



Moreton-in-Marsh
Neighbourhood Plan
SEA Screening Opinion

Cotswold District Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

March 2025

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Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, through the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (MiMNPSG). Moreton-in-Marsh is a thriving market town within Cotswold District in the north east of Gloucestershire. The Neighbourhood Plan will cover the full extent of the electoral boundary of the Town Council.

1.2 LUC has been appointed by Cotswold District Council to consider whether there is a need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan. SEA may be required for a Neighbourhood Plan if it is likely to have significant environmental effects. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is similar to SEA but includes assessment of the likely significant effects of a plan or programme on economic and social factors, as well as environmental factors. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) [\[See reference 1\]](#) clarifies that there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be subject to SA, but that SA can be used to demonstrate how the plan will contribute to sustainable development.

1.3 Cotswold District Council has commissioned LUC to carry out SEA Screening of the Draft Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan (January 2025) in order to determine whether an assessment is required under European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), transposed into UK law through the SEA Regulations [\[See reference 2\]](#).

Chapter 2

SEA Screening

Scope of the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Cotswold District Council, as the local Planning Authority (LPA), designated the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Area in September 2018 to enable Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The community, through the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (MiMNPSG), has been involved in producing the Draft Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council.

2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan covers the entire Parish of Moreton-in-Marsh. The Draft Neighbourhood Plan contains a vision for the future of Moreton-in-Marsh along with 14 objectives to realise this vision, presented under five themes:

■ Housing Objectives

1. New developments to be energy efficient and climate adaptive.
2. New developments to provide a range of housing to meet the needs of local people.
3. New developments on brownfield sites to take priority over greenfield sites.
4. To ensure new homes are of high-quality design and built to Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards.

■ Economy & Business

5. New developments to facilitate and support the growth of the business base within Moreton-in-Marsh, creating more jobs across a diverse range of sectors.
6. Support development of small business units/shared space.

■ Town Centre

7. New developments to support and sustain a vibrant attractive and successful town centre that meets the needs of the local community and visitors.
8. Improve the public realm and traffic management within and through the town to provide easier, safer and more pleasant access for residents and visitors, using developer contributions.

■ Environment

9. Protect and maintain open green spaces.
10. Protect and maintain archaeological and built heritage assets deemed to be of value to the community.
11. Preserve and increase opportunities for biodiversity net gain.
12. Preserve important views within the parish.
13. Protect the sensitive natural environment and exceptional rural assets surrounding Moreton-in-Marsh.

■ Transport & Active Travel

14. Create a more connected parish for residents and visitors alike, limiting the need for vehicular travel within the town and offering a genuine choice of transport options to help reduce congestion and emissions, to improve air quality and public health.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out 21 planning policies to realise the Vision for Moreton-in-Marsh. These policies address five topic areas: Housing, Economy and Business, Town Centre, The Environment, and Transport and Active Travel.

2.4 No sites have been allocated for development within the Neighbourhood Plan; rather the policies in the Housing section of the Neighbourhood Plan set out criteria that will apply to housing allocated through the Cotswold District Local Plan. Policy Three sets out criteria for housing proposals within the Parish in relation to housing mix, while Policy Four sets out criteria relating to affordable housing provision. Policy Five sets out criteria for housing proposals to demonstrate high-quality design, while Policy Six sets out that new residential developments must provide adequate off-street parking for residents and visitors.

2.5 Other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan address a range of topics including employment land, retail provision, local green spaces and biodiversity. Together these policies seek to ensure that new development in Moreton-in-Marsh is high quality and sensitively designed so as not to have adverse impacts on the surroundings and that it contributes positively to the town.

Baseline Information

2.6 This section summarises baseline information for the town of Moreton-in-Marsh, drawing from publicly available data and the information set out in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Context

2.7 Moreton-in-Marsh is a parish located within Cotswold District. The town is the major centre in the north Cotswolds.

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

2.8 There are no Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Ramsar sites within Moreton-in-Marsh, the nearest being Dixton Wood (SAC) 22.2km west of Moreton-in-Marsh.

2.9 There are a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) around Moreton-in-Marsh, although none are within the area covered by the Neighbourhood Development Plan:

- Wolford Wood and Old Covert (SSSI) is approximately 0.6km to the east;
- Bourton Down (SSSI) is 4.8km to the west;
- New Park Quarry (SSSI) is 4.8km south-west;
- Wellarce Quarry (SSSI) is 5.4km to the north;
- Cross Hands Quarry SSSI is 5.5km to the south east;
- Stretton-on-Fosse Pit (SSSI) is 5.9km to the north;
- Whichford Wood SSSI is 7.2km to the east;
- Hornsleasow Quarry (SSSI) is 7.4km to the west;
- Hornsleasow Roughs (SSSI) is 8.8km west of Moreton-in-Marsh;
- Midsummer Meadow (SSSI) is 9.3km north-east;
- Campden Tunnel Gravel Pit (SSSI) is 9.5km north-west;
- Broadway Hill (SSSI) is 9.8km north-west;
- Salmonsbury Meadows (SSSi) is 10.1km south-west;

- Huntsman's Quarry (SSSI) is 10.1km south-west
- Bould Wood SSSI is 11.0km to the south;
- Sharp's Hill Quarry SSSI is 11.3km to the north east;
- Sarsgrove Wood SSSI is 11.3km to the south east;
- Lark Wood is 11.3km south-west;
- Harford Railway Cutting (SSSI) and Brassey Reserve and Windrush Valley (SSSI) are 11.5km south-west;
- Glyme Valley SSSI is 12.1km to the south east; and
- Jackdaw Quarry is 12.8km west.

2.10 All are in favourable condition.

2.11 Within Cotswold District as a whole, there are over 260 locally designated Key Wildlife Sites. There are also a number of protected species within the Cotswold District, including bat species, great crested newts, water voles, otters, nesting birds, and badgers, and a number priority habitats, including:

- ancient or species-rich hedgerows;
- floodplain grazing marsh;
- fen, marsh, swamp and reedbeds;
- lowland beech and yew woodland;
- lowland calcareous grassland (e.g. species-rich chalk and limestone grasslands);
- lowland meadows (e.g. species-rich flower meadows);
- lowland mixed deciduous woodland (ancient woodland);
- lowland wood-pasture and parkland;
- rivers and streams;
- standing open water and canals (e.g. lakes and flooded gravel pits); and

- wet woodland.

Population

2.12 In 2021, Moreton-in-Marsh had a population of 5,015 people. This is an increase from the 2011 Census when 3,493 people were living in the Parish. The largest age group is 30 to 34 years, making up 7.2% of the population. Other significant age groups include 55 to 59 years at 7.1%, 50 to 54 years at 6.7%, and 60 to 64 years at 6.3%. The youngest age group, 0 to 4 years, constitutes 5.4% of the population, while the oldest age group, 85 and over, makes up 4.1%.

2.13 In 2021 there were 2,400 households 34% of which were one-person households and 62.5% of which were single-family households (other household types made up 3.5%).

2.14 The 2021 Census showed that there were 58.9% of residents were economically active and in employment, 2.4% were economically active and unemployed, and 38.6% were economically inactive.

2.15 The 2021 Census also shows that 52.9% of households in Moreton-in-Marsh are not deprived in any dimension while 47.1% of households are deprived in one to four dimensions.

Human Health

2.16 The majority of Moreton-in-Marsh's residents are in good (35%) or very good health (47.7%) with a small proportion (3.3%) in bad to very bad health (0.8%). Information from the 2021 Census indicates that the proportion of the Moreton-in-Marsh's population that is in very good health is slightly lower than the Cotswold (50.4%) average.

Soil

2.17 Around Moreton-in-Marsh, most of the land is classed as Grade 1 and Grade 3 agricultural land, with small areas of Grade 2 agricultural land and non-agricultural land. It is not known whether the Grade 3 land comprises Grade 3a, which is classed as high quality, or the lower quality Grade 3b

Water

2.18 While the majority of the plan area is at very low risk of fluvial and surface water flooding, there are areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3 associated with the River Evenlode which runs through Moreton-in-Marsh. The areas of Flood Zone 3 cover mainly the floodplains of the River Evenlode which includes the centre of Moreton-in-Marsh town. In the face of climate change, the risk of further surface water drainage problems is likely to increase.

Air and Climatic Factors

2.19 Air Quality in the Cotswold Area is generally very good. There is one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within Cotswold District at Birdlip, approximately 32km from Moreton-in-Marsh. There are no AQMAs within Moreton-in-Marsh. Air quality monitoring, using a network of diffusion tubes to measure nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels, is undertaken throughout the District. The District's air quality monitoring shows that NO₂ levels during 2023 were below the National Air Quality Objective in all locations.

2.20 Climate data are not available at ward level, but within Cotswold District as a whole, reductions in overall carbon emissions of 35.5% were achieved between 2005 and 2022. This reduction is mostly due to progress in reducing emissions from domestic, followed by commercial with minimal progress on public sector and transport. Transport makes the largest contribution to carbon emissions in Cotswold District.

Material Assets

2.21 Moreton-in-Marsh is a thriving market town of 1.5 km². The parish boasts a wide high street lined with elegant 17th and 18th-century buildings made of Cotswold stone, including notable landmarks such as the White Hart Royal and Curfew Tower. The town centre is a hub for community events and a key attraction for tourists. The rural setting offers scenic woods and agricultural fields with numerous public footpaths.

2.22 Employment is supported by High Street businesses, two business parks, the Fire Service College, and medical facilities at North Cotswold Hospital. Education is provided by St David's C of E Primary School. The town has facilities for various sports clubs and social activities, with additional leisure options at the Fire Service College.

2.23 Transport links include a mainline railway station with connections to major cities, bus services to local towns, and extensive footpath and cycle networks. Tourism is vital, with attractions like Batsford Arboretum and the Cotswold Falconry, and accommodation ranging from cottages to luxury hotels.

Landscape

2.24 Much of west Moreton-in-Marsh falls within the Cotswold National Landscape (formally referred to as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB).

2.25 Moreton-in-Marsh falls within National Character Area 107: Cotswolds. The Cotswolds landscape consists of steep slopes crowned by high, open uncultivated land with increasingly wooded valleys.

Cultural Heritage

2.26 Within Moreton-in-Marsh there are approximately 86 listed buildings, two of which are Grade II* listed while the remainder are Grade II. There are also two Scheduled Monuments.

2.27 There is one Conservation Area within Moreton-in-Marsh: Moreton-in-Marsh Conservation Area, which covers a significant portion of the town centre.

SEA Screening

2.28 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Draft Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan (January 2025) requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

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

Figure 2.1: Application of the SEA Directive to Plans and Programmes

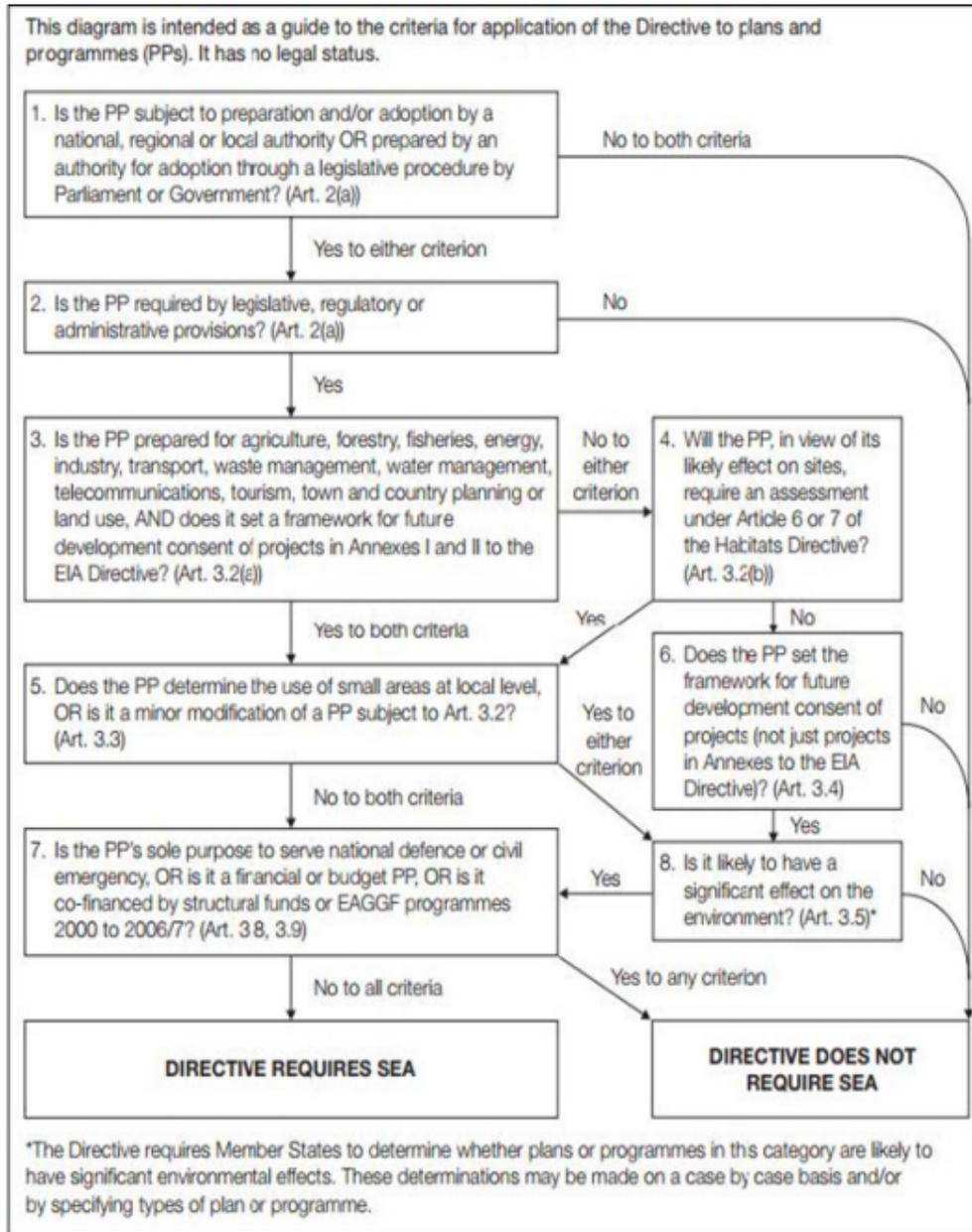


Table 2.1: Application of SEA Directive to the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and will be adopted ('made') by the Local Authority (Cotswold District Council) as part of the statutory development plan. Move to Q2
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	No	The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. However, there is no requirement to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan; it is an optional plan. Once made it will become part of the statutory development plan. Therefore, it should continue to be screened. Move to Q3.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes and No	The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country planning and land use, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive. Move to Q4
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an	No	HRA screening of the Neighbourhood Plan has

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))		identified that there are no likely significant effects on Habitats Sites and an Appropriate Assessment is not required. No: Move to Q6.
6.Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Yes and No	The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development; however, it includes policies against which proposals for development within the Parish will be assessed. Move to Q8.
8.Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	See Table 2.2. SEA IS NOT REQUIRED

Table 2.2: Likely Significant Effects

SEA Requirement	Comments
The characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:	
1. The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	Once made, the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development in Moreton-in-Marsh Parish, including in terms of design. The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for residential or other forms of development. The Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted in August 2018) allocates new development sites in Moreton-in-Marsh through Policy S18. These include three housing development sites, two established

SEA Requirement	Comments
	<p>employment sites, and one allocated employment development site.</p> <p>The adopted Local Plan is set to deliver 9,671 dwellings over the Local Plan period. In addition, it is expected that a further 233 homes will be released to the market resulting from the net increase in bedrooms in communal accommodation developments over the plan period. In total, the updated housing need aims to deliver 9,904 dwellings. The delivery of 9,904 dwellings will be delivered over the Local Plan period and will provide more homes than the housing need. Therefore, the housing land supply is capable of fully delivering the updated housing need.</p> <p>The emerging Cotswold District Local Plan Partial Update Regulation 18 'Local Plan update and Masterplan' was consulted on between the 1st of February and 7th April 2024.</p>
<p>2. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</p>	<p>The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the local strategic framework (the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (2018) and the emerging Cotswold District Local Plan Partial Update). The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan must also have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan does not have influence over other plans. Once made, the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for Moreton-in-Marsh and will be used in conjunction with the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 or the emerging Cotswold District Local Plan Partial Update</p>

SEA Requirement	Comments
	(once adopted) to determine planning applications.
3. The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Development Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.
4. Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	Baseline information relating to the plan area was described earlier in this chapter. Key issues of relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan are the presence of the Cotswold National Landscape, local biodiversity assets and the variety of designated heritage assets.
5. 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).	N/A
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
6. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or other forms of development. The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Development Plan covers the period up to 2031. Effects of the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Development Plan are expected to be indirect (due to not allocating sites) but long-term and permanent.
7. The cumulative nature of the effects.	Cumulative effects could result from the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan in combination with development that takes place in the surrounding towns and villages, although the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan does not

SEA Requirement	Comments
	allocate sites for housing or other forms of development. As the emerging Cotswold District Local Plan Partial Update is still in its development, it is not yet possible to assess with certainty the amount and location of development that may result from the Plan within and close to Moreton-in-Marsh. The Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted August 2018) allocates a number of new development sites in Moreton-in-Marsh, as detailed above.
8. The transboundary nature of the effects.	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Moreton-in-Marsh Parish only. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers transboundary effects on other EU Member States; therefore they are not relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.
9. The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	There are no anticipated risks to human health or the environment from the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan.
10. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan covers all of Moreton-in-Marsh. The population of the town was estimated to be around 5,015 people as of 2021.
11. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ■ Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; and ■ Intensive land-use. 	Moreton-in-Marsh is bordered by, and includes parts of, the Cotswold National Landscape. There are a number of SSSIs around the plan area and numerous designated heritage features within the plan area.
12. The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Moreton-in-Marsh is adjacent to and includes parts of the Cotswold National Landscape.

SEA Screening Conclusion

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

2.31 The Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision and detailed planning policies to shape development in the Parish up to 2031 and decision makers will need to consider the criteria of these policies when determining future applications in the Parish. It does not directly impact on land use through the allocation of sites for housing or other forms of development.

2.32 On this basis, it is considered that the Moreton-in-Marsh Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and that full SEA is therefore not required.

Next Steps

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

LUC

March 2025

References

- 1 Planning practice guidance (PPG). Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2018 to 2021) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- 2 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633) as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232) and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1531). It should be noted that the purpose of the amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the European Union. No substantive changes are made to the way the SEA regime operates.

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