from the development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the absence of the Masterplan, biodiversity and habitats in the area could face potential adverse impacts. Habitat fragmentation and urbanisation are among pressures notable for decreases in biodiversity. The site may continue to suffer from market failure and reduce the likelihood of potential benefits associated with biodiversity net gain that may arise if the plan was implemented. Sites designated for their national and international biodiversity and/or geodiversity value will continue to benefit from legislative protection. Without the Masterplan, it may be difficult to help ensure that development is not of a type, scale and location that could potentially have a major adverse impact on a biodiversity and geodiversity designation or on the functioning ecological network. It would be likely that biodiversity features would be somewhat protected by policies set out the Masterplan, however, it is uncertain to what extent.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of the Firepool site could potentially lead to adverse impacts on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the absence of the Masterplan, future planning applications for the land which

SEA Objective	Key Sustainability Issues	Future Evolution of the Baseline without the Masterplan
	<p>local air quality and climate change mitigation through increased GHG and particulate emissions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of new dwellings, leisure, office and retail developments will increase energy consumption, pollution and traffic within the local area. • Introduction of new dwellings, leisure, office and retail developments may increase effects attributed to urban heat islands. • Flooding could potentially impact the Firepool site in the future, as well as potentially increase flood risk elsewhere if appropriate mitigations are not implemented. 	<p>constitutes the Firepool site would be required to adhere to local and national policies regarding production of emissions and air pollution, increase in flood risk and urban heat island effects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Local Plan documents promote climate change mitigation, primarily energy efficient housing and development of walking and cycling networks. • SWT Council are currently working towards a goal of carbon neutrality by 2030. This is likely to be significantly more challenging than the target of 2050 which has been set by the UK Government.
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development within the Firepool site could potentially alter the setting of historic assets, both designated and non-designated. • The existing urban setting and built form of the surrounding environment has shaped a distinctive environmental baseline, one which has already impacted the historic environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the absence of the Masterplan, the character and setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets is unlikely to change significantly. • The extent to which the accessibility, local awareness or setting of heritage assets may be enhanced over time without the Masterplan is uncertain. • In the absence of the Masterplan, it is unlikely that archaeological assets (both discovered and undiscovered) will be harmed or threatened.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development proposed within the Firepool Masterplan could potentially alter views for users of the PRow and cycle networks currently located around the site. • The River Tone and Bridgwater and Taunton Canal corridor is of the highest sensitivity to landscape impacts. • Assessments from BDP's Townscape Visual Impact Assessment should also be considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the absence of the Firepool Masterplan, housing and economic needs would likely be met through planning applications and it is uncertain whether distinctive and long-distance countryside views within and of the site, and of any alternative site, would be altered, which may include views experienced by local residents and users of the local PRow network. • In the absence of the Firepool Masterplan, the local distinctive urban and rural landscape character would be unlikely to be altered. Although housing need would still be required to be met, key landscape features such as the River Tone and Bridgwater and Taunton Canal corridor

SEA Objective	Key Sustainability Issues	Future Evolution of the Baseline without the Masterplan
Population and Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, the population of the district is slowly increasing. This is predominantly due to increases in those aged over 65. The proportion of the population which is of typical working age (16-64) is decreasing. Population increases may increase pressure on education and health provision in Taunton. Development proposed within the Masterplan could potentially increase demand on waste services in Taunton. Development proposed within the Masterplan could potentially increase traffic and congestion in and around the centre of Taunton. 	<p>would be likely to be preserved in the absence of the Firepool Masterplan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the absence of the Masterplan, housing and employment needs would likely be met through planning applications and it is uncertain whether more or less undeveloped land, or Mineral Safeguarding Areas, would be used for development than current proposals outlined within the Masterplan. The population across SWT is expected to continue to increase. This is likely to place greater pressure on the capacity of key services and amenities, including health and leisure facilities and housing. It is uncertain if existing public green spaces and active travel networks would be maintained and enhanced, to encourage residents to live healthy and active lifestyles.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is capacity for increased water demand in the area; however, water efficiency principles and future proofing in the light of climate change predictions will require diligent consideration of water demand planning. Large proportions of the site are within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The ecological status of the River Tone and Bridgwater and Taunton Canal may be affected by development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Change is likely to lead to drier conditions and more extreme weather events, both potentially reducing the availability of water and increasing likelihood and severity of flooding. Increased development and urbanisation are likely to place increased demand on water provisions and water quality in the area.

3.4 The SEA Framework

3.4.1 The purpose of the SEA Framework is to provide a way of ensuring that the Masterplan considers the sustainability needs of the Firepool site and enables the environmental effects of the Masterplan to be described, analysed and compared.

3.4.2 The SEA Framework consists of objectives, which are measurable using indicators. There is no statutory basis for setting objectives, but they are a recognised way of considering the environmental effects of a Plan and comparing alternatives. The SEA Objectives are used to provide the basis against which effects of the Masterplan are assessed.

3.4.3 The SEA Framework for the Firepool Masterplan is focused on air, biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage, landscape, population and material assets and water resources for the reasons specified within the scoping report²². The SEA Framework has been developed through the PPP review, the baseline data collection and the key issues identified for the Plan area. The SEA topics identified in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations²³ were one of the key determinants when considering the SEA Objectives to be used for appraisal purposes. The updated SEA Framework, reflecting consultee comments received (see **Table 3.2**), is presented in **Appendix A**.

3.5 Consultation

3.5.1 Consultation responses on the SEA Scoping Report are summarised within **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2: Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Scoping Report

Consultee	Summary of Consultee Response
Natural England	N/A – No comment received.
Environment Agency (8 th September, 2022)	<p><i>“The Environment Agency supports the SEA but wishes to make the following comments:</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 4 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna Section 4.2.11</i></p> <p><i>The Tone and Tributaries Local Wildlife Site (LWS) has not been included. This needs to be written into the document and should be one of the main considerations in any biodiversity assessments about possible impacts, both to the LWS species and habitats, but also opportunities to improve and enhance things through the development.</i></p> <p><i>These sites were designated using robust scientifically determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys, and the Tone is the best example in the county of a whole river from source to saline limit with species of national and international protection. It is a biologically rich river including tributaries with a variety of associated habitats and legally protected species. Local Wildlife Sites offer corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks and they play a vital part in the natural green fabric of our towns.</i></p> <p><i>For all the above reasons we would hope SWAT would aspire to be an exemplary developer and in turn offer inspiration to others in the future.</i></p> <p><i>Section 4.2.13</i></p> <p><i>Protected species should include water voles, otters, kingfishers, and salmon, especially relevant in relation to being a LWS and the importance of the river habitat in the context of the development being next to the river.</i></p> <p><i>Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)</i></p> <p><i>This should be included in the SEA even though it is not mandatory until 2023. The Local Planning Authority have signed up to deliver it, and with the river being adjacent to the development seems appropriate to include river based BNG assessments as well as the terrestrial ones.</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 5 Climate Change</i></p>

²² Lepus Consulting (2022) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Firepool Masterplan – SEA Scoping Document.

²³ Biodiversity flora and fauna; Population; Human health; Soil; Water; Air; Climatic factors; Material assets; Cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage); and Landscape.

Consultee	Summary of Consultee Response
	<p><i>We support and encourage all means of reducing the effects of climate change and carbon neutral development, through sustainable development, and in particular the encouragement of resource efficiency, waste minimisation and recycling.</i></p> <p><i>Green Infrastructure</i></p> <p><i>The inclusion of aspirations for greening river corridors for biodiversity improvements are also encouraged, set back of development would create recreation and access for maintenance benefits. Any lighting should be set back and suitably designed with wildlife in mind. This would also align with the aspirations of the Taunton Garden Town.</i></p> <p><i>The masterplan should recognise the importance of wildlife corridors and connectivity. Given that the development is alongside an important Somerset River that runs through Taunton and is a real asset for everyone, as well as being critical for biodiversity, it would be good to see the development embracing opportunities to enhance this linear habitat and protect it for species to live in and to move through safely and successfully.</i></p> <p><i>Longrun Meadows is at the upstream end, followed by French Weir and the park, moving through Goodland Gardens and Firepool and finally straight into Children’s Wood Local Nature Reserve. The whole stretch is part of the Tone and Tributaries Local Wildlife Site as discussed above. There are also several Local Nature Reserves adjacent to numerous sections throughout this stretch and so anything to help make these areas more connected and more resilient to long term change the better. Considering the Firepool site in relation to the part it plays in the wider landscape for species and habitats would be beneficial.</i></p> <p><i>Flood Risk</i></p> <p><i>As indicated SW&T should follow guidance for new development and flood risk in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. This details flood risk, permitted development and advice on managing flood risk.</i></p> <p><i>New Development</i></p> <p><i>New development should be encouraged to create green infrastructure and maintain habitats, for example creating wildlife corridors or green space, tree planting etc.) and advocating the use of green roofs.</i></p> <p><i>We look forward to working alongside SW&T in reducing Climate Change, as well as working in partnership with the Taunton Flood Alleviation Strategy.”</i></p>
<p>Historic England (18th October 2022)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“You had previously indicated that you envisaged sending out the SEA Screening Report with this Scoping consultation but a copy hasn’t been received. Nonetheless, the Scoping Report in Section 2 identifies the relevant SEA topics which the Screening identified as likely to be relevant and confirms the inclusion of Cultural Heritage within the scope of topics to be included.”</i> 2. <i>“In our response to the SEA Screening consultation in September 2021 we identified the potential that the masterplan might have for generating impact on the setting of the Grade I and II* churches respectively. Even any individual impact, however modest, could be capable of being regarded as “significant environmental effects” within the context of SEA definitions and case law. So although such consideration has not been cited specifically within the Scoping Report – and not having had sight of the final Screening Report we don’t know how prominently this consideration may have featured in its conclusions – it is certainly something which should be given significant detailed and informed assessment within the SEA exercise.”</i> 3. <i>“Sections 6.2.2 to 6.2.14 of the Historic Environment section of the Scoping Report set out the relevant heritage assets and states the likely impacts on them from the proposed development. This is based on the findings of a preliminary screening assessment, heritage assessment, and Townscape Visual Impact Analysis (TVIA) as key evidence</i>

Consultee	Summary of Consultee Response
	<p><i>documents. However, these documents have not been shared, nor is it clear how much they have been subject to wider assessment or scrutiny. We therefore feel that it would be premature to form a view on the nature and scope of impact which the masterplan may have on heritage assets and include this within the Scoping Report. It may suggest that these heritage considerations do not need to be subject to the full and informed assessment incumbent upon the preparation of an SEA Environmental Report, especially given the limited impact on heritage assets which has been identified. Further, there is a risk that this is perceived as tendentious within the context of such an exercise, and create an unwitting bias in its conclusions.”</i></p> <p>4. <i>“This concern is reinforced by uncertainty over the means by which such conclusions have been arrived at. Emphasis is placed on the distance of identified heritage assets from the site and, where applicable, their relationship with surrounding townscape, as the basis upon which impact on their settings has been deduced. However, the determination of an asset’s setting, as a contributor to its significance, needs to take account of more extensive considerations, as set out in our guidance on Setting. It is not clear whether and how this guidance might have been used in the preparation of any of the evidence documents referred to above, and the absence of any reference to it within this section of the Scoping Report as source material which has, or would be used to, inform the preparation of the full SEA Environmental Report underscores that concern.”</i></p> <p>5. <i>“This highlights the need for clear and informed methodology on the identification and assessment of relevant heritage assets relative to the potential for significant environmental effects which the masterplan may have. We are not sure whether the absence of reference within the Scoping Report to our guidance on Setting, and SEAs more generally, is a reflection of the consultants not being aware of it, or a belief that it is not relevant to the exercise in question. We would therefore strongly encourage the reference and use of this guidance within the full SEA process to ensure it is fully informed from a heritage perspective, and thereby its comprehensiveness and credibility.”</i></p>

4 Methodology

4.1 Approach to assessment

4.1.1 The assessment process has used the SEA Framework, the review of plans, programmes and policies, and the baseline (including various mapped data sources) to assess each policy. Assessments have been undertaken using this empirical evidence and, to a lesser extent, expert judgement. The precautionary principle²⁴ is applied to all assessments.

4.2 Appraisal process

4.2.1 When evaluating significance of effect, the SEA draws on criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, derived from Annex II of the SEA Directive (see **Box 4.1**), and identifies a significance value using the guide in **Table 4.1**.

Box 4.1: Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations²⁵

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations)

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:

- (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
- (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
- (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
- (d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
- (e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;
- (b) the cumulative nature of the effects;
- (c) the transboundary nature of the effects;
- (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);
- (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - i. special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
 - ii. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;
 - iii. intensive land-use; and
- (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

²⁴ Judgment of 7 September 2004 in case C-127/02 (Waddenzee, paragraph 45).

²⁵ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date Accessed: 10/10/22]

Table 4.1: Guide to scoring significant effects

Significance	Definition (not necessarily exhaustive)
Major Negative --	The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of a quality receptor, such as a feature of international, national or regional importance; • Cause a very high-quality receptor to be permanently diminished; • Be unable to be entirely mitigated; • Be discordant with the existing setting; and/or • Contribute to a cumulative significant effect.
Minor Negative -	The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not quite fit into the existing location or with existing receptor qualities; and/or • Affect undesignated yet recognised local receptors.
Negligible 0	Either no impacts are anticipated, or any impacts are anticipated to be negligible.
Uncertain +/-	It is entirely uncertain whether impacts would be positive or adverse.
Minor Positive +	The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve undesignated yet recognised receptor qualities at the local scale; • Fit into, or with, the existing location and existing receptor qualities; and/or • Enable the restoration of valued characteristic features.
Major Positive ++	The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and redefine the location in a positive manner, making a contribution at a national or international scale; • Restore valued receptors which were degraded through previous uses; and/or • Improve one or more key elements/features/characteristics of a receptor with recognised quality such as a specific international, national or regional designation.

4.2.2 The results of the assessment will apply a single value from **Table 4.1** to the corresponding SEA Objective for each reasonable alternative or any other part of the plan which is being assessed as part of the SEA. Justification for the likely impact and corresponding score is presented in an accompanying narrative assessment text.

4.3 Significance

4.3.1 Where an environmental impact has been identified, the significance of effect has been categorised as minor or major. **Table 4.1** lists the significance matrix and explains the terms used. The nature of the significant effect can be either beneficial or adverse depending on the proposal.

4.3.2 Each reasonable alternative that has been assessed in this report has been scored according to its predicted performance in relation to the SEA Objectives in the Framework, using the values in **Table 4.1**.

4.3.3 It is important to note that the scores are high level indicators. The narrative assessment text which details the key decision-making criteria behind each awarded score should always be read alongside the score. Assumptions and limitations to the scores are presented in **Table 4.4** and **sections 4.7** and **4.8**.

4.3.4 Significance of effect is a combination of impact sensitivity and magnitude.

4.4 Impact sensitivity

4.4.1 Impact sensitivity is measured through consideration as to how the receiving environment will be impacted by a Plan proposal. This includes assessment of the value and vulnerability of the area, whether environmental quality standards will be exceeded, and if impacts will affect, for example, designated areas.

4.4.2 A guide to the range of scales used in the impact significance matrix is presented in **Table 4.2**. For most receptors, sensitivity increases with geographic scale.

Table 4.2: Geographic scales of receptors

Scale	Typical criteria
International/ national	Designations that have an international aspect or consideration of transboundary effects beyond national boundaries. This applies to effects and designations/receptors that have a national or international dimension.
Regional	This includes the regional and sub-regional scale, including county-wide level and regional areas.
Local	This is the district and neighbourhood scale.

4.5 Impact magnitude

4.5.1 Impact magnitude relates to the degree of change the receptor will experience, including the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact. Impact magnitude is determined based on the susceptibility of a receptor to the type of change that will arise, as well as the value of the affected receptor (see **Table 4.3**).

Table 4.3: Impact magnitude

Impact magnitude	Typical criteria
High	<p>Likely total loss of or major alteration to the receptor in question;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a new receptor/feature; or • The impact is permanent and frequent.
Medium	<p>Partial loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features; or</p> <p>The impact is one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent and short-term; • Frequent and reversible; • Long-term (and frequent) and reversible; • Long-term and occasional; or • Permanent and occasional.
Low	<p>Minor loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features of the receptor; or</p> <p>The impact is one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reversible and short-term; • Reversible and occasional; or • Short-term and occasional.

4.6 Predicting effects

4.6.1 SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates professional judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures.

4.6.2 The assessments in this report are based on the best available information. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.

4.6.3 SEA operates at a strategic level which uses available secondary data for the relevant SEA Objective. All reasonable alternatives are assessed in the same way using the same method. Sometimes, in the absence of more detailed information, forecasting the potential impacts of development can require making reasonable assumptions based on the best available data and trends.

4.7 Assessment assumptions

4.7.1 Assumptions have been used to help incorporate proportionality to the SEA of reasonable alternatives. In terms of published policy guidance, it is assumed that the following policies will apply to the Firepool site and surrounding environments, and have been borne in mind when completing the assessment of reasonable alternatives:

- Adopted TTCAAP 2008 policies²⁶;
- The Somerset West and Taunton Core Strategy²⁷;
- The Somerset West and Taunton Site Allocations and Development Plan (SADMP)²⁸; and
- The NPPF (2021)²⁹ and related PPG advice³⁰.

4.7.2 Other topic-specific assumptions have been applied to the report. These are presented in **Table 4.4**.

Table 4.4: Assumptions for the SEA Objectives

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
1. Air: Mitigate and reduce the impacts of air pollution arising as a result of the development of the Firepool site.	<p>Exposure of new residents to air pollution has been considered in the context of the development proposal location in relation to established Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and main roads. It is widely accepted that the effects of air pollution from road transport decreases with distance from the source of pollution i.e. the road carriageway. The Department for Transport (DfT) in their Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) consider that, “beyond 200m, the contribution of vehicle emissions from the roadside to local pollution levels is not significant”³¹. This statement is supported by Highways England and Natural England based on evidence presented in a number of research papers^{32 33}. A buffer distance of 200m has therefore been applied in this assessment.</p> <p>It is assumed that development would result in an increase in traffic and thus traffic generated air pollution. Both existing and future site users would be exposed to this change in air quality.</p>

²⁶ Somerset West and Taunton Council (2021) Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) 2008. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/1064/taunton-town-centre-area-action-plan.pdf> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

²⁷ Taunton Deane Borough Council (2011) Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2018. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/1061/adopted-core-strategy-2011-2018.pdf> [Date Accessed: 02/11/22]

²⁸ Somerset West and Taunton Council (2022) Site allocations and development management plan 2028. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning-policy/adopted-local-plans/sadmp/> [Date Accessed: 02/11/22]

²⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

³⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

³¹ Department for Transport (2017) TAG unit A3 Environmental Impact Appraisal. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/webtag-tag-unit-a3-environmental-impact-appraisal-december-2015> [Date Accessed: 13/10/22]

³² Bignal, K., Ashmore, M & Power, S. 2004. The ecological effects of diffuse air pollution from road transport. English Nature Research Report No. 580, Peterborough.

³³ Ricardo-AEA, 2016. The ecological effects of air pollution from road transport: an updated review. Natural England Commissioned Report No. 199.

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	<p>The proximity of a site in relation to a main road determines the exposure level of site end users to road related air and noise emissions^{34 35}. In line with the DMRB guidance, it is assumed that site end users would be most vulnerable to these impacts within 200m of a main road. Development proposals located within 200m of a main road would be expected to have a minor negative impact on site end users' exposure to air pollution.</p>
<p>2. Biodiversity: Protect, enhance, restore and manage the flora, fauna biodiversity and geodiversity assets of the areas affected by the development of the Firepool site.</p>	<p>The biodiversity objective considers adverse impacts of the proposed development at a landscape-scale. It focuses on an assessment of proposed development on a network of designated and undesignated sites, wildlife corridors and individual habitats within and surrounding the Firepool site. Receptors include the following:</p> <p>Designated Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitats sites; (Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites). • Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). • National Nature Reserves (NNR). • Local Nature Reserves (LNR). • Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). <p>Habitats and Species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient woodland. • Priority habitats. <p>Negative impacts would be expected where the ecological or geological designations listed above may be harmed or lost as a result of proposals. The assessment is largely based on a consideration of the proximity of a site and the attributes and qualities of the receptor in question.</p> <p>For the purposes of this assessment, impacts on priority habitats protected under the 2006 NERC Act³⁶ have been considered in the context of Natural England's publicly available Priority Habitat Inventory database³⁷. It is acknowledged this may not reflect current local site conditions in all instances.</p> <p>It is assumed that construction and occupation of previously undeveloped greenfield land would result in a net reduction in vegetation cover and Green Infrastructure in the Plan area. Development proposals which would be likely to result in the loss of greenfield land are therefore expected to contribute towards a cumulative loss in vegetation cover. This would also be expected to lead to greater levels of fragmentation and isolation across the wider ecological network, such as the loss of habitat stepping-stones and corridors.</p>

³⁴ Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (2019) LA 105 Air Quality. Available at: <https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/prod/attachments/10191621-07df-44a3-892e-c1d5c7a28d90?inline=true> [Date Accessed: 11/10/22]

³⁵ Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (2019) LA 104 Environmental assessment and monitoring. Available at: <https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/prod/attachments/0f6e0b6a-d08e-4673-8691-cab564d4a60a?inline=true> [Date Accessed: 13/10/22]

³⁶ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

³⁷ Natural England (2021) Priority Habitat Inventory (England). Available at: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/4b6ddb7-6c0f-4407-946e-d6499f19fcde/priority-habitat-inventory-england> [Date Accessed: 19/10/22].

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	<p>It should be noted that no detailed ecological surveys have been completed by Lepus to inform the assessments made in this report.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require detailed ecological surveys and assessments to accompany future planning applications. Such surveys will determine on a site-by-site basis the presence of Priority Species and Priority Habitats protected under the NERC Act.</p> <p>It is assumed that the loss of biodiversity assets, such as ancient woodland or an area of priority habitat, are permanent effects.</p> <p>It is assumed that mature trees and hedgerows will be retained where possible.</p> <p>Where development proposals coincide with a Habitats site, a SSSI, NNR, LNR, CWS, CGS or ancient woodland, or are adjacent to a Habitats site, SSSI or NNR, it is assumed that development would have a permanent impact on these nationally important biodiversity and geodiversity assets, and a major negative impact would be expected.</p> <p>Where development proposals coincide with priority habitats, are adjacent to an ancient woodland, LNR, LWS, are located within a SSSI IRZ³⁸ which states to “consult <i>Natural England</i>” or are located in close proximity to a Habitats site, SSSI, NNR, LNR or stand of ancient woodland, it is assumed that development would have an impact on these biodiversity assets, and a minor negative impact would be expected.</p> <p>Where a development proposal would not be anticipated to significantly impact a biodiversity asset, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective.</p> <p>Where development proposals would be anticipated to enhance biodiversity through the designation of a biodiversity site, a positive impact would be expected.</p>
<p>3. Climate change: Mitigate and Reduce the Firepool site’s contribution towards climate change.</p>	<p>Development proposals which would be likely to increase GHG emissions in the local area would make it more difficult for the Council to reduce the Plan area’s contribution towards the causes of climate change.</p> <p>The incorporation of GI within developments presents several opportunities to mitigate climate change, for example, through providing natural cooling to combat the ‘urban heat island’ effect, reducing the effects of air pollution and providing more pleasant outdoor environments to encourage active travel³⁹.</p> <p>It is assumed that development on previously undeveloped or greenfield land would result in an increase in GHG emissions due to the increase in the local population and the number of operating businesses and occupied homes.</p> <p>The increase in GHG emissions caused by new developments is associated with impacts of the construction phase, the occupation and operation of homes and businesses, oil, gas and</p>

³⁸ Natural England (2022) Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a Geographical Information System (GIS) tool which allow a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to: SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites. They define zones around each site which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts

Natural England’s Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 03 May 2022. Available at: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/5ae2af0c-1363-4d40-9d1a-e5a1381449f8/ssi-impact-risk-zones> [Date Accessed: 10/10/22]

³⁹ TCPA (2007) The essential role of green infrastructure: eco-towns green infrastructure worksheet. Available at: <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=dd06b21d-6d41-4c4e-bec5-4f29a192f0c6> [Date Accessed: 10/10/22]

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	<p>coal consumption and increases in local road transport with associated emissions. This impact is considered to be permanent and non-reversible.</p>
<p>4. Historic Environment: Protect, enhance and manage heritage assets, including designated and non-designated, as well as features and areas of and heritage importance.</p>	<p>Impacts on heritage assets will be largely determined by the specific layout and design of the development proposal, as well as the nature and significance of the heritage asset. There is a risk of adverse effects occurring, some of which may be unavoidable. As such, this risk has been reflected in the assessment as a negative impact where a site is in close proximity to heritage assets.</p> <p>Adverse impacts are recorded for options which have the potential to have an adverse impact on sensitive heritage designations, including Grade I, II* and II Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments (SM), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG), and Conservation Areas. Adverse impacts on heritage assets are predominantly associated with impacts on the existing setting of the asset and the character of the local area, as well as adverse impacts on views of, or from, the asset.</p> <p>Where development proposals are not located in close proximity to any heritage asset, or the nature of development is determined not to affect the setting or character of the nearby heritage asset, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective.</p> <p>When considering any planning application that affects a Conservation Area, authorities must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance⁴⁰. A replacement of a building that currently has a detrimental impact on a Conservation Area could potentially result in a neutral or a minor beneficial effect.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require a Heritage Statement to be prepared to accompany future planning applications, where appropriate. The Heritage Statement should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposals, including any contribution made by their settings.</p> <p>It is assumed that desk-based assessments will be required on a site-by-site basis for planning proposals which could potentially impact archaeological features (followed by field evaluation / potential trial trenching where appropriate).</p>
<p>5. Landscape: Conserve, enhance, restore and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening their distinctiveness</p>	<p>Impacts on landscape will be largely determined by the specific layout and design of development proposals, as well as the site-specific landscape circumstances. Detailed proposals for each development are uncertain at this stage of the assessment. Therefore, the nature of the potential impacts on the landscape are, to an extent, uncertain. However, there is a risk of negative effects occurring, some of which may be unavoidable. As such, this risk has been reflected in the assessment as a negative impact where a development proposal is located in close proximity to sensitive landscape receptors. The level of impact has been assessed based on the nature and value of, and proximity to, the landscape receptor in question.</p> <p>Where a development proposal would not be anticipated to impact a local or designated landscape, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective. Where the development or enhancement of green infrastructure / landscape features is proposed, which could potentially enhance the local landscape character, a minor positive impact</p>

⁴⁰ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/69> [Date Accessed: 10/10/22]

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	<p>It is anticipated that the Council will require developers to undertake Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) to accompany any future proposals, where relevant. The LVIAs should seek to provide greater detail in relation to the landscape character of the development proposals and its surroundings, the views available towards the development, the character of those views and the sensitivity and value of the relevant landscape and visual receptors.</p> <p>Development proposals which are considered to increase the risk of future development spreading further into the wider landscape would be expected to have a minor negative impact on the landscape objective.</p> <p>Development proposals which are considered to reduce the separation between existing settlements and increase the risk of the coalescence of settlements would be expected to have a potential minor negative impact on the landscape objective.</p>
<p>6. Population and Material Assets: Protect, enhance and ensure the efficient use of land, soils, minerals and water.</p>	<p>Previously Developed Land:</p> <p>In accordance with the core planning principles of the NPPF⁴¹, development on previously developed land is recognised as an efficient use of land. Development of previously undeveloped land and greenfield sites is not considered to be an efficient use of land.</p> <p>Development of an existing brownfield site would be expected to contribute positively to safeguarding greenfield land in SWT, and therefore, have a minor positive impact on this objective.</p> <p>Development proposals situated on previously undeveloped land would be expected to pose a threat to soil within the site perimeter due to excavation, compaction, erosion and an increased risk of pollution and contamination during construction.</p> <p>In addition, development proposals which would result in the loss of greenfield land would be expected to contribute towards a cumulative loss of ecological habitat. This would be expected to lead to greater levels of habitat fragmentation and isolation for the local ecological network restricting the ability of ecological receptors to adapt to the effects of climate change. The loss of greenfield land has therefore been considered to have a minor negative impact under this objective.</p> <p>Health, Housing, Education, Employment, and Transport:</p> <p>Assessments for health, housing, education, employment and transport were made against the latest population size figures for Taunton to 2021, where the population was approximately 157,400⁴². Assessments also were in line with the latest NPPF guidance.</p>

⁴¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 10/10/22]

⁴² Office for National Statistics (2022) How the population changed in Somerset West and Taunton: Census 2021. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000246/> [Date Accessed: 17/10/22]

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	<p>Assumptions for sustainable target distances to key facilities, transport, education and employment were made in line with Barton <i>et al</i>⁴³ sustainable distances.</p> <p>Waste</p> <p>Assessments for waste are under the assumption that new residents in Firepool will have an annual waste production of 399kg per person, in line with the England average⁴⁴.</p> <p>As waste generation has been calculated per person based on the average number of people per dwelling, development proposed for employment or non-residential end use have not been included in this assessment.</p>
<p>7. Water: Conserve, manage, restore and enhance water quality and supply.</p>	<p>The vulnerability of groundwater to pollution is determined by the physical, chemical and biological properties of the soil and rocks, which control the ease with which an unprotected hazard can affect groundwater. Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) indicate the risk to groundwater supplies from potentially polluting activities and accidental releases of pollutants. As such, any development proposal that is located within a groundwater SPZ could potentially have an adverse impact on groundwater quality. Firepool does not coincide with any SPZs.</p> <p>Construction activities in or near watercourses have the potential to cause pollution, impact upon the bed and banks of watercourses and impact on the quality of the water⁴⁵.</p> <p>An approximate 10m buffer zone from a watercourse should be used in which no works, clearance, storage or run-off should be permitted⁴⁶. However, it is considered that development further away than this has the potential to lead to adverse impacts such as those resulting from runoff.</p> <p>Wessex Water, which covers the town of Taunton, reported that there will be sufficient water to supply the population of Somerset West and Taunton until 2040 and beyond⁴⁷. This is partly due to the population of the areas serviced by Wessex Water being unexpected to grow rapidly.</p>

⁴³ Barton, H., Grant. M. & Guise. R. (2010) *Shaping Neighbourhoods: For local health and global sustainability*, January 2010

⁴⁴ Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (2021) Local authority collected waste generation from January 2010 to March 2021 England data. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env18-local-authority-collected-waste-annual-results-tables> [Date Accessed: 14/10/22]

⁴⁵ World Health Organisation (1996) *Water Quality Monitoring - A Practical Guide to the Design and Implementation of Freshwater Quality Studies and Monitoring Programmes: Chapter 2 – Water Quality*. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/41851> [Date Accessed: 16/10/22]

⁴⁶ Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (no date) *Advice and Information for planning approval on land which is of nature conservation value*. Available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/advice-and-information-planning-approval-land-which-nature-conservation-value> [Date Accessed: 10/10/22]

⁴⁷ Wessex Water (2019) *Final water resources management plan*. Available at: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/environment/water-resources/management-plan> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	It is assumed that development proposals will be in accordance with requirements for higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day, as set out in the Building Regulations Part G ⁴⁸ .

4.8 Limitations

- 4.8.1 SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates expert judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures. The assessments in this report are based on the best available information, including information that is publicly available. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.
- 4.8.2 All data used is secondary data available from SWT Council or freely available on the Internet. No biodiversity records search has been commissioned through the Somerset Environmental Records Centre.

⁴⁸The Building Regulations 2010. Part G: Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/504207/BR_PDF_AD_G_2015_with_2016_amendments.pdf [Date Accessed: 17/10/22]

5 Reasonable Alternatives

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The SEA Regulations require that the SEA process considers “*reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme*” (Regulation 12) and gives “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*” (Schedule 2).
- 5.1.2 The SEA process must record how reasonable alternatives were identified, described, and evaluated. The plan makers must identify all reasonable alternatives, providing an explanation as to their provenance and qualities that qualify them as reasonable.
- 5.1.3 The findings of the SEA can help with refining and further developing these options in an iterative and on-going way. The SEA findings do not form the sole basis for decision-making; other studies, the feasibility of the option and consultation feedback will also contribute to the decision of identifying a preferred option.
- 5.1.4 The SEA results may reveal that there is no single, best performing option. Where there is no obvious discernible difference at a strategic scale, the SEA process will record this as an outcome.

5.2 Identifying reasonable alternatives

- 5.2.1 PPG notes that ‘reasonable alternatives’ are the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker in developing the policies in its plan. It notes that the SEA process should provide conclusions on the overall sustainability of the different alternatives and that the alternatives must be realistic and deliverable⁴⁹.
- 5.2.2 Reasonable alternatives for a development could constitute:
- A) Growth alternatives for housing and employment use e.g., the total number of dwellings or employment floorspace across the development area;
 - B) Alternative site allocations for development; and
 - C) Alternative policies, including a comparison between the inclusion of policies against the ‘do nothing’ approach.
- 5.2.3 SWT Council has identified three reasonable alternatives for evaluation in the SEA process:
- The employment and retail-led option (RA1);
 - The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2); and
 - The ‘do nothing’ option (RA3).

⁴⁹MHCLG (2018) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date Accessed: 21/10/22]

5.3 Describing the reasonable alternatives

- 5.3.1 There are three reasonable alternatives which have been identified during the preparation of the Masterplan, relating to the layout of the proposed development at Firepool.
- 5.3.2 There are no discernible differences between the reasonable alternatives at the strategic scale, which SEA concerns; however, there are some minor differences at the local scale related to site layout. All reasonable alternatives have an identical site boundary; however, the layout of the strategic placemaking area would vary.
- 5.3.3 Reasonable Alternative 1 (RA1) is focused on provision of retail within floorspace allocations, with a secondary focus on residential provision. RA1 sought to include pedestrianised areas with active travel links to the surrounding area, implementing positive design principles with built form and GI within the layout.
- 5.3.4 Reasonable Alternative 2 (RA2) presents an increased focus toward residential provision, with the inclusion of student accommodation within the layout design. Provision of floorspace which caters to leisure, entertainment, office space and an innovation centre is also included within RA2. Furthermore, a health hub and strong links to public transport and active travel are featured within the RA2 layout, which would be likely to deliver a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the local population.
- 5.3.5 Reasonable Alternative 3 (RA3) involves doing nothing, leaving the site at Firepool in its current condition. The site is currently a previously developed site, containing car parking, poor quality amenity grassland and pedestrian links in the north of the site, with car parking and the Viridor building in the south. There is very little GI present at the site in its current form, and the site has very little utility other than car parking provision and minor connectivity for pedestrians from the canal path to canal road.



Figure 5.1: Firepool Masterplan for Reasonable Alternative 1 (source: Firepool Masterplan Framework Revision R by Ihc)



Figure 5.2: Draft Firepool Masterplan for Reasonable Alternative 2 (Source: Firepool Masterplan Design Report: AHR)

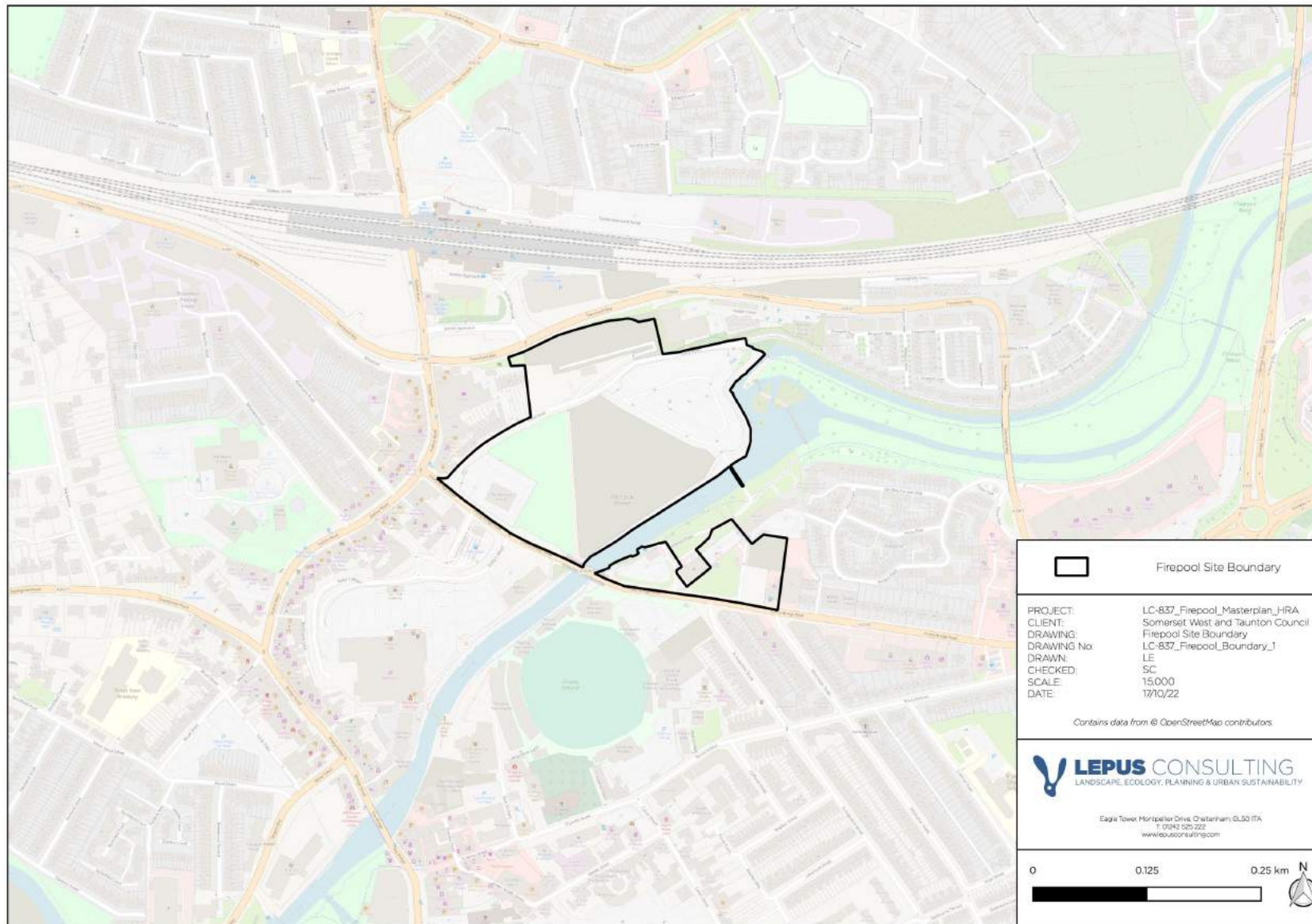


Figure 5.3: Reasonable Alternative 3 with the current Firepool boundary line and site composition

5.4 Evaluating the reasonable alternatives

- 5.4.1 Each reasonable alternative has been assessed against the SEA Framework, which itself focuses on air, biodiversity, climate change, historic environment, landscape, population and material assets and water.
- 5.4.2 The impact matrices for each reasonable alternative assessed in the SEA have been brought together in **Table 5.1**. These impacts should be read in conjunction with the topic-specific methodologies and assumptions presented in **Chapter 4**.
- 5.4.3 Whilst the assessment findings have drawn on the assumptions in **Table 4.4**, all assessment information excludes consideration of detailed mitigation i.e. additional detail or modification to the reasonable alternative that has been introduced specifically to reduce identified environmental effects of that site. Presenting assessment findings in this way facilitates transparency to the decision makers.

5.5 SEA Objective 1 – Air Quality

- 5.5.1 Air quality within SWT District is reasonably good⁵⁰, with only two small Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Taunton. The nearest AQMA is ‘East Reach AQMA’ which is approximately 500m to the south of the Firepool site and situated alongside the A38. ‘Henlade AQMA’ is the other AQMA near to Firepool, approximately 3.8km to the southeast of the site. Both AQMAs were declared due to exceedances in Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels.
- 5.5.2 The Firepool site is adjacent to the A3038 on its southern border. Development adjacent to this A road, which is within 200m of the site, could potentially lead to an adverse impact on the health of site end users due to increased levels of air pollutants⁵¹. There is likely to be scope within the site to ensure new residents are situated away from major sources of air pollution, such as roads, through careful design and layout and the use of GI buffers, which should be detailed in the Masterplan.
- 5.5.3 Air pollution, particularly excessive nitrogen deposition can be harmful to ecosystem function. ‘Children’s Wood’ is woodland Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which is sensitive to nitrogen deposition⁵², where increases in the nutrient, such as through air pollution, could lead to detrimental effects on biodiversity within the site.
- 5.5.4 RA1, RA2 and RA3 would locate site end users within 200m of the A3038. As such, the proposed development within RA1 and RA2 would have the potential to cause a minor negative effect in this regard.
- 5.5.5 RA1 proposes more towards employment and retail provision, with a secondary focus on housing provision within the site layout. Development of employment and retail floorspace is likely to increase vehicular emissions due to visits to destinations within the site, as well as from residents.
- 5.5.6 RA2 proposes the provision of new dwellings in the form of flats and houses, student accommodation, hotel, office spaces, nursery provision, ‘health hub’ and leisure and entertainment spaces which will likely require access roads, which could potentially have an adverse impact on air quality, including exacerbation of existing poor air quality the area surrounding the Firepool site. RA2 seeks to provide enhanced GI and incorporate good planning practices, which may serve to reduce adverse effects, to a greater extent than RA1.
- 5.5.7 Nonetheless, RA1 and RA2 would be expected to reduce air quality to some extent, due to the increase in vehicular emissions associated with residential and employment provisions.

⁵⁰ DBEIS (2022) UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics, 2005 to 2020. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2020> [Date Accessed: 17/10/22]

⁵¹ The Department for Transport in their Transport Analysis Guidance consider that “*beyond 200m from the link centre, the contribution of vehicle emissions to local pollution levels is not significant*”.

Department for Transport (2019) TAG unit A3 Environmental Impact Appraisal. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/webtag-tag-unit-a3-environmental-impact-appraisal-december-2015> [Date Accessed: 09/10/22]

⁵² Apis (2022) Woodlands. Available at: https://www.apis.ac.uk/overview/ecosystems/overview_woodlands.htm [Date Accessed: 15/10/22]

5.5.8 RA1’s proposal as an employment and retail-led development would be likely to increase pressures on air quality due to commuting and site end user associated vehicular emissions. RA3 would be expected to lead to no change in current air quality compared to the baseline.

Table 5.1: Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 1: Air Quality)

Reasonable alternatives	AQMA	Main Road	Increase in Air Pollution
The employment and retail-led option (RA1)	Negligible effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect
The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2)	Negligible effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect
The ‘do nothing’ option (RA3).	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect

5.6 SEA Objective 2 – Biodiversity

- 5.6.1 The closest Habitats Site to the Firepool site is ‘Hestercombe House’ SAC, located approximately 3.6km to the northeast. ‘Somerset Levels and Moors’ SPA and Ramsar sites are located approximately 6.8km east of the site. Additionally, ‘Quants’ SAC is located approximately 8km to the southwest of the site. Other Habitats sites surrounding the Plan area include ‘Holme Moor and Clean Moor’ SAC which is located approximately 13km to the west, and ‘Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods’ SAC located approximately 14.5km northwest of the site.
- 5.6.2 As outlined in **section 2.3**, a HRA was undertaken owing to the following identified likely significant effects:
- Hestercombe House SAC, due to: Loss/damage to roost sites; Loss, degradation, damage or fragmentation of foraging habitat and commuting corridors; and development which introduces new artificial light sources.
 - Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar, due to: Impacts upon the aquatic invertebrate assemblage of the Ramsar due to an increase in phosphate loading within the hydrological catchment of the Ramsar.
- 5.6.3 The plan for RA1 does not include any specific lighting scheme. RA2 includes design principles within the Masterplan which are focussed on reducing light spill over the river. Despite this, the proposals may introduce new artificial light sources to some extent under both options RA1 and RA2, with a minor negative impact identified on Hestercombe House SAC in line with precautionary principle, as identified in the HRA Screening exercise. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible impact on Hestercombe House SAC as no development is proposed.
- 5.6.4 There is potential for a negative impact on Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar following development of RA1, as RA1 does not outline any nutrient neutrality provision. RA2 has a proposed nutrient neutrality solution which seeks to address adverse impacts on Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar; however, at the time of writing a precautionary minor adverse effect is identified owing to uncertainty regarding the implementation and effectiveness of these measures. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible impact on Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar as no development is proposed.
- 5.6.5 The entirety of the site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) which states that “*All planning applications (except householder) outside or extending outside existing settlements/urban areas affecting greenspace, farmland, semi natural habitats or landscape features such as trees, hedges, streams, rural buildings/structures*” should be consulted on with Natural England, and “*Nutrient impact area: for new development with overnight accommodation Reg 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 must be applied and additional measures required. LPA to refer to Natural England’s Nutrient Neutrality advice*”. Both RA1 and RA2 would require consultation with Natural England regarding nutrient impacts as a result of development.

- 5.6.6 Firepool sits approximately 10km northwest of the National Nature Reserve (NNR) ‘Barrington Hill’ and approximately 14km southwest of ‘Somerset Levels’ NNR. Due to the Firepool site’s location in the centre of Taunton, which is already significantly urbanised, it is unlikely that development at this site will have any significant impacts on Barrington Hill. However, as discussed in **paragraph 5.6.2** in relation to the SPA/Ramsar designation, there is potential for adverse impacts for RA1 and RA2 associated with increased phosphate loading.
- 5.6.7 In line with the precautionary principle, a minor adverse effect is identified for both RA1 and RA2 owing to potential adverse effects on NNR / SSSIs underpinning Habitats sites, in accordance with the LSEs as identified in the HRA.
- 5.6.8 The Tone and Tributaries LWS runs between the North and South blocks of the Firepool site. RA1 and RA2 both have the potential to adversely impacted the species and habitats associated with this LWS due to increased phosphate loading associated with development, occupation and operation. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible effect on LWS.
- 5.6.9 For RA1 and RA2, a minor negative impact in line with the precautionary principle has been identified with respect to potential adverse impacts associated with reductions in air quality, potential light spill effects and recreational pressure to the Children’s Wood LNR which is located at the northeast of the site.
- 5.6.10 As the boundary line for all three reasonable alternatives is the same, there are no impacts expected in relation to ancient woodland or priority habitats as there are none located within proximity to the plan area.
- 5.6.11 RA1 does not outline any specific provisions for nutrient neutrality or biodiversity net gain. RA2 seeks to implement biodiversity net gain principles and GI provision to reduce impacts to existing biodiversity. A minor positive effect would be expected as a result of the inclusion of biodiversity net gain principles within the layout, subject to effective implementation and monitoring of the strategy over time. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible impact on biodiversity given its current status.

Table 5.2: Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 2 - Biodiversity)

Reasonable alternatives	Habitats Site	SSSI (IRZ)	National Nature Reserve	Local Nature Reserve	Local Wildlife Sites	Ancient Woodland	Priority Habitats	Biodiversity Net Gain
The employment and retail-led option (RA1)	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Minor adverse effect
The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2)	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Minor positive effect
The ‘do nothing’ option (RA3).	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect

5.7 SEA Objective 3 – Climate change

- 5.7.1 SWT had the lowest CO₂ emissions per capita of the Somerset local authorities in 2020⁵³ with 3.9 tCO₂e. The total carbon emissions from the district were 611.1 kt CO₂e, with transport being the sector responsible for the largest proportion of total carbon emissions.
- 5.7.2 RA1 would introduce up to 200 new dwellings and RA2 would result in the introduction of over 400 new dwellings as well as a mix of employment, leisure and office floorspace provision. These developments would be likely to cause an increase in energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages, to some extent, resulting in a minor negative impact on climate change.
- 5.7.3 RA1 highlights that the reduction of CO₂ emissions requires the use of renewable energy technologies and construction techniques, as well as incorporating sustainable movement networks within the layout. Despite this, no specific details are mentioned with regard to how much of a positive effect this may induce as a result of development.
- 5.7.4 RA2 references various local schemes and policies, with a zero-carbon vision for the site which incorporates Passivhaus principles, design principles which optimise solar gain, sustainable building methods and materials. RA2 also seeks to facilitate car-free plot uses, as well as an appropriate mix housing and commercial use. As no specifics are mentioned it is uncertain how much of a positive effect this may induce as a result of development.
- 5.7.5 RA3 would be expected to have a negligible effect unless increased traffic results in an increased use with current car parking facilities provided.
- 5.7.6 RA1 and RA2 both display GI provision within the Masterplan area in line with Policy Im1 of the TTCAAP. RA1 seeks to incorporate a naturalistic waterfront, with interspersed GI across the site and a greenspace link to the town centre. RA2 seeks to implement GI across the plan area, with SuDS and attenuation incorporated into the GI which is built into the layout design. Inclusion of GI within the proposed development would be expected to induce minor positive effects in relation to effects such as emissions and flood risk associated with climate change. RA3 contains a small area of poor-quality amenity grassland in the west of the north block, as well as trees, hedgerows and shrubs around the perimeter of the north block. No additional GI provision would be expected for RA3.

⁵³ DBEIS (2022) UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics, 2005 to 2020. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2020> [Date Accessed: 17/10/22]

- 5.7.7 RA1, RA2 and RA3 share the same boundary line, located within Flood Zones 2 and 3 and with the River Tone running through the plan area. It is likely that flood risk will become more prevalent in future years due to higher flood plain levels and climate change introducing more extreme weather events including higher volumes of rainfall. The SWT Local Plan considers a flood alleviation reservoir between Wellington and Taunton to aid in the reduction of flooding incidences⁵⁴. The Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvement Scheme (TSFAIS) highlighted the need for improved flood defence and management in Taunton, with the raising of Firepool Lock gates and river defences between Firepool Lock and Obridge Viaduct required to prevent floodwater from entering the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal proposed⁵⁵.
- 5.7.8 Planning consent has been secured to raise the site at Firepool in the north block only out of the flood plain in the future, which RA2 has referenced in the Masterplan. These measures could help to ensure that the likelihood of significant adverse impacts regarding flood risk is reduced in the northern area of the development, with a potential positive effect on flood risk. If RA1 was to utilise the same raise of site level referenced within the RA2 plan, a similar minor positive impact on flood risk would be expected. RA3 as the ‘do nothing’ option would result in the plan area continuing to sit within Flood Zones 2 and 3. As the majority of the north and south block at Firepool sits within Flood Zone 2, with a significant proportion in Flood Zone 3, a minor negative impact on flood risk would be expected with all reasonable alternatives. The minor negative impact for RA2 is in line with the precautionary principle as no current FRA or mitigation strategy currently exists for the south block at Firepool, and so these areas may remain at risk of flooding.

Table 5.3: Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 3: Climate change)

Reasonable alternatives	Increased energy consumption related GHG emissions	Green Infrastructure	Flood Zone
The employment and retail-led option (RA1)	Minor adverse effect	Minor positive effect	Minor adverse effect
The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2)	Minor adverse effect	Minor positive effect	Minor adverse effect
The ‘do nothing’ option (RA3).	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Minor adverse effect

⁵⁴ Levett-Therivel (2019) Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report: Somerset West and Taunton Local Plan Review. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/2122/sustainability-appraisal-scoping-report.pdf> [Date Accessed: 17/10/2022]

⁵⁵ Somerset Rivers Authority (2020) SRA Annual Report 2019-20: Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme (TSFAIS). Available at: <https://www.somersetiversauthority.org.uk/flood-risk-work/sra-annual-report-2019-20/taunton-strategic-flood-alleviation-improvements-scheme/> [Date Accessed: 21/10/22]

5.8 SEA Objective 4 – Historic environment

- 5.8.1 Historic environment priorities from the international to the local level seek to address a range of issues. These include protecting designated resources and their settings (such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, and Registered Parks and Gardens); recognising the cultural aspects of landscape and establishing mechanisms for their protection against inappropriate development; recognising the potential value of unknown and undesignated resources; and conserving/enhancing sites and landscapes of archaeological and heritage interest so that they may be enjoyed by both present and future generations.
- 5.8.2 Firepool and the surrounding area contains a variety of distinctive heritage assets and historic areas recognised through designations. This includes:
- Nationally designated Listed Buildings;
 - Scheduled Monuments;
 - Registered Parks and Gardens;
 - Conservation Areas; and
 - Non-designated features.
- 5.8.3 Listed Buildings are those which have been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. There are several Grade I Listed Buildings within the surrounding area to the south of Firepool, including: ‘Church of St Mary Magdalene’, ‘Castle Bow’, ‘Church of St John the Evangelist’, ‘Nos. 1 – 10 Grays Alms House’ and ‘Taunton Castle: standing buildings of the Inner Court’.
- 5.8.4 There are several Grade II* Listed Buildings within the surrounding area of Firepool, including: ‘Priory Barn’, ‘St James’ Church’, ‘Summerhouse at language centre’, ‘St Margaret’s Leper Hospital’ and ‘12 Middle Street’.
- 5.8.5 Numerous Grade II Listed Buildings are present in the area surrounding Firepool, including: ‘Firepool Pumping Station’, ‘The Wheel Tapper Public House’, ‘Gurds’, ‘Priory Lodge’, ‘The Collar Factory’ and ‘Bridge House’.
- 5.8.6 A Scheduled Monument (SM) is a nationally important archaeological site or historic feature that is given protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. ‘Borough Bank’ and ‘Taunton Castle’ SMs are within close proximity, approximately 500m to the south of the Firepool site. ‘Norton Camp’ SM is located approximately 3km to the northwest of the Firepool site. Due to the location of these SMs, which already exist within the built-up area surrounding the Firepool site, the impacts presented by the proposed development would be expected to be negligible.
- 5.8.7 The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest was first published by English Heritage in 1988. Although inclusion on the Register brings no additional statutory controls, registration is a material consideration in planning terms.
- 5.8.8 ‘Hestercombe’ Registered Park and Garden (RPG) is located approximately 2.8km to the northeast and ‘Poundisford Park’ RPG is located approximately 4km to the southwest of the site at Firepool. Both RPGs are separated from the proposed development site with significant built form.

- 5.8.9 Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Conservation Area designations increase the local planning authority's control over demolition of buildings and over certain alterations to residential properties that would normally be classed as 'permitted development' and not require planning permission.
- 5.8.10 Conservation Areas within close proximity to the proposed development include: 'St Mary and St James Conservation Area', 'Castle Green and Bath Place', 'The Crescent' and 'Fons George'. 'Poundisford Park Pale' is located approximately 4km to the southwest of the proposed development.
- 5.8.11 Non-designated features exist in the area surrounding the proposed development site, including within sites such as 'St Mary and St James Conservation Area'.
- 5.8.12 Due to the similar site boundary, development proposal and mix and the current location within existing built form, RA1 and RA2 would be expected to have a potential minor negative impact on the surrounding historic environment as a result of the proposed development at Firepool. These adverse impacts are likely to be particularly associated with the Grade II Listed Firepool Pumping Station and the listed churches with spires located in the surrounding area. RA3 would have a negligible effect as it would remain unchanged.

Table 5.4: Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 4: Historic environment)

Reasonable alternatives	Listed Buildings (Grades I, II* and II)	Conservation Area	Scheduled Monument	Registered Parks and Gardens	Non-designated features
The employment and retail-led option (RA1)	Minor adverse effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect
The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2)	Minor adverse effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect
The 'do nothing' option (RA3).	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect

5.9 SEA Objective 5 – Landscape

- 5.9.1 The Firepool site lies within the National Character Area (NCA) ‘Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes’. Key characteristics of this NCA include “*lowland mixed farming landscape, with dense hedges, sparse woodland, red soils and settlement pattern. The area is densely settled with a largely dispersed pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads linked by sunken winding lanes.*”⁵⁶.
- 5.9.2 The site at Firepool is located within the Landscape Character Type (LCT) ‘Urban’, which was excluded from the Landscape Character Assessment⁵⁷. The landscape and topography is described as low-lying, typically flat floodplain landform, which is defined by the tributaries and main watercourse of the River Tone.
- 5.9.3 Over one fifth of the Taunton Deane’s landscape is of National importance with both the Quantock Hills AONB and the Blackdown Hills AONB covering significant swathes of land within the Borough in the north and south respectively. The centrally positioned area known as the ‘Vale of Taunton Deane’ defines much of the Borough’s landscape.
- 5.9.4 The developments outlined within RA1 and RA2 have the potential to adversely impact the views from the Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB due to possible alterations to the visible skyline at the Plan area. RA3 would not be expected to impact the views from the surrounding AONBs as no development is expected with this reasonable alternative.
- 5.9.5 There are various PRoW throughout Taunton, with a path running to the east of the site, adjacent to the River Tone and Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. Pathways surrounding the Firepool site are accessible to pedestrians, with some accessible to cyclists such as the National Cycle Network Route 3 which runs adjacent to the River Tone.
- 5.9.6 The developments outlined within RA1 and RA2 have the potential to adversely affect the recreational experience associated with PRoWs, as well as the National Cycle Network 3 which runs adjacent to the River Tone and Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. The impacts are likely to be related to the alteration of views on and around the river and canal corridor, particularly those associated with areas surrounding Children’s Wood LNR.
- 5.9.7 RA1 and RA2 aim to create appealing frontages which are interspersed with GI and green edges alongside paths and cycle tracks, which would be expected to provide mitigation to the views affected by the development from the PRoWs in and around the plan area. As a result, a negligible effect on views from the PRoW network would be expected for RA1 and RA2. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible impact on views from the PRoW network.

⁵⁶ Natural England (2015) NCA Profile: 146 Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6601735426539520> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

⁵⁷ Taunton Deane Borough Council (2011) Taunton Deane Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/media/1343/taunton-deane-landscape-character-assessment.pdf> [Date Accessed: 22/10/22]

5.9.8 RA1 and RA2 would be expected to locate site end users in close proximity to multi-functional greenspace, as both plans outline the provision of greenspace within the layouts. This is likely to improve the views of site end users and those in the immediate surrounding area. RA2 includes both green and blue infrastructure within the Masterplan. RA3 has a small area of poor-quality amenity grassland in the West of the north block. As a result, RA1 and RA2 would be expected to have a minor positive impact on the immediate local landscape within and surrounding the plan area. RA3 is unlikely to induce extra positive impacts as it remains in its current state.

Table 5.5: Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (SEA Objective 5: Landscape)

Reasonable alternatives	AONB	Country Park	Altered view from PRowS	Access to multi-functional greenspace
The employment and retail-led option (RA1)	Minor adverse effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Minor positive effect
The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2)	Minor adverse effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Minor positive effect
The 'do nothing' option (RA3).	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect

5.10 SEA Objective 6 – Population and material assets

- 5.10.1 The consideration of ‘Population’ is a broad matter and has been addressed under several themes:
- Waste;
 - Housing;
 - Transport and accessibility;
 - Pedestrian and cycle access;
 - Education; and
 - Employment.
- 5.10.2 The effect of combining the assessment of these themes seeks to create places where residents live a high quality of life for longer, are well educated and have the necessary skills to gain employment and succeed in modern society. Indicators include the proximity of development proposals to schools, accessibility to employment land and proximity to services and amenities.
- 5.10.3 ‘Material assets’ covers a variety of built and natural assets. It is a requirement of Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations to consider material assets, although the Regulations does not include a definition. The SEA process has considered material assets as the health centres, schools and other essential infrastructure resources required to meet the demands of the local population and development aspirations of the Masterplan, in addition to natural assets such as mineral resources.
- 5.10.4 The SWT population has increased by 8.7% from 2011 where it was approximately 144,900 to 2021, where it was approximately 157,400⁵⁸. This increase is higher than the average for the South West region and overall national increase in that time period.
- 5.10.5 RA1 and RA2 comprise a mix of residential and employment/retail development. Both would be expected to increase waste generation as a result of the development through construction, occupation and operation of development. This would be expected to increase demand on the Somerset Waste Partnership in terms of waste management and thus induce a minor negative impact on waste levels as a result of development of either RA1 or RA2. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible effect on waste in Taunton as no development is expected with this reasonable alternative.
- 5.10.6 There are established road networks surrounding the Firepool site, with high traffic flows. RA1 and RA2 both include residential, employment and retail floorspace provision within the layout design, which could result in increases in traffic and congestion in and around the Firepool area. No analysis of connectivity to public transport has been undertaken with regard to RA1 and RA2 and as such, the effect of these RAs is uncertain.
- 5.10.7 However, in line with the precautionary principle, there is potential for a minor negative effect following the development of RA1 or RA2 in terms of transport and accessibility. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible effect on transport and accessibility.

⁵⁸ Office for National Statistics (2022) How the population changed in Somerset West and Taunton: Census 2021. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000246/> [Date Accessed: 17/10/22]

- 5.10.8 Firepool has reasonable existing links to the local pedestrian and cycle networks, with a pedestrian and cycle path running through the boulevards, along the River Tone. RA1 and RA2 both outline provision of access for both pedestrians and cyclists, with particular emphasis on sustainable travel measures. These provisions have the potential to increase accessibility and active travel to the site via sustainable means, improving the links to the existing pedestrian and cycle networks. Consequently, a minor positive impact on pedestrian and cycle access would be expected with RA1 and RA2. RA3 currently has moderate connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists but would be expected to have a negligible impact as no further development of these networks would be expected under RA3.
- 5.10.9 RA1 and RA2 both include the development of residential properties in the plan area. This would result in a minor positive effect on housing provision within Taunton for RA1 and RA2. Similarly, RA1 and RA2 both include employment and retail floorspace provision within the layout, resulting in an expected minor positive effect on employment provision and the local economy. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible effect on housing and employment.
- 5.10.10 No education provision is expected in any of the RAs, with only RA2 including a health hub within the Masterplan layout, which would be likely to positively impact site end users and local residents' access to healthcare services.
- 5.10.11 All three RAs are situated within the same boundary line and coincide with land classified as Urban according to the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). Any development at Firepool would not be expected to result in the loss of ecologically or agriculturally valuable soil and instead is preferentially developing an area of previously developed land. A negligible effect would be expected at all RAs.

Table 5.6: Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (Population and material assets)

Reasonable alternatives	Waste	Transport and Accessibility	Pedestrian and Cycle Access	Housing	Employment	Education	Health	ALC Soils
The employment and retail-led option (RA1)	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor positive effect	Minor positive effect	Minor positive effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect
The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2)	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect	Minor positive effect	Minor positive effect	Minor positive effect	Negligible effect	Minor positive effect	Negligible effect
The 'do nothing' option (RA3).	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect

5.11 SEA Objective 7 – Water

- 5.11.1 The Firepool site is in Taunton, which is situated in the South West River Basin District, in the Somerset South and West catchment. The River Tone is one of 17 main water bodies, with the Tone Downstream Taunton Water Body covering the Firepool site, which has a catchment area of 4,296 ha⁵⁹.
- 5.11.2 A large proportion of the site at Firepool is situated in Flood Zones 2 and 3, with Flood Zone 3 areas alongside River Tone and Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. As all RAs are within the same boundary line, all three will sit within the same Flood Zones. Flooding is assessed under SEA Objective 3 (see **section 5.7**).
- 5.11.3 Both the River Tone and the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal are assigned ‘moderate ecological status’ by the Environment Agency^{42, 60}, with the Environment Agency also considering the Tone and Tributaries LWS to be of high strategic significance. It is possible that development proposed in RA1 and RA2 could have negative impacts on the ecological status of these water bodies in the short, medium and long term by way of contamination, phosphate pollution, spillages and pollution attributed to increased vehicular activity, increased pedestrianisation and habitation of properties.
- 5.11.4 RA1 and RA2 both have the potential to adversely impact the ecological status of the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar, which is hydrologically linked with the River Tone, with a minor adverse impact recorded in **Table 5.7**. RA3 would be expected to have a negligible effect on the ecological status of the River Tone and other hydrologically linked watercourses, as no development is proposed which may introduce pollutants.
- 5.11.5 The Wessex Water final water resource management plan suggests that there will be sufficient water to supply the population of SWT until 2040 and beyond⁶¹. This is partly due to the population of the areas serviced by Wessex Water being unexpected to grow rapidly.
- 5.11.6 RA1 and RA2 would be expected to increase pressure and demand on water resources and drainage in Taunton due to the proposed development of residential and employment/retail floorspace. RA2 recognises that sustainable water management should be included within the layout design but makes no specific statement on water demand or usage attributed with development of the Masterplan. Consequently, the precautionary principle is applied and determines that RA1 and RA2 could potentially have a minor negative effect on water resources.
- 5.11.7 RA3 would be expected to have a negligible effect on water resources as in its current form, RA3 does not require any additional water resources or drainage.

⁵⁹ Environment Agency (2022) Tone Ds Taunton Water Body. Available at: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB108052015482> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

⁶⁰ Environment Agency (2022) Bridgwater and Taunton Canal Water Body. Available at: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB70810069> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

⁶¹ Wessex Water (2019) Final water resources management plan. Available at: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/environment/water-resources/management-plan> [Date Accessed: 20/10/22]

Table 5.7: Impact matrix for Firepool Masterplan reasonable alternatives (Water)

Reasonable alternatives	Ecological Status	Water Resources
The employment and retail-led option (RA1)	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect
The residential-led Firepool Masterplan proposal (RA2)	Minor adverse effect	Minor adverse effect
The 'do nothing' option (RA3).	Negligible effect	Negligible effect

6 The Preferred Approach

6.1 Selection of reasonable alternatives

6.1.1 PPG states that the Environmental Report accompanying the Masterplan should outline the reasons why alternatives were selected and the reasons that the rejected options were not taken forward.

6.1.2 Of the three reasonable alternatives, the preferred option (RA2) performs best overall against the SEA Objectives set out in previous chapters.

6.2 Preferred option

6.2.1 **Table 6.1** presents an assessment of the likely significant effects associated with the Masterplan in relation to the topics of air, biodiversity, climate change, historic environment, landscape, population and material assets and water prior to mitigation considerations.

6.2.2 Each of the topic sections have drawn on information presented in the SEA Scoping Report and **Chapter 3** in terms of baseline, impacts and key issues for the area affected by the Masterplan.

6.2.3 The assessments include consideration of the impacts arising as a consequence of the inter-relationship between the different topics and identify secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects where they arise.

Table 6.1: Summary of identified adverse impacts by SEA Objective

Objective 1: Air

- The Firepool site is adjacent to the A3038 on its southern border. Development adjacent to this A road which is within 200m of the site could potentially lead to an adverse impact on the health of site end users due to increased levels of air pollutants⁶².
- The development outlined within the Masterplan has the potential to adversely affect Children's Wood LNR due to increased nitrogen deposition associated with its construction, occupation and operation.

Objective 2: Biodiversity

- Firepool is within close proximity to Children's Wood LNR on the east edge of the site. The development outlined within the Masterplan has the potential to adversely impact air quality, and has potential for light spill effects and increases in recreational pressure to the Children's Wood LNR. These potential adverse impacts may affect the habitats and species associated with this LNR.

⁶² The Department for Transport in their Transport Analysis Guidance consider that "beyond 200m from the link centre, the contribution of vehicle emissions to local pollution levels is not significant".

Department for Transport (2019) TAG unit A3 Environmental Impact Appraisal. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/webtag-tag-unit-a3-environmental-impact-appraisal-december-2015> [Date Accessed: 09/10/22]

- The development outlined within the Masterplan has the potential to increase phosphate loading following development, occupation and operation of the site, which in turn has the potential to adversely impact Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar as well as locally designated sites such as the Tone and Tributaries LWS.
- The development has the potential to adversely impact Hestercombe House SAC and the species associated with it, due to increased artificial lighting.

Objective 3: Climate change

- The introduction of 400 or more new dwellings and employment and retail provisions will inevitably cause an increase in energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages, to some extent, resulting in an increase in GHG emissions. It is therefore expected that the development at Firepool could have an adverse impact on climate change, to some extent. An increase in carbon emissions is likely to contribute towards cumulative effects which exacerbate global events such as extreme weather events.
- The proposed incorporation of GI within the site alongside the residential development would be expected to help offset GHG emissions, to some extent, and would be expected to provide areas of shade and shelter which may have beneficial impacts in terms of adapting to climate change.

Objective 4: Historic environment

- Potential impacts may be expected on historic environment features such as the Grade II Listed Firepool Pumping Station and church spires within the surrounding area as a result of the development proposed within the preferred approach.

Objective 5: Landscape

- Potential impacts on the views from the Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB may be expected as a result of development outlined within the Masterplan.

Objective 6: Population and material assets

- The introduction of 400 or more new dwellings and employment and retail provisions as proposed within the Masterplan will inevitably cause an increase in waste generation. It is therefore expected that this increase in waste generation would be expected to increase the demand on the Somerset Waste Partnership and have an adverse impact on waste services within the Taunton area.

Objective 7: Water

- The proposed development of 400 or more new dwellings and employment and retail provisions as proposed within the Masterplan would be likely to increase the demand for water resources and wastewater treatment, with potential implications for water resource capacity. It is acknowledged that Wessex Water determine that the water supply for Taunton and the surrounding areas will be sufficient until 2040⁶³, however in the longer term, there may be an increased pressure on water resources.

⁶³ Wessex Water (2019) Final water resources management plan. Available at: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/environment/water-resources/management-plan> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22]

6.3 Mitigation considerations

- 6.3.1 The mitigation hierarchy is a sequential process that operates in the following way: firstly, if possible, negative impacts should be avoided. Failing this, the nature of the effect should be reduced, if possible, so that it is no longer significant. If neither avoidance nor reduction is feasible, compensation measures should be considered.

Table 6.2: Summary of mitigation measures by SEA Objective

Objective 1: Air
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No specific mitigation measures are required within the Masterplan for air.• Some provisions outlined within the Masterplan, such as enhancements to GI and tree-lined boundaries, may serve to reduce the likelihood of site end users' exposure to adverse impacts associated with reductions in air quality.
Objective 2: Biodiversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposed development at Firepool must be in accordance with ACS objectives including objective 8 and Policy CP 8 which seeks to protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity, and the Taunton Deane Biodiversity Action Plan. This could lead to longer term positive effects on biodiversity if net gains are successful.• Specific mitigations in the form of appropriate buffer zones, lighting schemes and recreational management measures may be required in order to prevent adverse impacts to Children's Wood LNR as a result of development proposed within the Masterplan.• Though the Masterplan identifies the need for design which incorporates principles associated with reduced light spill, no specific mention or provision is made with regards to Children's Wood LNR.• The HRA⁶⁴ concluded that the Masterplan will not adversely affect the integrity of Hestercombe House SAC or the Somerset Level and Moors Ramsar site, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, subject to mitigation as identified in Section 7.4 of the HRA, relating to improvements to existing discharges and upgrades to sewage works. These measures are expected to be implemented through the proposed nutrient neutrality strategy as referred to in the Masterplan.
Objective 3: Climate change
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Masterplan sets out principles for mitigating climate change including reducing energy use, promotion of energy efficiency measures and use of renewable energy through new development, in line with Policy ED 5 of the TTCAAP, Policies CP 1 and DM 5 of the ACS, SWT Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.• The Masterplan seeks to implement key design principles such as the provision of blue and green infrastructure and the pedestrian prioritisation, encouraging active travel and reduced reliance on private cars. These key principles if implemented may potentially help to reduce associated GHG emissions.
Objective 4: Historic environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The TVIA (October 2022) determined that no significant impact would be expected on the settings of heritage assets associated with the historic environment of Taunton. In addition to this, an archaeological

⁶⁴ Lepus Consulting (2022) Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Firepool Masterplan, October 2022.

report conducted by Cotswold Archaeology determined no adverse impacts would be expected following development of the area.

- Appropriate design elements such as building heights and orientations and other inherent mitigations would be likely to mitigate the likelihood of any significant adverse impacts on the historic environment surrounding the site.

Objective 5: Landscape

- The latest TVIA (October 2022) determined that no significant impact would be expected on the landscape in and around Firepool as a result of development of the Masterplan, with potential for positive effects on the character of the local landscape.
- Appropriate design elements such as building heights and orientations and other inherent mitigations may reduce the likelihood of any potential adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape, such as views from AONBs.

Objective 6: Population and material assets

- The Masterplan must include measures within the construction, occupation and operation of the site which are in line with Policy DM 5 of the ACS.
- The developers are expected to contribute towards waste management and recycling as outlined in Policy Im 1 in the TTCAAP.
- Mitigations such as reduce, reuse and recycle principles applied to construction would be likely to effectively contribute towards minimising waste associated with the construction, occupation and operation of the site.

Objective 7: Water resources

- The Masterplan must include measures to maximise water efficiency as per Policy ED 5 of the TTCAAP and Policy DM 5 of the ACS.
- The Masterplan is required to minimise water pollution and its risks to the public as per Policy DM 1 ACS.
- Developers must not exacerbate and, where possible, improve the quantity, quality and availability of water resource as per Policy CP 8 of the ACS.
- The Masterplan incorporates a riverfront green corridor which may help to mitigate adverse impacts associated with water quality and ecological value of the River Tone.

6.4 Residual effects and recommendations

6.4.1 Following consideration of mitigation measures as outlined in **Table 6.2**, the following conclusions have been made, as presented in **Table 6.3**, regarding the residual effects of the Masterplan.

6.4.2 Due to the local scale of the proposals outlined within the Masterplan, the likelihood for residual effects is reduced.

Table 6.3: Summary of identified residual effects by SEA Objective

SEA Topic	Identified Residual Effects	SEA Score
Objective 1: Air	There is anticipated to be no residual effect on air as a result of the Masterplan.	0
Objective 2: Biodiversity	There is anticipated to be no adverse impact on the integrity of the Children's Wood LNR as a result of the Masterplan, so long as the mitigation provisions are appropriate, proportionate and achieved. The development would not be likely to adversely affect the integrity of Hestercombe House SAC or the Somerset Level and Moors Ramsar site, subject to effective implementation of mitigation as identified in the HRA. No adverse residual effect on biodiversity is anticipated.	0
Objective 3: Climate change	The TTCAAP, ACS and Masterplan set out various requirements which aim to help mitigate the adverse impacts relating to climatic factors. However, the implementation of these requirements would not be expected to fully mitigate the adverse impacts associated with net increases in greenhouse gases. An increase in carbon emissions would be likely to be a long term but potentially temporary significant effect.	-
Objective 4: Historic Environment	There is anticipated to be no residual effect on the historic environment as a result of the Masterplan.	0
Objective 5: Landscape	There is anticipated to be a minor positive residual effect on landscape as a result of the Masterplan due to potential improvements to the local landscape character.	+
Objective 6: Population and Material Assets	There is anticipated to be no residual effect on population and material assets as a result of the Masterplan.	0
Objective 7: Water	Increased pressures on demand for water resources and wastewater treatment as a consequence of the proposed development has the potential to be a long-term and potentially permanent significant effect. Though Wessex Water indicates that supply is sufficient up to 2040, there may be a residual effect on capacity and provision in the longer term.	-

SEA Topic	Identified Residual Effects	SEA Score
	In line with the precautionary principle, a minor negative residual effect has been identified.	

6.4.3 Therefore, the Masterplan is considered to have potential to lead to minor residual adverse effects in relation to, Climate change (SEA Objective 3) and Water (SEA Objective 7).

6.4.4 **Table 6.4** outlines further recommendations which may help to mitigate or offset identified adverse impacts, or further enhance the sustainability of the Masterplan where no residual adverse effects were identified.

Table 6.4: Recommendations to further improve sustainability of the Masterplan

SEA Topic	Recommendations
Objective 1: Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater inclusion and incorporation of GI within the development may help to further improve air quality for site end users.
Objective 2: Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Masterplan should seek to remain in line with and incorporate the aims, objectives and principles of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan to ensure that the habitats and species surrounding and connected to the site benefit. The Masterplan should also seek to embrace the priorities of the future publications from the Natural Environment Partnership including the upcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The development should consider opportunities for enhancing connectivity of the wider ecological networks associated with designated biodiversity sites, particularly those habitats and species associated with the River Tone and its hydrological catchment.
Objective 3: Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for increasing the proportion of trips made through sustainable transport should be understood and pursued, in line with the hierarchy of decarbonisation recommended in the RTPI's Net Zero Transport⁶⁵. In line with the NPPF, the Masterplan should seek to prioritise renewable and low carbon energy sources, opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers. Energy statements could be required in order to demonstrate how carbon emissions have been minimised for the development over its lifetime. The Masterplan should implement principles highlighted within the Masterplan itself to deliver Zero Carbon design principles in the construction and operation of the site.

⁶⁵ RTPI (2021) Net Zero Transport: the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions. Available at: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/> [Date Accessed: 21/10/22]

SEA Topic	Recommendations
Objective 4: Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development proposals should seek to explore ways to maximise enhancement of, and minimise harm to, designated heritage assets and their settings, in line with Historic England’s Good Practice Advice⁶⁶. • It is recommended that, where the opportunity exists, proposals should seek to increase the local awareness of cultural heritage assets in the local area.
Objective 5: Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific recommendations are required for the development outlined within the Masterplan in relation to Landscape. • It is recommended that, where the opportunity exists, proposals should seek to reduce the likelihood of impacts to the surrounding landscape. • It is recommended that all findings of the TVIA are acknowledged and any further recommendations are adhered to.
Objective 6: Population and Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All waste management measures should be developed and implemented in line with the NPPF⁶⁷.
Objective 7: Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with the NPPF, development should seek to, wherever possible, help to improve environmental conditions, such as water quality. • Development proposals should be built in accordance with recommendations within relevant documents within the Evidence Base, including Water Resource Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plan and Basin Management Plans.

⁶⁶ Historic England (2017) The Setting of Heritage Assets - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/> [Date Accessed: 22/10/22]

⁶⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf [Date Accessed: 24/10/22].

7 Monitoring

7.1 Monitoring proposals

7.1.1 Regulation 17(1) of the SEA Regulations states that “*The responsible authority shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of each plan or programme with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action*”.

7.1.2 According to Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, the ER should also provide information on a “*description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring*”.

7.1.3 The monitoring requirements typically associated with the SEA process are recognised as placing heavy demands on authorities with SEA responsibilities. For this reason, the proposed monitoring framework should focus on those aspects of the environment that are likely to be negatively impacted upon, where the impact is uncertain or where particular opportunities for improvement might arise.

7.1.4 The purpose of monitoring is to measure the environmental effects of a plan, as well as to measure success against the plan’s objectives. It is therefore beneficial if the monitoring strategy builds on monitoring systems that are already in place. It should also be noted that monitoring could provide useful information for future plans and programmes.

7.1.5 Monitoring is particularly useful in answering the following questions:

- Were the assessment’s predictions of sustainability effects accurate?
- Does the development contribute to the achievement of desired sustainability objectives?
- Are mitigation measures performing as well as expected?
- Are there any unforeseen adverse effects? Are these within acceptable limits, or is remedial action required?

7.1.6 The SEA guidance suggests that SEA monitoring and reporting activities can be integrated into the regular planning cycle. As part of the monitoring process, Somerset West and Taunton Council are required to prepare Annual Monitoring Reports⁶⁸. It is anticipated that elements of the SEA monitoring programme for the development could be incorporated into these processes. The monitoring targets will be informed by the SEA Framework and its indicators (see **Appendix A**).

⁶⁸ Somerset West and Taunton Council (2022) Planning Reports. Available at: <https://www.Somerset West and Taunton.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-reporting/#:-:text=The%20Somerset West and Taunton%20Council%20Authority%20Monitoring,much%20development%20is%20taking%20place> [Date Accessed: 18/10/22].

7.1.7 Whilst the SEA process has not identified any significant negative effects associated with the development it is considered that monitoring may be beneficial to ensure the successful implementation of recommended mitigation and enhancement measures set out within the Masterplan. Monitoring suggestions are provided in **Table 7.1**.

Table 7.1: Proposals for monitoring adverse sustainability impacts of the Masterplan

SEA Topic	Indicator	Scale and frequency	Target
Biodiversity	Condition of Children’s Wood LNR and other potentially affected designated sites	Annually, Plan area wide	Increase
	Number of Planning Approvals granted contrary to the advice of Natural England or the Wildlife Trust	Annually, Plan area wide	Zero
	Percentage loss of the ecological network	Annually, Plan area wide	Zero
Climate change	CO ₂ emissions per capita	Annually, Plan area wide	Decrease
	Renewable energy generation	Annually, Plan area wide	Increase
Population and material assets	Amount of waste generated as a result of new developments	Annually, Plan area wide	Decrease
	Amount of recycling processed	Annually, Plan area wide	Increase
Water	Number of planning permissions granted contrary to Environment Agency advice	Annually, Plan area wide	Zero
	Quality of watercourses	Annually, Plan area wide	Increase
	Water efficiency in new homes	Annually, Plan area wide	Increase

7.1.8 Details of any monitoring programme are, at this stage, preliminary and may evolve over time based on the results of consultation and the identification of additional data sources (as in some cases information will be provided by outside bodies). The monitoring of individual schemes/proposals should also be addressed at project level.

8 Conclusion and Next Steps

8.1 Overview

8.1.1 This document constitutes an Environmental Report for the purposes of the SEA Regulations, in order to:

- Provide an outline of the contents and main objectives of the Masterplan and its relationship with other relevant plans;
- Consider the environmental protection objectives established at international, national or community level and how these objectives are relevant to the Masterplan;
- Assess the likely significant effects on the environment caused by the Masterplan (including biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, and cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors);
- Give details of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the Masterplan;
- Give an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information; and
- Include a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

8.1.2 Assessment of reasonable alternatives identified that the three reasonable alternatives perform similarly in the SEA, with RA2 performing best overall.

8.1.3 The assessment of the preferred option, prior to mitigation considerations, identified potential for adverse effects attributed to the following SEA topics:

- **Air** – due to increased emissions associated with vehicles and the site’s proximity to the A3038;
- **Biodiversity** – primarily related to potential adverse air quality, light pollution and recreational impacts on the Children’s Wood LNR, potential for adverse impacts on phosphate loading associated with Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar, and potential adverse effects on bat habitats associated with Hestercombe House SAC;
- **Climate change** – due to potential flood risk, and increased energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages associated with the development of dwellings, offices and retail developments;

- **Historic environment** – potential to affect the setting and view of heritage assets in proximity to the Masterplan site;
- **Landscape** – potential to impact views from Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB;
- **Population and Material Assets** – in terms of potential effects on waste generation and management, arising from the proposed development at Firepool; and
- **Water** – in terms of potential effects on water supply/resources arising from the proposed development.

8.1.4 The Masterplan would be anticipated to result in a range of positive effects including the opportunity to provide new homes, employment opportunities, community facilities and pedestrian routes current and future residents, as well as having the potential to deliver enhanced multi-functional GI and biodiversity net gain. Various provisions proposed within the Masterplan and policies outlined in the TTCAAP and ACS would help to ensure that future development takes into account the surrounding built and natural environment, historic assets and landscape character.

8.1.5 Following consideration of mitigation measures (see **Table 6.2**), as well as the outputs of the HRA, TVIA, nutrient neutrality strategy and other evidence base documents, a residual adverse effect on air, biodiversity, historic environment, landscape and population and material assets have been ruled out (see **Table 6.3**).

8.1.6 Potential residual minor adverse effects have been identified in relation to:

- **Climate change** – it is not expected that the identified adverse impacts from GHG emissions associated with the proposed development would be fully mitigated;
- **Water** – at this stage, the potential for increased pressure on demand for water resources and wastewater treatment cannot be ruled out.

8.1.7 Potential residual minor positive effects have been identified

8.1.8 Several recommendations have been made in this SEA report (see **Table 6.4**) to potentially enhance the sustainability of the proposals within the Masterplan or to provide further clarity regarding certain issues.

8.2 Next steps

8.2.1 This ER will be subject to consultation with the statutory bodies and the public.

8.2.2 Following the consultation period, responses will be considered by the Council to inform the final version of the Masterplan. If the Council members vote in favour of the Firepool Masterplan, the Masterplan will become adopted as a material consideration.

8.2.3 SEA Regulations 16.3(c) (iii) and 16.4 require that a ‘statement’ be made available to accompany the plan, as soon as possible after the adoption of the plan or programme, known as a post-adoption statement. The purpose of the SEA statement is to outline how the SEA process has influenced and informed the Masterplan development process and demonstrate how consultation on the SEA has been taken into account.

8.2.4 In accordance with the SEA Regulations, the statement should contain the following information:

- The reasons for choosing the preferred policies for the Masterplan as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with;
- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Masterplan;
- How consultation responses have been taken into account; and
- Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the Masterplan.

8.3 Commenting on the Environmental Report

8.3.1 Any comments on this SEA Report should be directed through Somerset West and Taunton Council.

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Appendix A: SEA Framework

SEA Objective	Decision making criteria	Indicators
<p>1</p> <p>Air: Mitigate and reduce the impacts of air pollution arising as a result of the development of the Masterplan.</p>	<p>Will it improve local air quality and avoid generating further air pollution?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new residents located within nearby AQMAs. • Number of vehicles on the local road network. • Proximity to, and frequency of, public transport services. • Cycling and walking infrastructure provision for new development. • Provision of electric vehicle charging points. • Provision of green infrastructure.
<p>2</p> <p>Biodiversity: Protect, enhance, restore and manage the flora, fauna, biodiversity and geodiversity assets of the areas affected by the development of the Masterplan.</p>	<p>Will it result in a net loss or a net gain for biodiversity?</p> <p>Will it protect or enhance wildlife sites or biodiversity?</p> <p>Will it protect sites and habitats designated for nature conservation including protected species?</p> <p>Will it protect and enhance the water environment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new residents which generate adverse impacts on sites of biodiversity importance, such as the Children's Wood LNR. • Creation of new biodiversity assets. • Provision of multi-functional green infrastructure. • Enhancement and protection of habitats and wildlife corridors. • Ensure current ecological networks are not compromised and secure future improvement in habitat connectivity. • Protection of existing vegetation and hedgerows. • Protection and enhancement of watercourses.

SEA Objective	Decision making criteria	Indicators
<p>3</p> <p>Climate Change: Mitigate and reduce the Masterplan's contribution towards climate change.</p>	<p>Will it reduce emissions from transport and the built environment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of green infrastructure. • Public transport and cycling and walking provision for new development. • Length of greenways constructed. • Natural greenspace within 400m of residential development. • Increased local traffic. • Drainage designed for 'exceedance' flood events (e.g. SuDS). • Design incorporating water conservation methods.
	<p>Will it reduce flood risk?</p>	
	<p>Will it conserve water resources?</p>	
<p>4</p> <p>Historic environment: Protect, enhance and manage heritage assets, including designated and non-designated, as well as features and areas of and heritage importance.</p>	<p>Will it preserve buildings of historic interest and, where necessary, encourage their conservation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of local heritage features including Listed Buildings. • Annual number of visitors to historic attractions. • Below ground remains – For archaeology this means conserving archaeological remains where practicable, particularly remains of national importance, through Masterplan design, to mitigate through archaeological investigation, recording and publication where conservation is not practicable.
	<p>Will it preserve or enhance archaeological sites?</p>	
	<p>Will it preserve or enhance the setting or character of cultural heritage assets or areas?</p>	
<p>5</p> <p>Landscape: Conserve, enhance, restore and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening their distinctiveness.</p>	<p>Will it protect and enhance the local landscape?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape-led development with consideration of long-distance views of the AONBs. • Use of locally sourced materials. • Is development in-keeping with surroundings (e.g. character of Taunton)? • Increase of coalescence. • Protection of local PROWs.
	<p>Will it protect and enhance the local townscape?</p>	

SEA Objective	Decision making criteria	Indicators
<p>6</p> <p>Population and material assets: Protect, enhance and ensure the efficient use of land, soils, water, health, education, employment, transport and waste.</p>	<p>Will it ensure the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed?</p> <p>Will it maintain soil quality or help to remediate land affected by ground contamination?</p> <p>Will it ensure the prudent use and sustainable management of man-made and natural resources?</p> <p>Will it ensure the needs of the population are met in relation to transport, education, employment and healthcare provision?</p> <p>Will it adequately and sustainably deal with waste?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings. • Area of best and most versatile agricultural land lost to development. • Levels of employment, education and healthcare. • Sustainable transport engagement. • Decreasing trend of waste generation (kg/pp) and incentives towards recycling and sustainable waste processes.
<p>7</p> <p>Water: Maintain and enhance water quality and ensure the most efficient use of water.</p>	<p>Will it maximise water efficiency?</p> <p>Will it minimise impact on water quality?</p> <p>Will it impact on water discharges that affect designated sites?</p> <p>Will it contribute to achieving the River Basin Management Plan actions and objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water efficiency in new homes (i.e. all new housing schemes to achieve water efficiency standard of 110 litres/person/day (lpd) • No indicators for water infrastructure have been identified. • Protect local watercourses and improve their water quality.

Appendix B: Plans, Policies and Programmes Review

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Air	
EC Air Quality Directive (1996)	Aims to improve air quality throughout Europe by controlling the level of certain pollutants and monitoring their concentrations. In particular, the Directive aims to establish levels for different air pollutants; draw up common methods for assessing air quality; methods to improve air quality; and make sure that information on air quality is easily accessible to Member States and the public.
Clean Air Strategy (2019)	This Clean Air Strategy sets out how the Government will tackle all sources of air pollution, making air healthier to breathe, protecting nature and boosting the economy. The strategy includes targets such as a commitment to reduce PM2.5 concentrations across the UK, so that the number of people living in locations above the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline level of 10 µg/m ³ is reduced by 50% by 2025.
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021)	The NPPF states that plans should prevent development from contributing to, or being put at risk of, air or water pollution. Plans should consider the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas.
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)	<p>The document sets out government action to help achieve natural world regain and retain good health.</p> <p>The main goals of the Plan are to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean air; • Clean and plentiful water; • Thriving plants and wildlife; • A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought; • Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently; and • Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.
Somerset West and Taunton Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2021	<p>This report provides an overview of air quality in Somerset West and Taunton during 2020. It fulfils the requirements of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act (1995) and the relevant Policy and Technical Guidance documents.</p> <p>The LAQM process places an obligation on all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where an exceedance is considered likely the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives. This Annual Status Report (ASR) is an annual requirement showing the strategies employed by Somerset West and Taunton to improve air quality and any progress that has been made.</p>

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Biodiversity	
<p>A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)</p>	<p>The document sets out government action to help achieve natural world regain and retain good health. The main goals of the Plan are to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean air; • Clean and plentiful water; • Thriving plants and wildlife; • A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought; • Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently; and • Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.
<p>EC Seventh Environmental Action Programme 2013-2020 (2013)</p>	<p>The main concern of the EEB was the need to describe in an un-ambivalent manner the environmental challenges the EU is faced with, including accelerating climate change, deterioration of our eco-systems and increasing overuse of natural resources.</p>
<p>Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (2011)</p>	<p>The EU biodiversity strategy follows on from the EU Biodiversity Action Plan (2006). It aims to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services across the EU by 2020. The strategy contains six targets and 20 actions. The six targets cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of EU nature legislation to protect biodiversity; • Better protection for ecosystems, and more use of green infrastructure; • More sustainable agriculture and forestry; • Better management of fish stocks; • Tighter controls on invasive alien species; and • A bigger EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.
<p>The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (1995)</p>	<p>The strategy aims to stop and reverse the degradation of biological and landscape diversity values in Europe.</p>
<p>UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)</p>	<p>The aims of the Convention include the conservation of biological diversity (including a commitment to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss), the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.</p>
<p>Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)</p>	<p>The Convention seeks to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, and to monitor and control endangered and vulnerable species.</p>
<p>Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora 1992 (the Habitats Directive)</p>	<p>The main aim of the Habitats Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed on the Annexes to the Directive at a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance. In applying these measures Member States are required to take account of economic, social and cultural requirements, as well as regional and local characteristics.</p> <p>The provisions of the Directive require Member States to introduce a range of measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or restore European protected habitats and species listed in the Annexes at a favourable conservation status as defined in Articles 1 and 2;

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Biodiversity	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to a coherent European ecological network of protected sites by designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats listed on Annex I and for species listed on Annex II. These measures are also to be applied to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under Article 4 of the Birds Directive. Together SACs and SPAs make up the Natura 2000 network (Article 3); • Ensure conservation measures are in place to appropriately manage SACs and ensure appropriate assessment of plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of an SAC. Projects may still be permitted if there are no alternatives, and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In such cases compensatory measures are necessary to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network (Article 6); • Member States shall also endeavour to encourage the management of features of the landscape that support the Natura 2000 network (Articles 3 and 10); • Undertake surveillance of habitats and species (Article 11); • Ensure strict protection of species listed on Annex IV (Article 12 for animals and Article 13 for plants). <p>Report on the implementation of the Directive every six years (Article 17), including assessment of the conservation status of species and habitats listed on the Annexes to the Directive.</p>
The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Habitats regulations)	This transposes into national law the Habitats Directive and also consolidates all amendments that have been made to the previous 1994 Regulations. This means that competent authorities have a general duty in the exercise of any of their functions to have regard to the Directive.
The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	The Act provides for public access on foot to certain types of land, amends the law relating to public rights of way, increases measures for the management and protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation, and provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006	The Act makes provision in respect of biodiversity, pesticides harmful to wildlife and the protection of birds, and in respect of invasive non-native species. It alters enforcement powers in connection with wildlife protection and extends time limits for prosecuting certain wildlife offences. It addresses a small number of gaps and uncertainties which have been identified in relation to the law on sites of special scientific interest. And it amends the functions and constitution of National Park authorities, the functions of the Broads Authority and the law on rights of way.
DEFRA Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended)	The principle mechanism for the legislative protection of wildlife in Great Britain.
DEFRA. Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011)	<p>The England biodiversity strategy 2020 ties in with the EU biodiversity strategy in addition to drawing links to the concept of ecosystem services. The strategy's vision for England is:</p> <p>"By 2050 our land and seas will be rich in wildlife, our biodiversity will be valued, conserved, restored, managed sustainably and be more resilient and able to adapt to change, providing essential services and delivering benefits for everyone".</p> <p>The Strategy's overall mission is "to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people".</p>
DoE Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan (1994)	Government's strategy for protection and enhancement of biodiversity, from 1992 convention on Biodiversity commitments. Advises on opportunities and threats for biodiversity.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Biodiversity	
TCPA: Biodiversity by Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities (2004)	The development process should consider ecological potential of all areas including both greenfield and brownfield sites. Local authorities and developers have a responsibility to mitigate impacts of development on designated sites and priority habitats and species and avoid damage to ecosystems.
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2021)	<p>The recently released NPPF seeks to streamline the planning system and sets out the Governments planning policies and how these should be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>The NPPF includes guidance on promoting the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. It requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils; • recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; • minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; • preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and • remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
Making Space for Nature: a review of England’s wildlife sites and ecological network (2010)	<p>The Making Space for Nature report, which investigated the resilience of England’s ecological network to multiple pressures, concluded that England’s wildlife sites do not comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network. The report advocates the need for a step change in conservation of England’s wildlife sites to ensure they are able to adapt and become part of a strong and resilient network. The report summarises what needs to be done to improve England’s wildlife sites to enhance the resilience and coherence of England’s ecological network in four words; more, bigger, better, and joined. There are five key approaches which encompass these, which also take into account of the land around the ecological network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management. • Increase the size of current wildlife sites. • Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors, or through ‘stepping stones’. • Create new sites. • Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites. <p>To establish a coherent ecological network 24 wide ranging recommendations have been made which are united under five key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to continue the recent progress in improving the management and condition of wildlife sites, particularly our SSSIs. We also make recommendations for how these should be designated and managed in ways that enhance their resilience to climate change. • There is a need to properly plan ecological networks, including restoration areas. Restoration needs to take place throughout England. However, in some areas, both the scale of what can be delivered to enhance the network, and the ensuing benefits for wildlife and people, will be very high. These large areas should be formally recognised as Ecological Restoration Zones. • There are a large number of surviving patches of important wildlife habitat scattered across England outside of SSSIs, for example in Local Wildlife Sites. We need to take steps to improve the protection and management of these remaining wildlife habitats. ‘Protection’ will usually be best achieved through incentive-based mechanisms, but at times may require designation. • There is a need to become better at deriving multiple benefits from the ways we use and interact with our environment. There are many things that society has to do that may seem to have rather little to do with nature conservation, but could have, or even should have if we embrace more radical thinking; e.g. flood management by creating wetlands.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Biodiversity	
	<p>It will not be possible to achieve a step-change in nature conservation in England without society accepting it to be necessary, desirable, and achievable. This will require strong leadership from government and significant improvements in collaboration between local authorities, local communities, statutory agencies, the voluntary and private sectors, farmers, landowners and other land-managers and individual citizens.</p>
<p>DEFRA England's Trees, Woods and Forests Strategy (2007)</p>	<p>The England's Trees, Woods, and Forest Strategy (2007) aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide, in England, a resource of trees, woods and forests in places where they can contribute most in terms of environmental, economic and social benefits now and for future generations • ensure that existing and newly planted trees, woods and forests are resilient to the impacts of climate change and also contribute to the way in which biodiversity and natural resources adjust to a changing climate • protect and enhance the environmental resources of water, soil, air, biodiversity and landscapes (both woodland and non-woodland), and the cultural and amenity values of trees and woodland • increase the contribution that trees, woods and forests make to the quality of life for those living in, working in or visiting England; and • improve the competitiveness of woodland businesses and promote the development of new or improved markets for sustainable woodland products and ecosystem services where this will deliver identify able public benefits, nationally or locally, including the reduction of carbon emissions.
<p>The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature. The Natural Environment White Paper. (HM Government 2011)</p>	<p>Published in June 2011, the Natural Environment White paper sets out the Government's plans to ensure the natural environment is protected and fully integrated into society and economic growth. The White Paper sets out four key aims:</p> <p>(i) <u>Protecting and improving our natural environment</u></p> <p>There is a need to improve the quality of our natural environment across England, moving to a net gain in the value of nature. It aims to arrest the decline in habitats and species and the degradation of landscapes. It will protect priority habitats and safeguard vulnerable non-renewable resources for future generations. It will support natural systems to function more effectively in town, in the country and at sea. It will achieve this through joined-up action at local and national levels to create an ecological network which is resilient to changing pressures.</p> <p>(ii) <u>Growing a green economy</u></p> <p>The ambition is for a green and growing economy which not only uses natural capital in a responsible and fair way but also contributes to improving it. It will properly value the stocks and flows of natural capital. Growth will be green because it is intrinsically linked to the health of the country's natural resources. The economy will capture the value of nature. It will encourage businesses to use natural capital sustainably, protecting and improving it through their day-to-day operations and the management of their supply chains.</p> <p>(iii) <u>Reconnecting people and nature</u></p> <p>The ambition is to strengthen the connections between people and nature. It wants more people to enjoy the benefits of nature by giving them freedom to connect with it. Everyone should have fair access to a good-quality natural environment. It wants to see every child in England given the opportunity to experience and learn about the natural environment. It wants to help people take more responsibility for their environment, putting local communities in control and making it easier for people to take positive action.</p> <p>(iv) <u>International and EU leadership</u></p> <p>The global ambitions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internationally, to achieve environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth, together with food, water, climate and energy security; and • to put the EU on a path towards environmentally sustainable, low-carbon and resource-efficient growth, which is resilient to climate change, provides jobs and supports the wellbeing of citizens.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Biodiversity	
UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2011)	<p>The UK National Ecosystem Assessment is the first analysis of the UK's natural environment and the benefits it provides to society and economic prosperity. The assessment leads on from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) and analyses services provided by ecosystem set against eight broad habitat types. The ecosystem services provided by these habitat types have been assessed to find their overall condition. The assessment sought to answer ten key questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are the status and trends of the UK's ecosystems and the services they provide to society? 2) What are the drivers causing changes in the UK's ecosystems and their services? 3) How do ecosystem services affect human well-being, who and where are the beneficiaries, and how does this affect how they are valued and managed? 4) Which vital UK provisioning services are not provided by UK ecosystems? 5) What is the current public understanding of ecosystem services and the benefits they provide? 6) Why should we incorporate the economic values of ecosystem services into decision-making? 7) How might ecosystems and their services change in the UK under plausible future scenarios? 8) What are the economic implications of different plausible futures? 9) How can we secure and improve the continued delivery of ecosystem services? 10) How have we advanced our understanding of the influence of ecosystem services on human well-being and what are the knowledge constraints on more informed decision making?
DEFRA Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing Biodiversity Duty (2007)	<p>The Duty is set out in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, and states that: "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". Particular areas of focus include: Policy, Strategy and Procurement; Management of Public Land and Buildings; Planning, Infrastructure and Development; and Education, Advice and Awareness.</p>
CABE Making Contracts Work for Wildlife: How to Encourage Biodiversity in Urban Parks (2006)	<p>Advises on how to make the most of the potential for biodiversity in urban parks and it shows how the commitment of individuals and employers can make the difference between failure and inspiring success.</p>
Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan 2008	<p>The Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) focuses on the delivery of major regeneration proposals for large parts of the town centre. The Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds on the work of the Taunton Vision and establishes how the regeneration of the town centre will be proactively delivered and co-ordinated by the public and private sectors in partnership; • delivers those parts of the Sustainable Community Strategy that relate to the use of land within the town centre; and • sets out the statutory policy framework against which planning applications will be assessed. <p>The Area Action Plan is part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) for Taunton Deane, which is a suite of documents setting down the spatial planning strategy for the Borough. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the LDF comprises the statutory development plan, which provides the framework for planning decisions. The LDF will gradually replace the Taunton Deane Local Plan, as its component documents are produced.</p>

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Biodiversity	
	<p>The adopted Plan, which covers the area of proposed development at Firepool seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity by protections against unacceptable impacts, appropriate mitigations and compensations and ensuring net gains in biodiversity where possible.</p>
<p>Taunton Deane Biodiversity Action Plan (2008)</p>	<p>For each LBAP there are a number of actions that are cross cutting between all of the SAPs and HAPs and relate to the day-to-day functions of the Taunton Deane Borough Council, particularly in relation to development planning and policy. The following actions are taken from the Somerset Biodiversity Strategy and detail how planning authorities should safeguard and seek to enhance biodiversity in their work. Many of these actions are simply what is necessary to comply with the law or guidelines, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 • Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) • EU Habitats Directive • Planning Policy Statement 9
<p>Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) and Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) Ecological Emergency Vision and Action Plan (EEVAP)</p>	<p>The Vision sets out ambitions to address the ecological deterioration within the districts to lessen global impacts on the natural world". It is accompanied by a comprehensive action plan that provides the practical steps to deliver ecological recovery. It builds on previous work to address the Climate Emergency, but with a specific focus on wildlife and habitats.</p> <p>The Vision aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support our natural environment by: • Promote and implement sustainable land and woodland management, • Protect habitats and avoid land use change that degrades the landscape and its inhabitants, • Create connectivity and wildlife corridors to improve species resilience, • Improve soil, air and water quality, • Maintain genetic diversity, • Reduce invasive species, reducing pollution e.g. plastics, chemicals excess nutrients and hazardous waste, • Develop climate resilience in habitats. <p>The 'Four Pillars' to ecological recovery mentioned in the SWT and SDC Vision are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife • Assets and Open Spaces • Our Values • People and Nature

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Climate change	
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)	Sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change.
UN Paris Climate Change Agreement (2015)	The Paris Agreement builds upon the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Paris Agreement’s central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C.
IPCC Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997)	Commits member nations to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases or engage in emissions trading if they maintain or increase emissions of these gases.
European Sustainable Development Strategy (2006)	This Strategy identifies key priorities for an enlarged Europe. This includes health, social inclusion and fighting global poverty. It aims to achieve better policy integration in addressing these challenges, and to ensure that Europe looks beyond its boundaries in making informed decisions about sustainability. The Sustainable Development Strategy was reviewed in 2009 and “underlined that in recent years the EU has mainstreamed sustainable development into a broad range of its policies. In particular, the EU has taken the lead in the fight against climate change and the promotion of a low-carbon economy. At the same time, unsustainable trends persist in many areas and the efforts need to be intensified”. Sustainable development is a key focus of the EU and the strategy continues to be monitored and reviewed.
European Floods Directive (2007)	Requires Local Authorities to feed into the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment, as well as the Local Flood Risk Strategy (already completed) and ensure that objectives within Local Plans compliment the objectives of the Directive.
UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009)	The UK has committed to sourcing 15% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020 – an increase in the share of renewables from about 2.25% in 2008. The Renewable Energy Strategy sets out how the Government will achieve this target through utilising a variety of mechanisms to encourage Renewable Energy provision in the UK. This includes streamlining the planning system, increasing investment in technologies as well as improving funding for advice and awareness raising.
UK Renewable Energy Roadmap Update (2013)	This is the second Update to the 2011 Renewable Energy Roadmap. It sets out the progress that has been made and the changes that have occurred in the sector over the past year. It also describes the continuing high ambitions and actions along with the challenges going forward.
The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan (2009)	<p>The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan sets out how the UK will meet the Climate Change Act’s legally binding target of a 34% cut in emissions on 1990 levels by 2020. It also seeks to deliver emissions cuts of 18% on 2008 levels.</p> <p>The main aims of the Transition Plan include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing 30% of energy from renewables by 2020; • Improving the energy efficiency of existing housing; • Increasing the number of people in ‘green jobs’; and <p>Supporting the use and development of clean technologies.</p>

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Climate change	
<p>National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021)</p>	<p>The NPPF seeks to streamline the planning system and sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these should be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>The NPPF includes guidance on climate change, flooding, and coastal change. Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.</p> <p>To increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts); • consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and • identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co- locating potential heat customers and suppliers. • Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk, taking account of the impacts of climate change, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applying the sequential test and then, if necessary, applying the exception test; • safeguarding land from development that is required for current and future flood management; • using opportunities offered by new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding; and • where climate change is expected to increase flood risk so that some existing development may not be sustainable in the long-term, seeking opportunities to facilitate the relocation of development, including housing, to more sustainable locations.
<p>Department for Transport: An Evidence Base Review of Public Attitudes to Climate Change and Transport Behaviour (2006)</p>	<p>This is a summary report of the findings of an evidence base review investigating the research base on public attitudes towards climate change and transport behaviour.</p>
<p>Carbon Trust: The Climate Change Challenge: Scientific Evidence and Implications (2005)</p>	<p>This report summarises the nature of the climate change issue. It explains the fundamental science and the accumulating evidence that climate change is real and needs to be addressed. It also explains the future potential impacts, including the outstanding uncertainties.</p>
<p>Energy Saving Trust: Renewable Energy Sources for Homes in Urban Environments (2005)</p>	<p>This document provides information about the integration of renewable energy sources into new and existing dwellings in urban environments. It covers the basic principles, benefits, limitations, costs and suitability of various technologies.</p>

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Climate change	
HM Government: The Road to Zero (2018)	This report outlines how the Government will support the transition to zero-emission road transport. This includes measures to reduce emissions from vehicles including specific targets for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), promoting low- and zero- emission cars and developing high quality electric vehicle infrastructure networks.
Environment Agency, Adapting to Climate Change: A Checklist for Development (2005)	The document contains a checklist and guidance for new developments to adapt to climate change. The main actions are summarised in a checklist.
Environment Agency: Building a Better Environment: A Guide for Developers (2013)	Guidance on addressing key environmental issues through the development process (focusing mainly on the issues dealt with by the Environment Agency), including managing flood risk, surface water management, use of water resources and preventing pollution.
DECC Energy White Paper: Meeting the Energy Challenge (2007)	Sets out Government's long-term energy policy, including requirements for cleaner, smarter energy; improved energy efficiency; reduced carbon emissions; and reliable, competitive and affordable supplies. The White Paper sets out the UK's international and domestic energy strategy, in the shape of four policy goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aiming to cut CO₂ emissions by some 60% by about 2050, with real progress by 2020; • maintaining the reliability of energy supplies; • promoting competitive markets in the UK and beyond; and • ensuring every home is heated adequately and affordably.
Department of Energy and Climate Change: Microgeneration Strategy (2011)	The strategy aims to improve the effectiveness of the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS), enable policy makers and industry to understand the consumer protection structure and suitably sign post schemes in policy and create regulatory environment and assessment framework that enables accurate representation of contribution of microgeneration technologies to low carbon homes and buildings.
Taunton Deane Town Centre Area Action Plan 2008	<p>The Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) focuses on the delivery of major regeneration proposals for large parts of the town centre. The Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds on the work of the Taunton Vision and establishes how the regeneration of the town centre will be proactively delivered and co-ordinated by the public and private sectors in partnership; • delivers those parts of the Sustainable Community Strategy that relate to the use of land within the town centre; and • sets out the statutory policy framework against which planning applications will be assessed. <p>The Area Action Plan is part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) for Taunton Deane, which is a suite of documents setting down the spatial planning strategy for the Borough. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the LDF comprises the statutory development plan, which provides the framework for planning decisions. The LDF will gradually replace the Taunton Deane Local Plan, as its component documents are produced. The Action Plan seeks to ensure that appropriate mitigation of adverse impacts and optimisation of beneficial impacts arising from energy generating proposals is provided. The Plan aims to encourage the development of low and/or zero carbon economy proposals in the area and to encourage low energy solutions in new development. The Plan seeks to combat climate change through new development.</p>

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Climate change	
Somerset West and Taunton Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan (CNCR Action Plan, 2020)	The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan (the CNCR Action Plan) has been produced as this Council's own response to declaring a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and inclusion of addressing climate change as the Council's number one priority in the Corporate Strategy. The CNCR Action Plan identifies a total of 345 potential actions to progress over the next ten years based on current understandings, but focuses on a Y1 action plan with Y2+ routemaps, with an intention for the plan to remain iterative and to be reviewed on an annual basis, which will evolve as our understanding of what is necessary and possible improves. The CNCR Action Plan sits alongside the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy as the detail for how this Council proposes to address the specific issues, meet the goals and deliver on the outcomes that the Somerset-wide Strategy identifies.
Taunton Deane Borough Council Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2009	The purpose of the Strategy is to: Create and enhance green infrastructure across the Borough, particularly at Taunton and Wellington, and maximise its potential to meet a diversity of functions, including wildlife habitat, recreation, flood alleviation and visual amenity, and to identify opportunities for GI within and adjacent to potential development areas to inform the LDF, and to identify approaches to funding and implementation of the green infrastructure proposals.
Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2014	The Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) 2014 revises and updates the IDP, covering the period 2014 - 2028. It follows from further work on identifying strategic land allocations for housing within the Borough. The IDP gives details of the infrastructure that local service providers and the Council have identified as key to supporting future growth in the Borough and in meeting the objectives of the Core Strategy. The IDP also explains how this infrastructure will be delivered as well as the risks associated with infrastructure delivery and how these risks will be mitigated. The Core Strategy sets out eight key objectives under the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1- Climate Change • Objective 2 - Economy • Objective 3 - Town and other Centres • Objective 4 - Housing • Objective 5 - Inclusive Communities • Objective 6 - Accessibility • Objective 7 - Infrastructure • Objective 8 - Environment
Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028	The Core Strategy sets out the vision for Taunton Deane and the strategic objectives, spatial strategies and policies for meeting that vision. It specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough up to 2028 and identifies the strategic site allocations for developments over five hectares, including mixed-use urban extensions.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Historic environment	
Council of Europe: Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985)	Aims for signatories to protect their architectural heritage by means of identifying monuments, buildings and sites to be protected; preventing the disfigurement, dilapidation or demolition of protected properties; providing financial support by the public authorities for maintaining and restoring the architectural heritage on its territory; and supporting scientific research for identifying and analysing the harmful effects of pollution and for defining ways and means to reduce or eradicate these effects.
Council of Europe: The Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Revised) (Valetta Convention) (1992)	The convention defines archaeological heritage and identifies measures for its protection. Aims include integrated conservation of the archaeological heritage and financing of archaeological research and conservation.
DCMS Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)	An act to consolidate and amend the law retain to ancient monuments, to make provision of matters of archaeological or historic interest, and to provide grants by secretary of state to the Architectural Heritage fund.
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021)	<p>The NPPF seeks to streamline the planning system and sets out the Governments planning policies and how these should be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>The NPPF and related guidance given within the PPG includes direction on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It seeks to ensure local authorities plan recognise heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner that reflects their significance.</p> <p>Local planning authorities should take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; • the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; • the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and <p>opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.</p>
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)	An act to consolidate certain enactments relating to special controls in respect of buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest with amendments to give effect to recommendations to give effect to recommendations of the Law Commissions.
Circular on the Protection of World Heritage Sites, CLG 07/2009 2	<p>The purpose of this circular, which applies only to England, is to provide updated policy guidance on the level of protection and management required for World Heritage Sites.</p> <p>The circular explains the national context and the Government's objectives for the protection of World Heritage Sites, the principles which underpin those objectives, and the actions necessary to achieve them.</p>
Office of the Deputy Prime minister (ODPM) Secure and Sustainable Buildings Act (2004)	Amends the Building act, and others, with regard to sustainable construction practices and conservation of historic buildings. Also states the general nature of security provisions which should be in place at the construction stage and beyond.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Historic environment	
Heritage 2020: strategic priorities for England's historic environment 2015-2020	<p>Over the next five years the commitment to the Heritage 2020 framework will achieve a step change in the understanding, valuing, caring and enjoyment of the historic environment of England. The vision concentrates on five strategic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery, identification & understanding • Constructive conservation and sustainable management • Public engagement • Capacity building • Helping things to happen.
Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1, 2 and 3 (2015)	<p>These three notes provide information on good practice to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the related guidance given in the PPG.</p>
Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011 - 2028	<p>The Core Strategy sets out the vision for Taunton Deane and the strategic objectives, spatial strategies and policies for meeting that vision. It specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough up to 2028 and identifies the strategic site allocations for developments over five hectares, including mixed-use urban extensions.</p>

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Landscape	
Council of Europe: European Landscape Convention (2006)	<p>Aims to promote the protection, management and planning (including active design and creation of Europe's landscapes, both rural and urban, and to foster European co-operation on landscape issues.</p>
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021)	<p>The NPPF and related guidance given within the PPG states that development could seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness; both aesthetic considerations and connections between people and places should be considered. The NPPF also promotes the protection and enhancements of valued landscapes, giving greatest weight to National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p>
English Heritage and CABE: Guidance on Tall Buildings (2007)	<p>Provides advice and guidance on good practice in relation to tall buildings in the planning process and to highlight other related issues, which need to be considered, i.e. where tall buildings would and would not be appropriate.</p>
Taunton Deane Borough Area Action Plan, October 2008	<p>The Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) focuses on the delivery of major regeneration proposals for large parts of the town centre. The Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds on the work of the Taunton Vision and establishes how the regeneration of the town centre will be proactively delivered and co-ordinated by the public and private sectors in partnership;

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Landscape	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivers those parts of the Sustainable Community Strategy that relate to the use of land within the town centre; and sets out the statutory policy framework against which planning applications will be assessed. <p>The Area Action Plan is part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) for Taunton Deane, which is a suite of documents setting down the spatial planning strategy for the Borough. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the LDF comprises the statutory development plan, which provides the framework for planning decisions. The LDF will gradually replace the Taunton Deane Local Plan, as its component documents are produced.</p>
Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024	<p>This management plan of the Blackdown Hills AONB sets out a series of policies and actions that, through effective long-term planning and decision making, aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills Enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the special quality of the AONB <p>The management plans notes the special qualities of the AONB to be protected, including panoramic views which can be harmed by development, and has produced Position Statements on Development Affecting the Setting of the Blackdown Hills AONB and their cumulative impacts, to help protect the long-term interests of the landscape.</p>
Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024	<p>This management plan of the Quantock Hills AONB sets out a series of policies and actions that, through effective long-term planning and decision making, aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Quantock Hills Enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the special quality of the AONB <p>The management plans notes the special qualities of the AONB to be protected, including panoramic views which can be harmed by development, and has produced Position Statements on Development Affecting the Setting of the Quantocks AONB and their cumulative impacts, to help protect the long-term interests of the landscape.</p>
Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011 - 2028	<p>The Core Strategy sets out the vision for Taunton Deane and the strategic objectives, spatial strategies and policies for meeting that vision. It specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough up to 2028 and identifies the strategic site allocations for developments over five hectares, including mixed-use urban extensions.</p>
Taunton Deane Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment 2011	<p>Explains the modern concepts of landscape and landscape character. Summarises the 15 landscape character types present in Taunton Deane.</p>

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Population and Material Assets	
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021)	<p>The NPPF seeks to streamline the planning system and sets out the Governments planning policies and how these should be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>The NPPF includes guidance on promoting healthy communities.</p> <p>The NPPF requires planning authorities to aim to achieve places which promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, including through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages which bring together those who work, live and play in the vicinity; • Safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and • Safe and accessible developments, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high-quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas. <p>In order to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments; • Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs; • Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and <p>Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.</p>
Social Exclusion Unit: Preventing Social Exclusion (2001)	<p>The primary aims are to prevent social exclusion and reintegrate people who have become excluded. Improvement is required in the areas of truancy, rough sleeping, teenage pregnancy, youth at risk and deprived neighbourhoods.</p>
DCLG Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable (2007)	<p>The Housing Green Paper outlines plans for delivering homes; new ways of identifying and using land for development; more social housing- ensuring that a decent home at an affordable price is for the many; building homes more quickly; more affordable homes; and greener homes - with high environmental standards and flagship developments leading the way.</p>
ODPM & Home Office: Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention (2004)	<p>Practical guide to designs and layouts that may help with crime prevention and community safety, including well-defined routes, places structured so that different uses do not cause conflict, places designed to include natural surveillance and places designed with management and maintenance in mind.</p>
Cabinet Office: Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion (2006)	<p>Sets out an action plan to improve the life chances of those who suffer, or may suffer in the future, from disadvantage. Guiding principles for action include: better identification and earlier intervention; systematically identifying 'what works'; promoting multi-agency working; personalisation, rights and responsibilities; and supporting achievement and managing underperformance.</p>
EC Waste Framework Directive (1975, updated 2006)	<p>Objective is the protection of human health and the environment against harmful effects caused by the collection, transport, treatment, storage and tipping of waste. Particular focus is placed on the re-use of recovered materials as raw materials; restricting the production of waste; promoting clean technologies; and the drawing up of waste management plans.</p>

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Population and Material Assets	
EC Landfill Directive (1999)	Aims to prevent or reduce as far as possible negative effects on the environment, in particular the pollution of surface water, groundwater, soil and air, and on the global environment, including the greenhouse effect, as well as any resulting risk to human health, from the landfilling of waste, during the whole lifecycle of the landfill.
Cabinet Office: Waste Not, Want Not, A Strategy for tackling the waste problem (2002)	A study into how England's current waste management practices could be improved to reduce the current, and growing, waste problem.
DEFRA Waste Strategy for England (2007)	Aims are to reduce waste by making products with fewer natural resources; break the link between economic growth and waste growth; re-use products or recycle their materials; and recover energy from other wastes where possible. Notes that for a small amount of residual material, landfill will be necessary.
Department for Transport: Transport White Paper: The Future of Transport – A Network for 2030 (2004)	Sets out factors that will shape transport in the UK over the next thirty years. Also sets out how the Government will respond to the increasing demand for travel, while minimising the negative impact on people and the environment.
Department for Transport: Towards a Sustainable Transport System: Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World (2008)	<p>Outlines five national goals for transport, focusing on the challenge of delivering strong economic growth while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It outlines the key components of national infrastructure, discusses the difficulties of planning over the long term in the context of uncertain future demand and describes the substantial investments we are making to tackle congestion and crowding on transport networks. The National Goals for Transport are as follows:</p> <p>Goal 1: To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change.</p> <p>Goal 2: To support economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks.</p> <p>Goal 3: To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society.</p> <p>Goal 4: To contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health.</p> <p>Goal 5: To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.</p>
Department for Transport: The Future of Rail White Paper (2004)	Sets out a blueprint for a new streamlined structure for Britain's Railway. The proposals aim to provide a single point of accountability for the network's performance, allow closer working between track and train and provide for greater devolution of decision-making.
Department for Transport: An Evidence Base Review of Public Attitudes to Climate Change and Transport Behaviour (2006)	Summary report of the findings of an evidence base review investigating the research base on public attitudes towards climate change and transport behaviour.
Cycling and walking plan for England (2020)	The 'Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking' document sets out a vision for a travel revolution in England's streets, towns and communities. The plan sets out the multiple benefits of increased cycling and walking including health, congestion, the economy and air quality, and the vision that

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	<p>“cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030”. The plan sets out four main themes to achieve this vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1: Better streets for cycling and people; • Theme 2: Cycling at the heart of decision-making; • Theme 3: Empowering and encouraging Local Authorities; and <p>Theme 4: Enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do.</p>
DEFRA, Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) (2010)	<p>This document seeks to clarify the underlying principles and aims in existing policy documents, legislation and guidance that relate to noise. The key aims of this document are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life; • Mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life; and <p>Where possible, contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life.</p>
Strategy for Sustainable Construction (2008)	<p>“Themes for Action” include: re-use existing built assets; design for minimum waste; aim for lean construction; minimise energy in construction; minimise energy in building use; avoid polluting the environment; preserve and enhance biodiversity; conserve water resources; respect people and their local environment; and set targets (benchmarks & performance indicators).</p>
Planning for Town Centres: Practice guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach (2009)	<p>This practice guidance was intended to support the implementation of town centre policies set out in Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (PPS4) (now replaced by PPG). It is aimed at helping those involved in preparing or reviewing need, impact and sequential site assessments.</p>
Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington Future Transport Strategy 2011 - 2026 (2010)	<p>The objectives of the Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington future transport strategy are designed to reflect local issues that need addressing but also take into account national priorities. Recent Government guidance has given increased consideration to the implications of climate change and it will be a priority for us to pick this up in future transport plans. These wider priorities, set out as policies and strategies in their own right.</p> <p>The strategy’s key objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the economy • Strengthening communities • Protecting the environment • Making travel safer
Taunton Deane Town Centre Area Action Plan 2008	<p>The Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) focuses on the delivery of major regeneration proposals for large parts of the town centre. The Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds on the work of the Taunton Vision and establishes how the regeneration of the town centre will be proactively delivered and co-ordinated by the public and private sectors in partnership; • delivers those parts of the Sustainable Community Strategy that relate to the use of land within the town centre; and • sets out the statutory policy framework against which planning applications will be assessed.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Population and Material Assets	
	The Area Action Plan is part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) for Taunton Deane, which is a suite of documents setting down the spatial planning strategy for the Borough. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the LDF comprises the statutory development plan, which provides the framework for planning decisions. The LDF will gradually replace the Taunton Deane Local Plan, as its component documents are produced.
Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028	The Core Strategy sets out the vision for Taunton Deane and the strategic objectives, spatial strategies and policies for meeting that vision. It specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough up to 2028 and identifies the strategic site allocations for developments over five hectares, including mixed-use urban extensions.
Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2014	<p>The Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) 2014 revises and updates the IDP, covering the period 2014 – 2028. It follows from further work on identifying strategic land allocations for housing within the Borough. The IDP gives details of the infrastructure that local service providers and the Council have identified as key to supporting future growth in the Borough and in meeting the objectives of the Core Strategy. The IDP also explains how this infrastructure will be delivered as well as the risks associated with infrastructure delivery and how these risks will be mitigated. The Core Strategy sets out eight key objectives under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1- Climate Change • Objective 2 - Economy • Objective 3 - Town and other Centres • Objective 4 - Housing • Objective 5 - Inclusive Communities • Objective 6 - Accessibility • Objective 7 - Infrastructure • Objective 8 - Environment
Site allocations and development management plan 2028	The Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP) sets out more detailed site allocations to meet land requirements up to 2028. It also includes specific, detailed development management policies. It fits within the framework of the adopted Core Strategy.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Water	
Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC	This provides an overarching strategy, including a requirement for EU Member States to ensure that they achieve 'good ecological status' by 2015. River Basin Management Plans were defined as the key means of achieving this. They contain the main issues for the water environment and the actions we all need to take to deal with them.

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Water	
HM Government Strategy for Sustainable Construction (2008)	Encourages the construction industry to adopt a more sustainable approach towards development; identifies eleven themes for targeting Action, which includes conserving water resources.
DEFRA The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations (2003)	<p>Requires all inland and coastal waters to reach “good status” by 2015. It mandates that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development must not cause a deterioration in status of a waterbody; and • Development must not prevent future attainment of ‘good status’, hence it is not acceptable to allow an impact to occur just because other impacts are causing the status of a water body to already be less than good. <p>This is being done by establishing a river basin district structure within which demanding environmental objectives are being set, including ecological targets for surface waters.</p>
Environment Agency: Building a Better Environment: Our role in development and how we can help (2013)	Guidance on addressing key environmental issues through the development process (focusing mainly on the issues dealt with by the Environment Agency), including managing flood risk, surface water management, use of water resources, preventing pollution.
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)	<p>The document sets out Government action to help achieve natural world regain and retain good health.</p> <p>The main goals of the Plan are to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean air; • Clean and plentiful water; • Thriving plants and wildlife; • A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought; • Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently; and • Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment. <p>The Plan seeks to achieve clean and plentiful water by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the damaging abstraction of water from rivers and groundwater, ensuring that by 2021 the proportion of water bodies with enough water to support environmental standards increases from 82% to 90% for surface water bodies and from 72% to 77% for groundwater bodies; • Reaching or exceeding objectives for rivers, lakes, coastal and ground waters that are specially protected, whether for biodiversity or drinking water as per our River Basin Management Plans; • Supporting OFWAT’s ambitions on leakage, minimising the amount of water lost through leakage year on year, with water companies expected to reduce leakage by at least an average of 15% by 2025; and • Minimising by 2030 the harmful bacteria in our designated bathing waters and continuing to improve the cleanliness of our waters. We will make sure that potential bathers are warned of any short-term pollution risks. <p>The 2021 Environment Act (9th November, 2021) embeds several of these aspects into the new legislation.</p>
Environment Agency: Water for people and the environment: A Strategy for England and Wales (2009)	Looks at the steps needed, in the face of climate change, to manage water resources to the 2040s and beyond, with the overall aim of improving the environment while allowing enough water for human uses.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and environmental / socio-economic requirements of PPP
Water	
South West river basin district River basin management plan, 2015	The management plan lays out the objectives for the South West River basin, which include avoiding deterioration of surface and groundwater, achieving good status for all water bodies, reversing significant and sustained pollution and progressively reducing pollution of groundwater. The plan also sets out measures by which objectives can be achieved.
Taunton strategic flood alleviation improvements scheme, 2019	<p>Currently, there are approximately 1031 properties (residential, commercial and infrastructure buildings) at risk from river flooding in Taunton from the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood. The 1% AEP flood has a 1 in 100 chance of occurring once in any one year, taking into account the standard of protection offered by the existing flood defences.</p> <p>Somerset West & Taunton Council (SWT) and the Environment Agency (EA) work closely together to identify strategic flood risk reduction measures for the town centre. The existing flood defences, built during the late 1960s/early 1970s were modified in the early 1990s. However, they are now deteriorating with time, and will not provide longer term flood protection to the Town, especially when considering climate change predictions for increased rainfall and flood flows. Taunton is principally at risk of flooding from the River Tone and its tributaries.</p>
Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028	<p>The Core Strategy sets out the vision for Taunton Deane and the strategic objectives, spatial strategies and policies for meeting that vision. It specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough up to 2028 and identifies the strategic site allocations for developments over five hectares, including mixed-use urban extensions.</p> <p>The Council works closely with the Environment Agency who support the long-term objective of reducing flood risk and the impacts of climate change in the Taunton urban area. An initial inception study has been completed which identifies a preferred option of long term storage on the River Tone between Taunton and Wellington to reduce flood risks downstream. The Council will also consider the use of green spaces to contribute to flood alleviation (as recommended by the Green Infrastructure Strategy and paragraph 3.15 of the Core Strategy) as well as the modification of existing infrastructure (for example de-culverting of watercourses and improving existing flood risk infrastructure) to alleviate flooding.</p>
Taunton Deane Town Centre Area Action Plan 2008	<p>The Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) focuses on the delivery of major regeneration proposals for large parts of the town centre. The Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds on the work of the Taunton Vision and establishes how the regeneration of the town centre will be proactively delivered and co-ordinated by the public and private sectors in partnership; • delivers those parts of the Sustainable Community Strategy that relate to the use of land within the town centre; and • sets out the statutory policy framework against which planning applications will be assessed. <p>The Area Action Plan is part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) for Taunton Deane, which is a suite of documents setting down the spatial planning strategy for the Borough. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the LDF comprises the statutory development plan, which provides the framework for planning decisions. The LDF will gradually replace the Taunton Deane Local Plan, as its component documents are produced.</p>
South West Water Resources Management Plan, 2019	The Plan sets out how South West Water plan to manage supply and demand for the next 25 years. It examines strategic issues that affect available water and demand and details how maintaining the balance between water supply and demand to ensure customers receive a continued reliable supply will happen. The Plan covers both South West Water and Bournemouth Water following the merger in April 2016.
Wessex Water Final water resources management plan, 2019	The Plan sets out how Wessex Water maintains the balance between supply and demand for water. Their priorities for the future include keeping bills for customers at a minimum, reducing water usage, help safeguard the resilience of the ecosystems and delivering long term environmental benefits.

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Habitats Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys



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