

Leek Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion

Locality and Leek Town Council

May 2024

Quality information

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1. Purpose of this SEA Screening Opinion

Introduction

- 1.1 This SEA Screening Opinion has been prepared by AECOM in relation to the Leek Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as the 'LNP').
- 1.2 The purpose of the Screening Opinion is to set out an opinion in relation to whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process is required to accompany the development of the LNP. The Screening Opinion has been provided to the statutory consultation bodies for SEA (Historic England, the Environment Agency, and Natural England) for their opinion.
- 1.3 The area covered by LNP is illustrated in **Figure 1.1** and key information relating to the LNP is presented in **Table 1.1** below.

Table 1.1 Key information relating to the LNP

Name of qualifying body	Leek Town Council
Title of the Plan	Leek Neighbourhood Plan
Area covered by the Plan	The neighbourhood area covers the market town of Leek and its rural environs. The boundary of the neighbourhood area is shown in Figure 1.1 below.
Timescale	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period up to 2035.
Vision of the Neighbourhood Plan	<i>"Leek a Place to Enjoy - Work and Thrive."</i>
Neighbourhood Plan contact	Denise Wheat, Leek Town Council Clerk Email: clerk@leektowncouncil.gov.uk

Background to SEA screening

- 1.4 SEA is a systematic process undertaken to evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of plans and programmes. The requirement for SEA in England was introduced in 2004 through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('The SEA Regulations'), which transposed the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).
- 1.5 One of the 'Basic Conditions' that a Neighbourhood Plan is tested against is whether the making of the Plan is compatible with European Union obligations, including obligations under the SEA Directive.¹ Neighbourhood Plans only require SEA where they are likely to lead to significant environmental effects. To decide whether a proposed Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it should be screened against the criteria set out in Annex 2 of the SEA Directive.

¹ The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020. Under the UK-EU withdrawal agreement, a transition period ended on 31st December 2020, during which time all EU law continued to apply to the UK. During the transition period the UK needed to continue following domestic law that implements EU law, or directly applicable EU law that is given effect through the EUWA 2018. Beyond the transition period, the SEA Regulations, which previously implemented the requirements of the SEA Directive in England, will continue to apply as before unless and until new legislation is introduced.

- 1.6 Where it is determined that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require SEA), a statement of reasons for this determination should be prepared and published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies for SEA (Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England). Where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, an SEA process must be carried out.
- 1.7 This Screening Opinion therefore provides a view as to whether the LNP is likely to lead to significant environment effects, and therefore, whether it requires an SEA process.

Content and structure of this report

- 1.8 This Screening Opinion report presents the following:
- Details and context of the LNP, including its scope and likely content, its relationship with the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (SMLP), and key environmental constraints within and near the neighbourhood area (**Chapter 2**).
 - A discussion of the potential significant environmental effects of the LNP and their significance (**Chapter 3**);
 - A summary of the screening opinion (**Chapter 4**); and
 - Consultation responses (**Appendix A**).

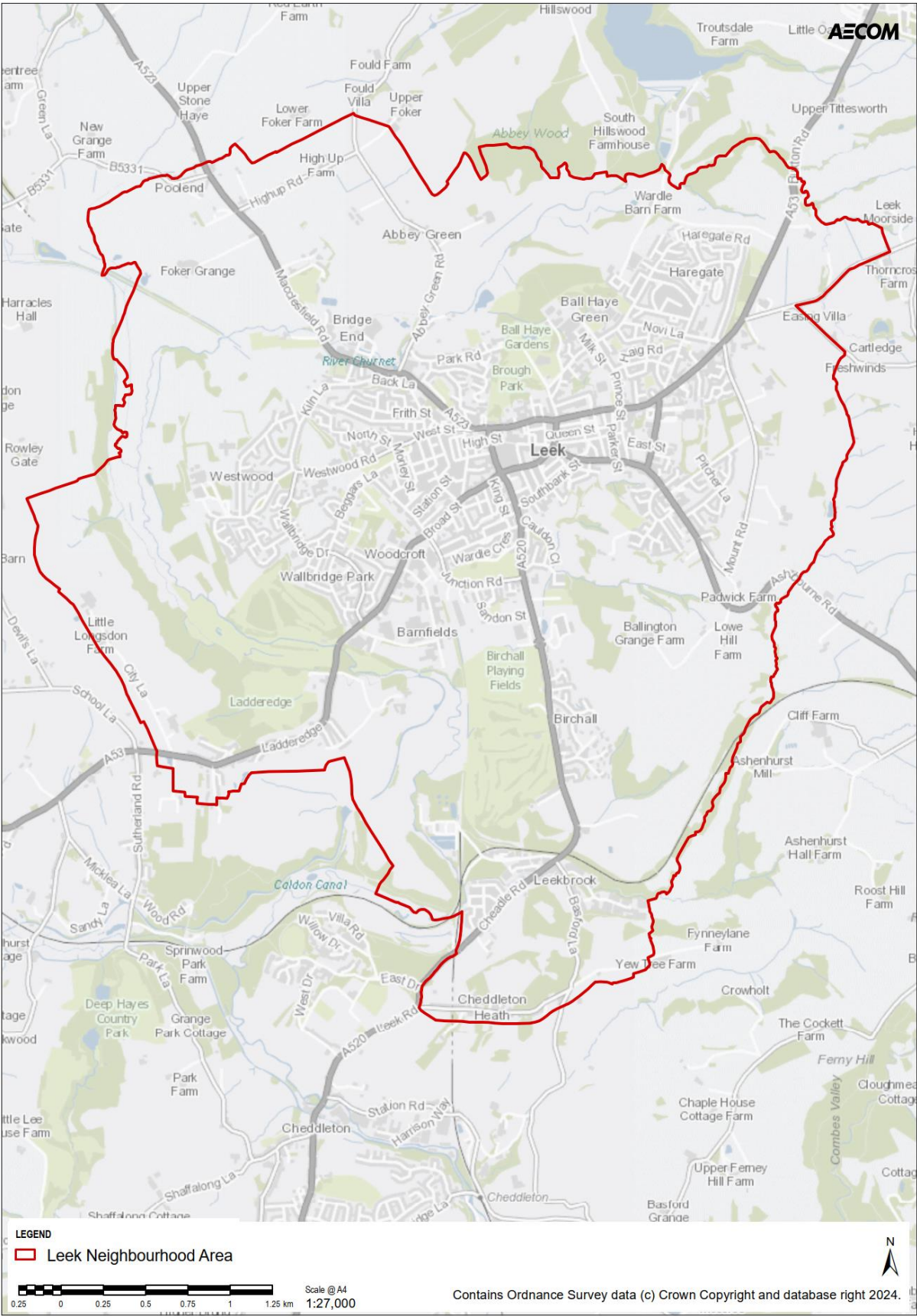


Figure 1.1 Leek Neighbourhood Area

2. Context for the Neighbourhood Plan and area

Local Plan context for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The LNP is being prepared in the context of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (SMLP).² The SMLP identifies Leek as a market town and sets out an objective to ensure its long-term vitality and viability.
- 2.2 Policy SS2 of the SMLP (Settlement Hierarchy) recognises Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle as the largest settlements in the District with the majority of services and facilities, and states that the 'spatial strategy seeks to focus future growth in these settlements and to strengthen their role as service centres'. Policy SS3 (Future Provision and Distribution of Development) distributes 30% of housing and 30% of employment growth of the District to Leek. Policy SS4 (Strategic Housing and Employment Land Supply) sets out a requirement of 945 homes and 7.12 hectares of employment land in Leek between 2014 and 2033. For the purposes of neighbourhood planning, the policy further sets out a minimum housing requirement of 890 homes between 2014 and 2033 for Leek parish. This need is met in the SMLP through allocations for 614 homes and estimated windfall of 275 homes in Leek.
- 2.3 Policy SS5 (Leek Area Strategy) seeks to 'consolidate the role of Leek as the principal service centre and a market town' by: meeting its housing and community needs; supporting employment growth and diversification; improving the town centre and its service and retail provision; promoting its special character and heritage; and creating major mixed use development opportunities and related infrastructure improvements.
- 2.4 Policy E2 (Employment Allocations) allocates two employment sites in the neighbourhood area including 'Land at Newton House' for 1.5 hectares and 'Cornhill East' for 0.83 hectares. Policy H2 (Housing Allocations) allocates six sites for housing or mix-use development including 'Land east of Horsecroft Farm' for 15 homes, 'Land at the Mount' for 345 homes, 'Land adjacent to Newton House' for 179 homes, 'Land at Cornhill' for 50 homes, 'Land west of Ashbourne Road', and 'Land north of Macclesfield Road' for 25 homes.

Key components of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.5 The vision of the LNP is presented in **Table 1.1** above. The LNP also outlines eight key objectives which guide the writing of the policies, which are:
 1. Responding to climate change and the need to promote biodiversity;
 2. Town centre recovery and diversification, building on the strengths identified by the community and responding to COVID19;
 3. Creating more sustainable live/work patterns and travel;
 4. Creating local economic opportunities;
 5. The need for housing to meet local need, including affordable housing;
 6. Reuse vacant buildings, including historic mills;

² Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (2020): 'Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

7. Realising the potential of the visitor economy; and
 8. Encouraging younger people to live in the area.
- 2.6 In terms of key land use policies which should be considered for their potential for significant environmental effects, the LNP is not seeking to allocate land for housing or employment uses. The LNP identifies sites and buildings which present opportunities for redevelopment and refurbishment. This includes draft Policy TCE2 which sets out a framework for the redevelopment of the Smithfield Centre and Pickwood Road Shopping Centre. This also includes draft Policy TCE3 which identifies historic mill buildings for refurbishment and reuse. In this respect, the LNP is unlikely to lead to any significant changes in land use in the neighbourhood area.
- 2.7 The LNP instead is seeking to shape development which may come forward during the plan period by supporting development which meets a series of criteria. This is likely to include relating to housing (type, tenure, and affordability), and in terms of design (supported by design codes), town centre regeneration, green infrastructure enhancements, community value, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental protection.
- 2.8 As the LNP will be strongly design led, policy provisions will likely focus on informing and influencing the design of new development areas which have the potential to come forward in the neighbourhood area, including any Local Plan allocations.

Environmental constraints present in and around the neighbourhood area

- 2.9 A key determinant of whether effects are likely to be significant is the sensitivity of the asset affected. In this context, the more environmentally sensitive a location, the more likely it is that potential environmental effects from a plan will be significant.
- 2.10 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)³ provides guidance on this topic through providing a list of sites and areas which should be deemed as 'sensitive areas' for the purposes of environmental assessment.⁴ These comprise:
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
 - Natura 2000 sites;
 - National Parks;
 - National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty);
 - World Heritage Sites; and
 - Scheduled Monuments.

³ DLUHC & MHCLG (2021): 'The National Planning Policy Framework and relevant planning practice guidance', [online] accessible [here](#)

⁴ i.e., those sites and areas that should be considered 'sensitive' for the purposes of screening projects for Environmental Impact Assessment (accessible [here](#))

2.11 In the context of the PPG, there are five sensitive areas consisting of Scheduled Monuments within the neighbourhood area, including:

- Dieu-la-Cres Abbey Scheduled Monument, located in the northern part of the neighbourhood area and is part of a Cistercian Monastery known as Dieulacres Abbey within the grounds of Abbey Farm.
- Brindley's Mill Scheduled Monument, located in the north west of Leek and consists of a historic water mill.
- Market Cross Scheduled Monument is a post-medieval standing cross in Leek town centre, with an ornamental socket-stone and a complete cross-head.
- Anglo-Scandinavian cross Scheduled Monuments consists of two early medieval cross, with one situated within the churchyard and 2m south of St Edward's Church, and a second cross located 11m east of St Edward's Church.

2.12 The locations of the Scheduled Monuments are illustrated in **Figure 2.1**.

2.13 Other sensitive areas in proximity to the neighbourhood area include:

- The Combes Valley SSSI is located approximately 1.4km south-east of the settlement edge of Leekbrook. The SSSI consists of nine units, with eight units 'favourable' and one unit 'unfavourable'.
- The Thorncliffe Moor SSSI is located approximately 2.2km north-east of the settlement edge of Leek. The SSSI includes a mixture of 'favourable' and 'unfavourable' areas.
- The South Pennine Moors SAC is located approximately 3.5km north-east at the closest point of the settlement edge of Leek. The SAC covers a large area mostly in the Peak District National Park. The SAC is characterised by areas of inland water bodies (1%), bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (42.7%), heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue and phygrana (45.5%), dry grassland and steppes (4.8%), humid grassland and mesophile grassland (4.8%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (1%), mixed woodland (0.1%) and non-forest areas cultivated with woody plants (0.1%).⁵ Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of the site are European dry heaths, blanket bogs, and Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site are Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* and transition mires and quaking bogs.
- The Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA is also located approximately 3.5km north-east at the closest point of the settlement edge of Leek.

⁵ JNCC (no date): 'South Pennine Moors', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

- The Peak District Dales SAC is located approximately 9.4km to the east at the closest point to the settlement edge of Leek. The SAC consists of valleys (the 'dales'), which contain a wide range of wildlife habitats, particularly woodland, scrub and grassland. The SAC is characterised by areas of inland water bodies (0.3%), bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (0.1%), heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue and phygrana (4%), dry grassland and steppes (43.7%), humid grassland and mesophile grassland (13%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (37.1%), and inland rocks, screes, sands, permanent snow and ice (1.8%).⁶ Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of the site are semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) and *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site are White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish.

2.14 The locations of these sensitive areas are illustrated in **Figure 2.3**.

2.15 In light of internationally designated sites located within 10km of the neighbourhood area, the draft plan has been subjected to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening,⁷ concluding: *"The Leek Neighbourhood Plan (LNP) area is located within 10km of the following Internationally designated sites: South Pennine Moors SAC; Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA; Peak District Dales SAC. Based on an analysis of the threats and pressures that are faced by these sites, as specified in their respective site improvement plans, the following potential impacts pathways were considered with respects to the LNP: Recreational Pressure; Air Pollution; Water quantity, level and flow; Water quality. The Leek Neighbourhood Plan (LNP) has a total of 11 policies. No Leek Neighbourhood Plan policies allocate any form of development. The Neighbourhood Plan purely provides development management policies. As such, no of the Leek Neighbourhood Plan policies were found to have the potential to cause a likely significant effect in isolation or in combination."*

2.16 In terms of other key environmental assets within the neighbourhood area (i.e., those which are not defined as 'sensitive areas' by the PPG), these include:

- One Grade I listed building (Parish Church of All Saints), five Grade II* and 146 Grade II listed buildings. Leek parish also includes the Leek Conservation Area covering most of the town centre and partially includes Caldon Canal Conservation Area.
- Areas of priority habitat contributing to local ecological networks, these include: coastal and floodplain grazing marsh; deciduous woodland; good quality semi-improved grassland; lowland heathland; lowland meadows; traditional orchards; and areas of no main habitat but additional habitats present.
- Areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland throughout.
- Brough Park Fields Local Nature Reserve (LNR) to the north and Ladderedge Country Park LNR to the south-west of Leek.

⁶ JNCC (no date): 'Peak District Dales', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

⁷ Prepared separately by AECOM. AECOM (2024) 'Leek Neighbourhood Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Test of Likely Significant Effects'.

- Several trees (or groups of trees) of amenity value which have tree preservation order (TPO) designations.

2.17 The locations of these key environmental assets are illustrated in **Figures 2.2 and 2.4**.

2.18 There is a linear area of fluvial flood risk which follows the course of the River Churnet, which flows from the south, along the west and north of Leek. Surface water flood risk is also largely linked to the River Churnet as well as other water features such as streams.

2.19 Several roads in Leek town centre fall within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The extent of the SMDC AQMA No.1 Leek is illustrated in **Figure 2.5**. According to the 2022 Air Quality Annual Status Report for Staffordshire Moorland District Council (SMDC)⁸, the only pollutant monitored for the SMDC AQMA No.1 Leek is nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). This pollutant is linked to the road network and vehicle usage. Monitoring results show that over the past five years there has been a general trend of reduction in emissions, but four sites in the AQMA exceeded the annual mean objective of 40 µg/m³.

⁸ SMDC (2022): 'Staffordshire Moorland District Council Annual Status Report 2022', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

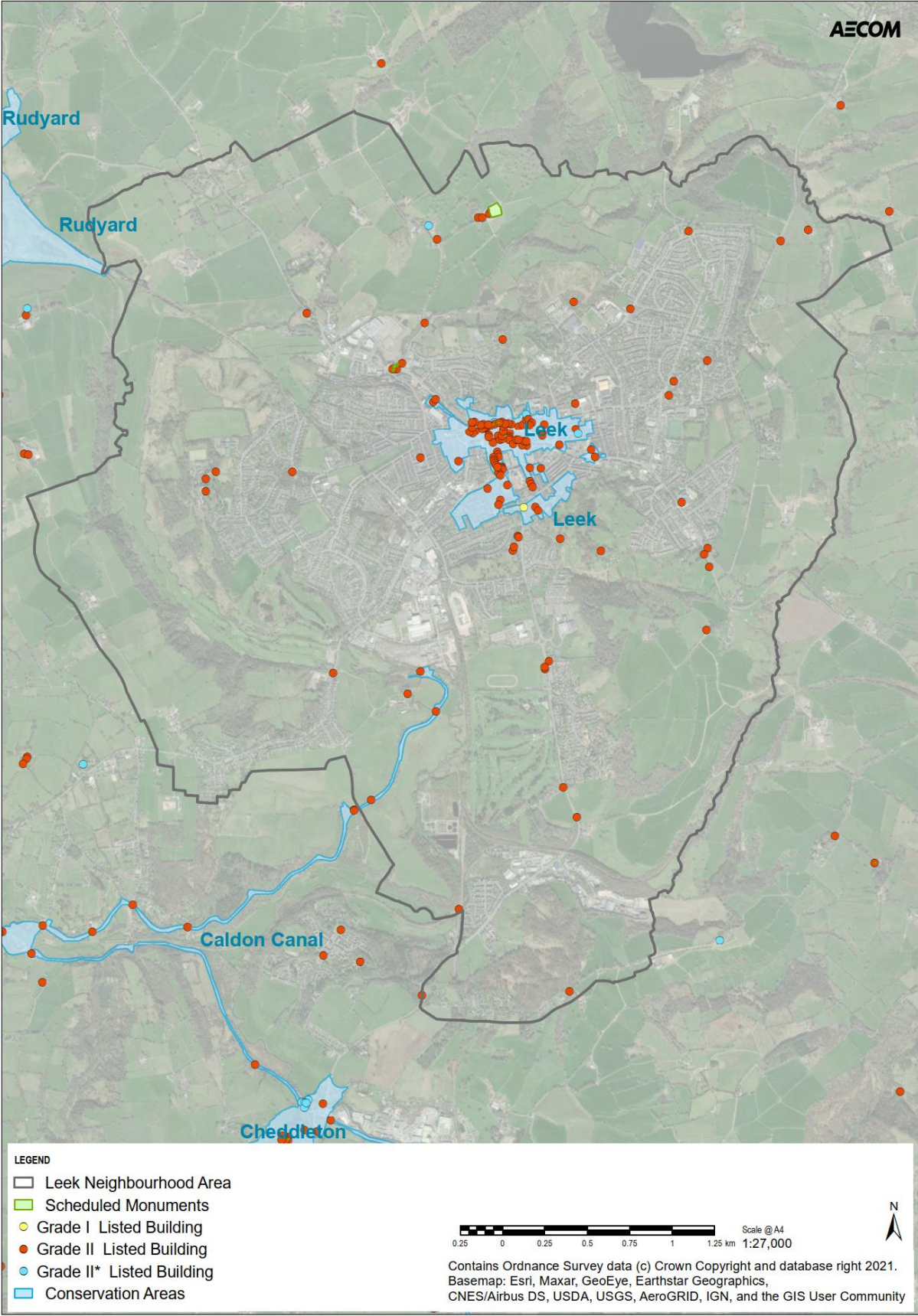


Figure 2.1 Designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area

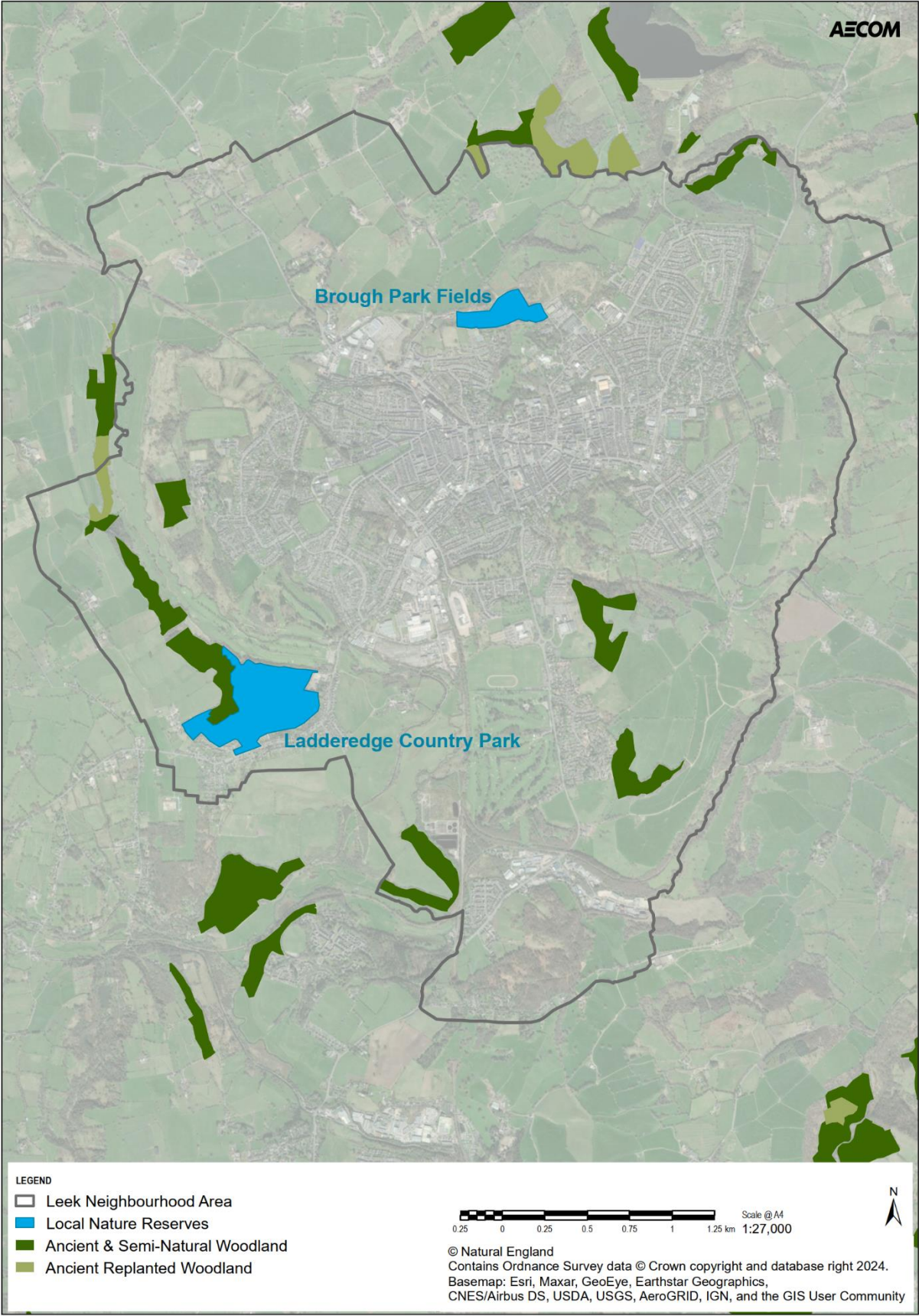


Figure 2.2 Biodiversity designations in the neighbourhood area

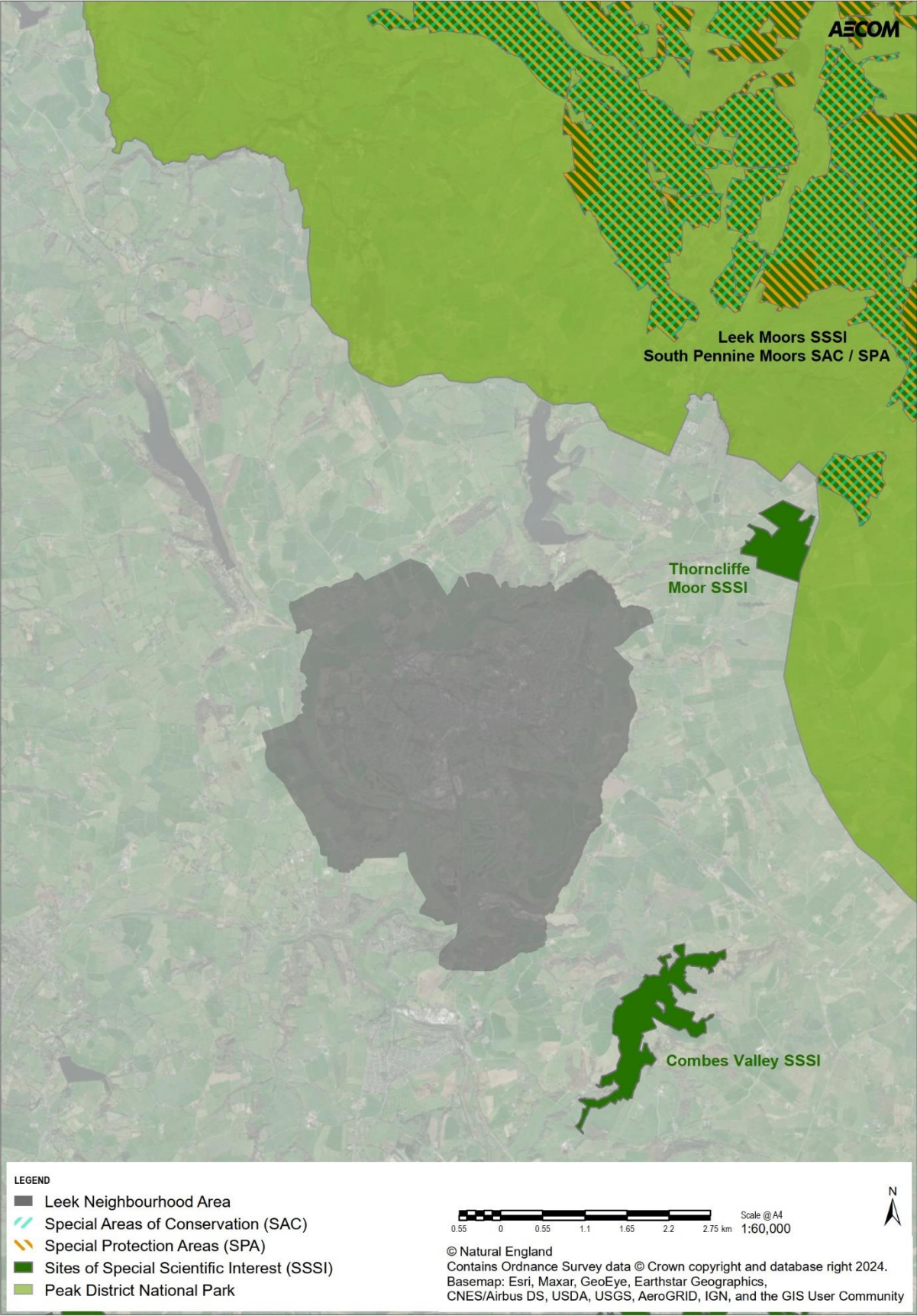


Figure 2.3 National biodiversity designations in the wider area

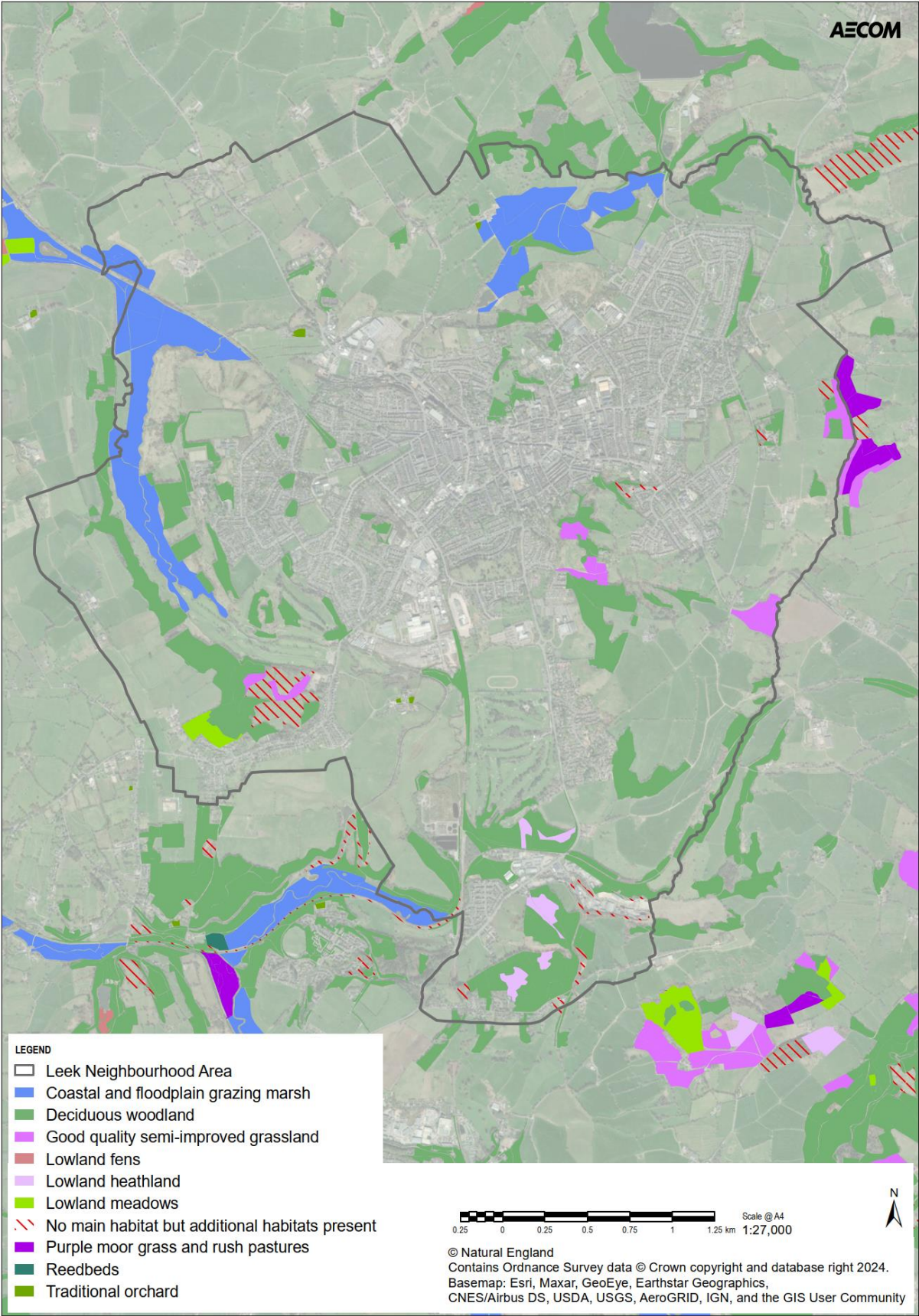


Figure 2.4 Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat in the neighbourhood area

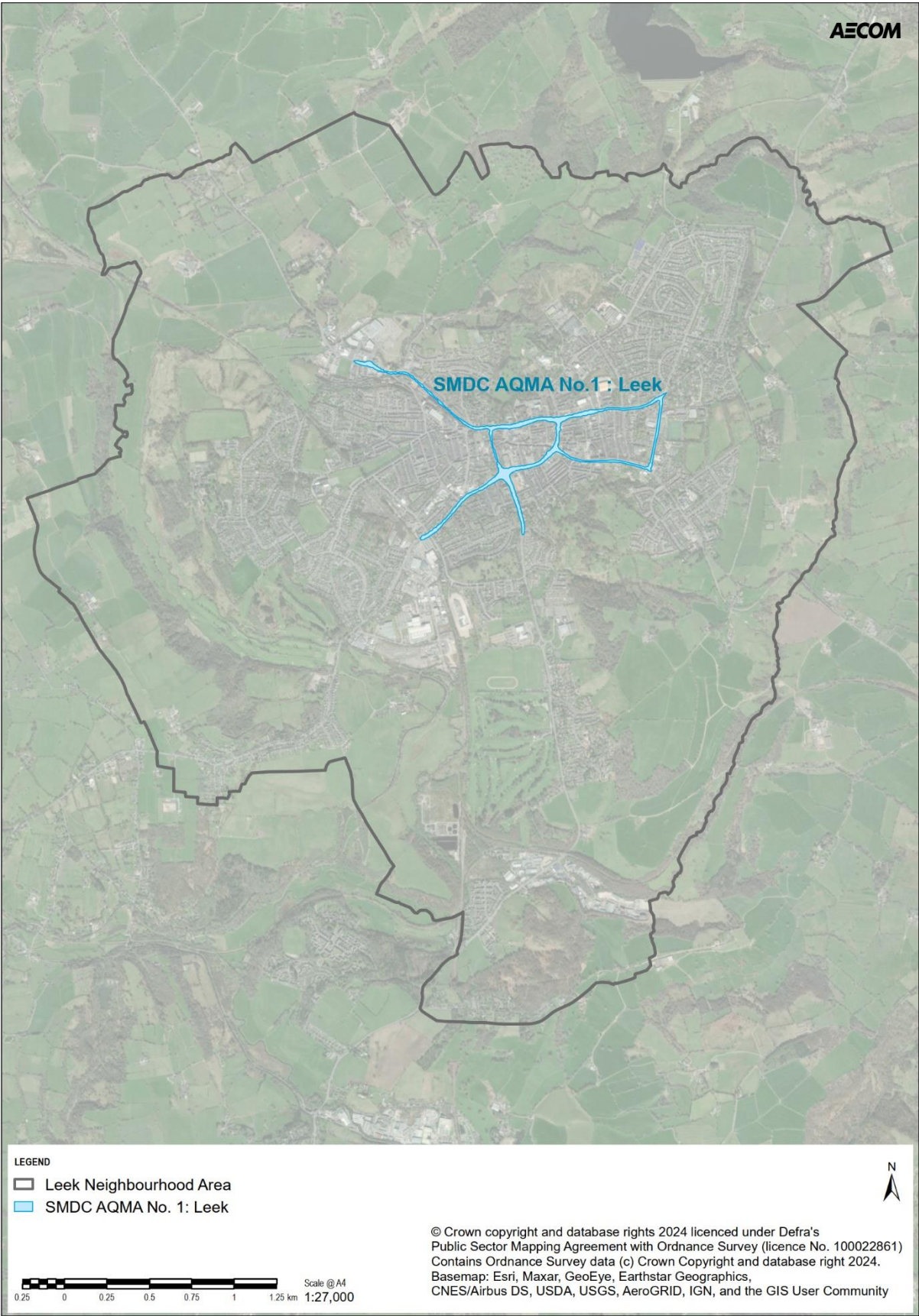


Figure 2.5 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) within the neighbourhood area

3. Screening assessment

3.1 **Table 3.1** discusses the significance of the potential environmental effects of the LNP, and their likely significance.

Table 3.1 Potential environmental effects of the LNP and their significance

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
Biodiversity	The neighbourhood area does not include any internationally or nationally designated sites. Locally important sites within the neighbourhood area include priority habitats, including: coastal and floodplain grazing marsh; deciduous woodland; good quality semi-improved grassland; lowland heathland; lowland meadows; traditional orchards; and areas of no main habitat but additional habitats present. The neighbourhood area also includes the Brough Park Fields LNR to the north and Ladderedge Country Park LNR to the south-west of Leek. Internationally and nationally designated sites within an area of influence to the neighbourhood area include the South Pennine Moors SAC, Peak District Dales SAC, Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA, Combes Valley SSSI and Thorncliffe Moor SSSI. The South Pennine Moors SAC is characterised by areas of inland water bodies (1%), bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (42.7%), heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue and phygrana (45.5%), dry grassland and steppes (4.8%), humid grassland and mesophile grassland (4.8%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (1%), mixed woodland (0.1%) and non-forest areas cultivated with woody plants (0.1%).⁹ Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of the site are European dry heaths, blanket bogs, and Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles. Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site are Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix and transition mires and quaking bogs. The Peak District Dales SAC is characterised by areas of inland water bodies (0.3%), bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (0.1%), heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue and phygrana (4%), dry grassland and steppes (43.7%), humid grassland and mesophile grassland (13%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (37.1%), and inland rocks, screes, sands, permanent snow and ice (1.8%).¹⁰ Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of the site are semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) and Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines. Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site are White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish. Whilst these designations comprise significant sensitivities, as the spatial strategy within the LNP encourages the redevelopment of brownfield sites within the urban area and the reuse of buildings, the potential for significant environmental effects on designated sites and biodiversity as a whole are limited.	No

⁹ JNCC (no date): 'South Pennine Moors', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁰ JNCC (no date): 'Peak District Dales', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	In light of the above and given the absence of any specific site allocations within the LNP, it is considered that effects on biodiversity as a result of the implementation of the LNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u> .	
Population and human health	With respect to housing requirements, Policy SS4 of the SMLP sets out a housing requirement of 890 homes between 2014 and 2033 for Leek parish. This need is met in the SMLP through allocations and estimated windfall. Therefore, there is no known unmet housing need for Leek and the LNP does not allocate sites for housing or employment uses. A key focus of the LNP is to improve the quality of life of residents, including improving the town centre, natural environment enhancements, improvements to green space, supporting the provision of affordable housing and community infrastructure. Whilst the LNP has potential to deliver wide-ranging benefits for the local population, these are <u>not deemed to be significant</u> with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.	No
Soil	A small area of land within Leek parish has been surveyed in detail and found to comprise best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land to the east and north-west of Leek.¹¹ The national 'provisional' dataset¹² serves to suggest that there could be BMV land to the north-west and south-east of Leek parish, but most of the neighbourhood area is urban or comprises Grade 4 agricultural land. Nevertheless, there is <u>no potential for significant effects</u> on soil resources as the LNP does not intend to allocate land and supports the redevelopment of brownfield land.	No
Water	Development influenced by the LNP policies may lead to very limited changes in water demand in the neighbourhood area. However, in the context of water management within Staffordshire, and wider population pressures, the effect on water resources is <u>deemed to be insignificant</u>. As the LNP is not seeking to allocate sites, impacts on water quality in the neighbourhood area is also <u>unlikely to be significant</u>. However, as the LNP supports the redevelopment of brownfield land, there is some minor potential for improvements to water quality through improved run-off management .	No
Air	Several roads in Leek town centre fall within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) due to the exceedance of national air quality objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) related to the road network and vehicle usage. The most recent Air Quality Annual Status Report (2022) for SMDC ¹³ sets out that over the past five years there has been a general trend of reduction in NO ₂ emissions in the Leek AQMA.	No

¹¹ Natural England (2023): 'Agricultural Land Classification Grades - Post 1988 Survey', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹² Natural England (2023): 'Provisional Agricultural Land Classification', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹³ SMDC (2022): 'Staffordshire Moorland District Council Annual Status Report 2022', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	A key objective of the LNP is to address transport and encourage active travel, which should help counteract potential negative effects on air quality that may arise from new development. National and local policies further seek to encourage a transition away from petrol and diesel vehicles to zero-emission vehicles, which should improve baseline air quality conditions in the absence of a neighbourhood plan. In light of the above and given the absence of any specific site allocations within the LNP, the plan is unlikely to significantly increase traffic and congestion in the neighbourhood area (i.e., in locations with sensitivities for air quality, including the Leek AQMA). The LNP is likely to encourage the redevelopment of brownfield sites and re-use of vacant buildings, but this is likely to be small-scale and to be supported with a policy framework to encourage active and sustainable travel, and sustainable design measures. Therefore, it is considered that effects on air quality as a result of the implementation of the LNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.	
Climatic factors	In terms of climate change mitigation, the LNP is not proposing to allocate land for development, but the Plan does seek to encourage redevelopment on brownfield sites. This has the potential to lead to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as a result of an increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area. However, by directing development to brownfield sites within the built-up area, emissions as a result of the disturbance and release of carbon stores in soil, and emissions from transport (particularly from petrol and diesel private cars), are likely to be limited. The policy framework of LNP further seeks to limit such potential effects by supporting sustainable modes of transport and active travel. Fluvial flood risk in Leek is largely linked to the River Churnet, which flows from the south, along the west and north of Leek. Surface water flood risk is also largely linked to the River Churnet as well as other water features such as streams. Whilst it is considered that statutory requirements (including the requirements of the NPPF) will help ensure that flood risk is addressed through new development proposals, the LNP is also likely to facilitate green infrastructure enhancements within the neighbourhood area. This will indirectly support and protect the natural functioning of the River Churnet and improve levels of natural discharge of surface water. When combined with the lack of allocations to be proposed through the LNP, significant impacts on flood risk are not anticipated. Effects in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation are therefore <u>unlikely to be significant</u> with regard to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.	No
Material assets	Whilst the LNP supports opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield sites and the reuse of vacant buildings in Leek, it is considered unlikely to lead to significant increases in the neighbourhood area's waste management requirements. Effects are likely to be further limited by statutory requirements regarding waste management, including through the provisions of the Waste Management Plan for England 2021.¹⁴	No

¹⁴ GOV.UK (2021): 'Waste Management Plan for England 2021', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	The neighbourhood area includes mineral safeguarding areas for all minerals except coal and fireclays. The LNP does not seek to allocate sites for development and redevelopment is encouraged on sites within the built-up area. Therefore, no mineral sites are likely to be affected as a result of the LNP. It is considered that effects on material assets as a result of the implementation of the LNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.	
Cultural heritage	The neighbourhood area includes nationally designated features including listed buildings and scheduled monuments. This includes the Grade I listed building (Parish Church of All Saints), five Grade II* and 146 Grade II listed buildings. Leek parish also includes the Leek Conservation Area covering most of the town centre and partially includes Caldon Canal Conservation Area. These designations are afforded protection through national and local planning policy. The LNP does not seek to allocate sites for housing or employment land. However, a key focus of the LNP is to support the redevelopment of brownfield sites and reuse of vacant buildings including historic mills. This is likely to mostly occur in the town centre, which includes sensitive heritage features and assets including a conservation area, listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Alongside policies within the SMLP, the LNP is likely to include a range of provisions which will conserve and enhance the fabric and setting of the historic environment, including designated and undesignated assets and areas within the neighbourhood area. This is further supported by the design principles and criteria to be included within the policy framework of the LNP, which will likely have a close focus on protecting and enhancing historic townscape character and the setting of the historic environment, and on implementing high quality design within the neighbourhood area. As such, any effects are <u>unlikely to be significant</u> in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.	No
Landscape	There are no nationally designated landscapes in or within the immediate vicinity of the neighbourhood area (such as National Landscapes or National Parks). Whilst the land to the west of Leek is designated as Green Belt, this is unlikely to be impacted by the Plan. Crucially, the LNP is not seeking to allocate sites for housing or employment land. As such, any effects are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.	No

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
Transport and movement	The LNP does not allocate sites and thus is unlikely to cause a significant increase in the demand for travel and movement. However, the LNP does seek to support opportunities for the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites within the built-up area and the reuse of vacant buildings. Whilst this may result in a minor increase in travel demand, such sites are likely to be in accessible locations, with good existing public transport links and opportunities for active travel to access local services and facilities and employment opportunities. A key objective of the LNP is to address local transport issues and encourage active travel. This is likely to include policy to encourage walking and cycling. Overall, it is considered that effects on transport and movement as a result of the implementation of the LNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.	No

4. Summary of screening opinion

- 4.1 This screening opinion has considered whether the LNP is likely to lead to significant environmental effects in the context of the SEA Regulations.
- 4.2 The screening has considered potential environmental effects that may arise as a result of the LNP. Whilst some limited environmental effects have the potential to take place as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that these are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.
- 4.3 Key factors in concluding that effects will not be significant are as follows:
- The absence of specific site allocations or growth strategy policies within the LNP.
 - Though there are some sensitive receptors, there is a suitable protective framework for environmental assets within the SMLP and national policy.
- 4.4 A further consideration is that HRA screening (see para. 2.15) has found that appropriate assessment is not required, hence the need for SEA is not triggered on HRA / appropriate assessment related grounds.
- 4.5 For these reasons, it is considered that the LNP is not subject to the requirements of the SEA Regulations. As a result, **a full SEA process meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations is not deemed necessary to accompany the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 4.6 The three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) were consulted on the screening opinion between 30th April and 24th May 2024. All three consultation bodies concluded that, in their opinion, SEA is not required for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The consultation responses are contained in **Appendix A**.

Appendix A - Consultation Responses

Historic England



Historic England

Mr Ishaq Khan
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8 May 2024

Dear Mr Khan

LEEK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN- SEA SCREENING

Thank you for your consultation and the invitation to comment on the SEA Screening Document for the above Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, "Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. On the basis of the information supplied and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of the 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

I trust the above comments will be of help in taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours sincerely,

P. Boland.

Historic Places Advisor



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888
HistoricEngland.org.uk



Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.

Environment Agency

AECOM Limited
100 Embankment
Cathedral Approach
Manchester
M3 7FB

Our ref: SV/2024/112434/SE-01/SC1-L01

Your ref:

Date: 14 May 2024

F.A.O: Ishaq Khan

Dear Ishaq

LEEK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - SEA SCREENING

Strategic Environmental Assessment: The European Union directive 200142/EC requires a SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans and programmes that would have 'significant' environmental effect(s).

Paragraph: 046 in the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Guidance (Reference ID: 11-046-20150209) states "a strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development,
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan.
- the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan or other strategic policies for the area".

Having reviewed the Screening Report submitted, and in consideration of the matters within our remit, we concur with the conclusion that, given the lack of specific site allocations within the document, the Leek Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental impacts and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not therefore required.

To assist in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans we have created Environment Agency guidance (attached), specific to Staffordshire Moorlands in this instance, which should assist moving forward with the Plan.

I trust the above is of assistance at this time. Please can you also copy in any future correspondence to my team email address at westmidsplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk

Environment Agency
Hafren House, Welshpool Road, Shelton, Shropshire, Shrewsbury, SY3 8BB.
Customer services line: 03708 506 506
www.gov.uk/environment-agency
Cont/d..

Yours faithfully

Mr. Graeme Irwin
Planning Specialist

Direct e-mail [REDACTED]

End

2

Date: 22 May 2024
 Our ref: 474710
 Your ref: Leek Neighbourhood Plan

Mr Ishaq Khan
 AECOM

BY EMAIL ONLY



Hornbeam House
 Crewe Business Park
 Electra Way
 Crewe
 Cheshire
 CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Mr Khan

Leek Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 30 April 2024.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely.

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection area (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

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

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

