

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Semington Neighbourhood Plan

SEA Scoping Report

Semington Parish Council

November 2023

Quality information

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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Semington Neighbourhood Plan (NP).
- 1.2 The Semington NP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of Wiltshire Council.
- 1.3 The neighbourhood area (see **Figure 1.1** overleaf) covers the parish of Semington, located in the western part of Wiltshire. Semington is a civil parish and large village. The village is located approximately 3.2km to the south of Melksham and 4.8km north-east of Trowbridge. The neighbourhood area is characterised by the three distinct settlements - Semington, Little Marsh and Littleton - set within an extensive open rural landscape south of the Kennet and Avon Canal.

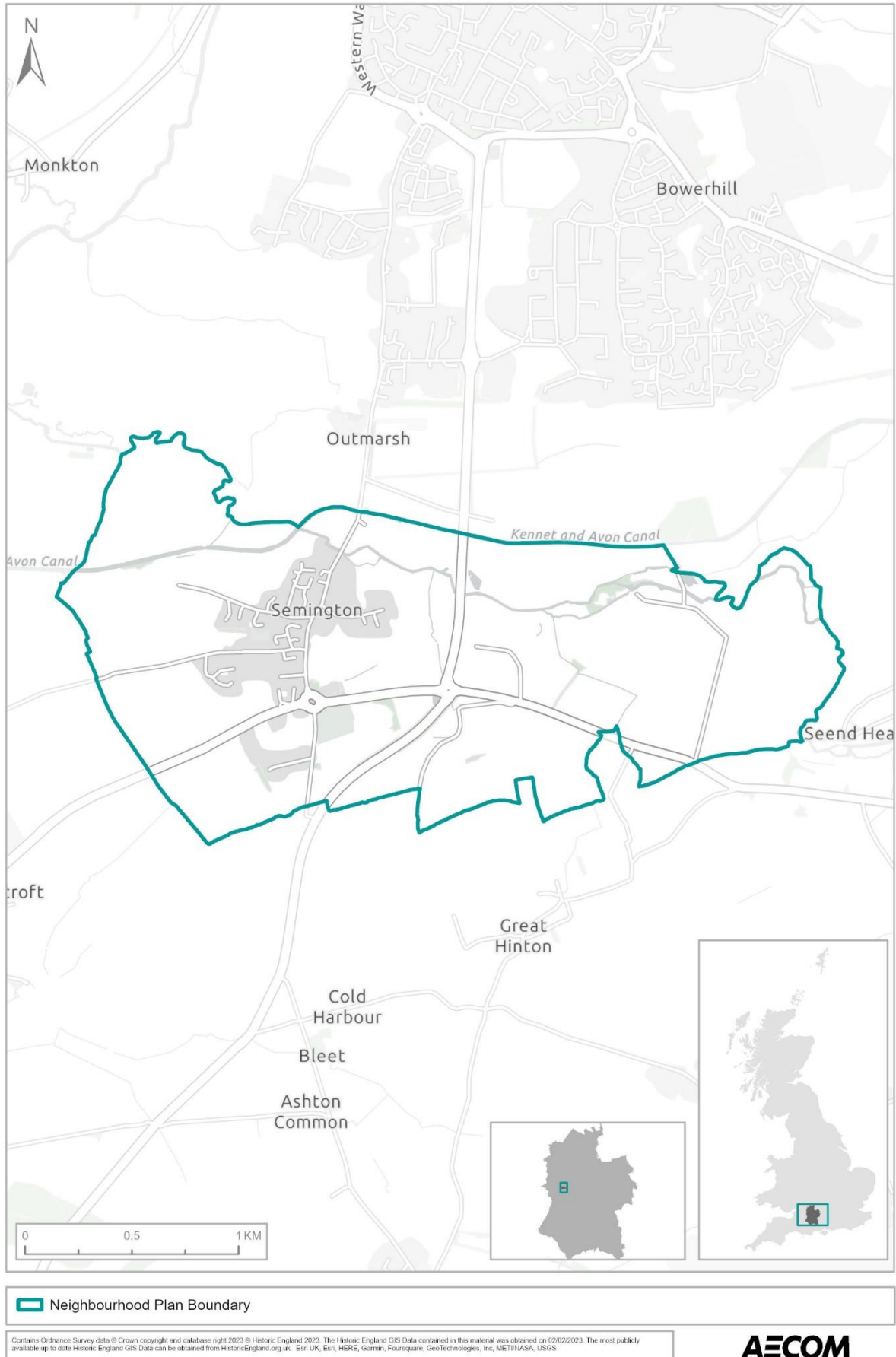


Figure 1.1 The neighbourhood area

SEA explained

- 1.4 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, SEA seeks to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.5 SEA is undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).
- 1.6 The Semington NP has been screened in as requiring SEA. This is predominantly because of the scope of the plan, which proposes to allocate land for additional homes with the potential to lead to a range of environmental effects. SEA is therefore required to assess the potential for significant environmental effects.
- 1.7 The next stage of SEA (this report) seeks to establish a suggested scope for the assessment. A key procedural requirement of the SEA Regulations is to present this scope for the SEA, so that the designated authorities (Historic England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency) can provide timely comment.

SEA scoping explained

- 1.8 The scope is explored and presented under a series of key environmental themes as follows:
 - Air quality
 - Biodiversity and geodiversity
 - Climate change and flood risk
 - Community wellbeing
 - Historic environment
 - Land, soil, and water resources
 - Landscape
 - Transportation and movement
- 1.9 The selected environmental themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive¹. These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects.
- 1.10 Developing the draft scope for the SEA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:
 1. Exploring the policy context for the neighbourhood plan and SEA to summarise the key messages arising. Overarching plans and the strategic policy context are presented in the first chapter (as part of the context for the plan), whilst localised plans and strategies are explored under each environmental theme.

¹ The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on 'the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'.

2. Establishing the baseline for the SEA (i.e., the current and future situation in the area) to help identify key sensitive receptors. Following a series of maps, key statistics, and cited evidence sources, a narrative summarises the baseline for each environmental theme.
 3. Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA. Key issues are explored for each environmental theme; and
 4. Considering this information, developing a SEA framework comprising SEA objectives and assessment questions, which can then be used as a guiding framework for the subsequent assessment. Objectives are explored for each environmental theme scoped in as part of the assessment, and then brought together as a whole (the SEA framework) in the final chapter.
 5. The future baseline (in the absence of the plan) is then explored before the next steps in the SEA process are addressed.
- 1.11 Options and proposals within the emerging neighbourhood plan will be assessed consistently using this framework.

2. Context

2.1 This section presents the strategic planning policy context provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the local development framework of Wiltshire Council. It also identifies plans and strategies of distinct relevance to the interests of statutory consultees, and other broad national strategies of relevance.

Strategic policy context

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2023
Planning practice guidance	2021
Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015
Wiltshire Local Plan Review	Emerging

2.2 The NPPF provides an overarching framework for development in England. It sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is supported by planning practice guidance, which is a suite of policy papers covering a broad range of topics, including SEA. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the NPPF.

2.3 The Wiltshire Core Strategy forms part of the local development framework for Wiltshire. Core Policy 15 (Spatial Strategy: Melksham Community Area) defines Semington as a 'Large Village' within the Melksham Community Area. Over the plan period, approximately 2,370 new homes will be provided, of which approximately 2,240 should occur at Melksham. The remaining 130 homes will be provided in the rest of the Community Area.

2.4 Wiltshire Council are currently undertaking a Local Plan Review. Following a series of consultations, informing a review of the Local Plan, a draft version is now moving to a final public pre-submission consultation (Regulation 19) this autumn. This is running from 27th September to the 22nd of November. The new Local Plan is due to be adopted in late 2024. It is not clear at this stage whether any homes will be allocated in Semington.

Historic England

Document title	Year of publication
<u>Historic England Advice Note 11 (Second Edition): Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment</u>	2022
<u>Historic England: Heritage and Climate Change</u>	2022
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>National Model Design Code</u>	2021
<u>The National Design Guide</u>	2019
<u>Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal Designation and Management</u>	2019
<u>A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</u>	2018
<u>Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: The Setting of Heritage Assets</u>	2017
<u>Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)</u>	2016

2.5 Historic England champions England's heritage. The key high-level principles for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are as follows:

- The historic environment is a shared resource.
- Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.
- Understanding the significance of places is vital.
- Significant places should be managed to sustain their values.
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent; and
- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.²

The significance of places is the key element which underpins the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Significance is a collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, be it a building, an archaeological site, or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape.

² Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance

Natural England and the Environment Agency

Document title	Year of publication
<u>UK Climate Change Risk Assessment</u>	2022
<u>Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener</u>	2021
<u>Environment Act</u>	2021
<u>National Model Design Code</u>	2021
<u>Changes to the Habitats Regulations 2017</u>	2021
<u>The National Design Guide</u>	2019
<u>A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</u>	2018
<u>Space for people: Targeting action for woodland access</u>	2017
<u>Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance</u>	2009
<u>The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations</u>	2017
<u>Flood and Water Management Act 2010</u>	2010
<u>Climate Change Act 2008</u>	2008

- 2.6 The interests of Natural England and the Environment Agency span a range of SEA themes, including landscape, biodiversity, land, soil, and water resources (including waste), community wellbeing, and climate change and flood risk. Key documents which link to these interests are outlined above.

Other national strategies

Document title	Year of publication
<u>UK Climate Change Risk Assessment</u>	2022
<u>Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain</u>	2021
<u>National Infrastructure Assessment</u>	2021
<u>Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener</u>	2021
<u>Waste Management Plan for England</u>	2021
<u>Blueprint for a resilient economy</u>	2020
<u>National Infrastructure Strategy</u>	2020
<u>Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On</u>	2020
<u>The UK Sixth Carbon Budget</u>	2020
<u>The Clean Air Strategy</u>	2019
<u>Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy</u>	2019
<u>Planning Practice Guidance</u>	2019
<u>Healthy High Streets</u>	2018
<u>The National Adaptation Programme and the Third Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting</u>	2018
<u>The Clean Growth Strategy</u>	2017
<u>UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations</u>	2017

3. Air quality

3.1 This section seeks to summarise any air pollution issues, in particular; exceedances in air pollution objectives / declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and air quality issues associated with the main road network.

Maps

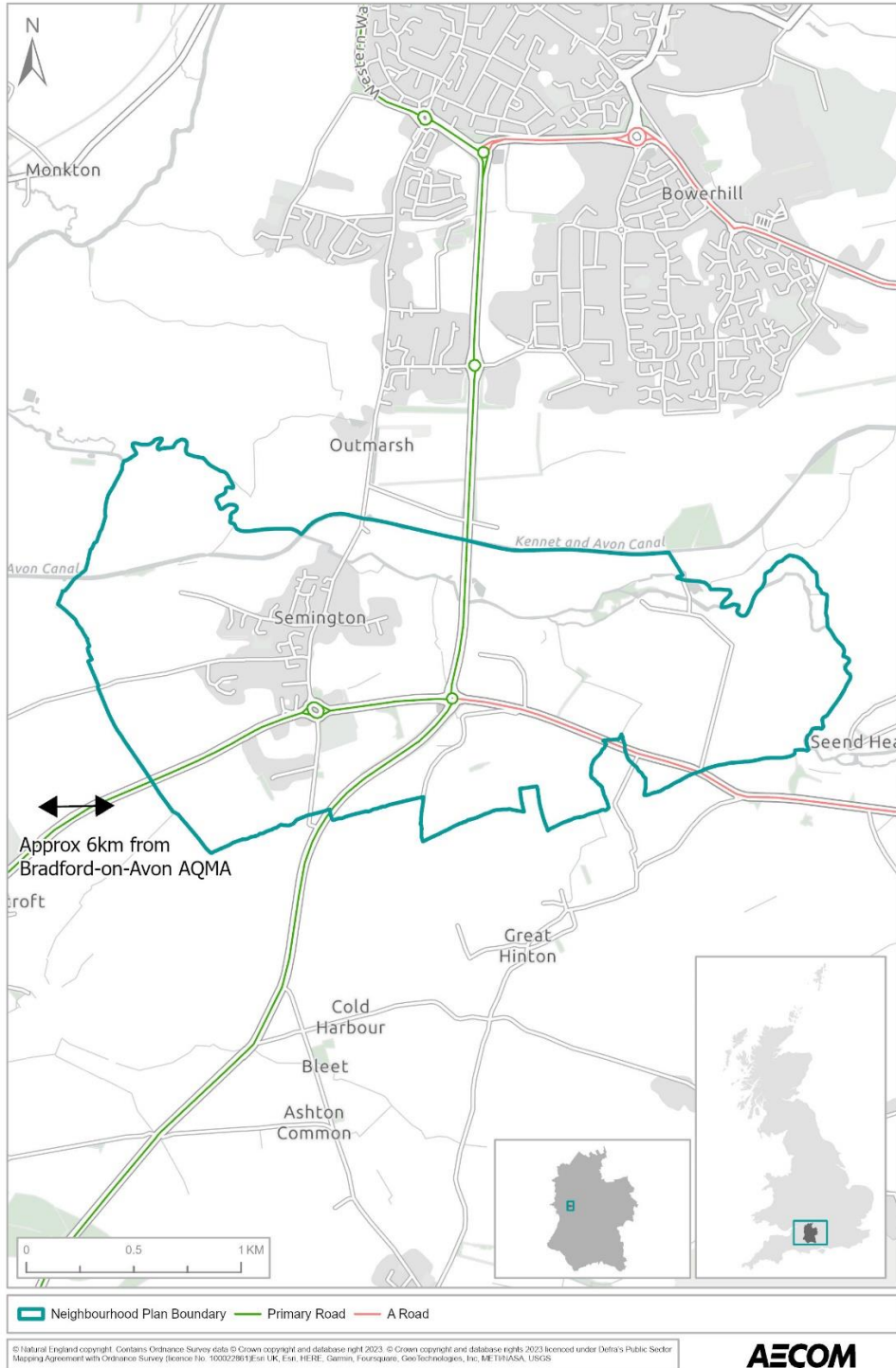


Figure 3.1 AQMAs in proximity to the neighbourhood area

Key statistics



- There are no AQMAs within the neighbourhood area.
- The neighbourhood area is approximately 6km from the Bradford-upon-Avon AQMA to the west, designated by Wiltshire Council.

Key evidence sources

3.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [DEFRA UK AIR - Air Information Resource - AQMAs interactive map](#)
 - [AQMA Details \(Devizes Shanes Castle AQMA, Wiltshire Council\)](#)
 - [AQMA Details \(Bradford-upon-Avon AQMA, Wiltshire Council\)](#)
- [Wiltshire Council – Air Quality](#)
 - [Air Quality Annual Status Report 2022](#)

Policy context

Table 3.1: Additional plans and policies relating to air quality

Document title	Year of publication
Wiltshire Council Air Quality Action Plan 2023-2026	2023
Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 3 2011-2026	2011

Commentary

- 3.3 Wiltshire Council monitor (and are primarily concerned with) nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM₁₀), linked to traffic volume, road layout and topography. The most recent Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), published in 2022, indicates that there were no exceedances of the air quality objectives in Semington for both NO₂ and PM₁₀.
- 3.4 There are no AQMAs within the neighbourhood area, however there are two AQMAs within proximity. The first is the Bradford-upon-Avon AQMA, which is approximately 6km to the west of Semington (see **Figure 3.1** above). Originally declared in 2001 by Wiltshire Council for exceedances of both NO₂ and PM₁₀ air quality objectives, the AQMA was amended to only NO₂ in 2021. The AQMA covers Masons Lane, Market Street, Silver Street, St Margarets Street. The second is the Devizes Shanes Castle AQMA, located 8km east of the neighbourhood area. Declared in 2001 by Wiltshire Council for exceedances of NO₂ air quality objectives, the AQMA covers the junction of the A342 and A361.

Key issues

- 3.5 The neighbourhood area is approximately 5.9km east of the Bradford-upon-Avon AQMA and 8km west of the Devizes AQMA, designated due to high NO₂ emissions. It is possible that these AQMAs could be impacted as a result of

development in the neighbourhood area due to increased vehicle traffic to both Bradford-upon-Avon and Devizes, increasing vehicular emissions. However, given Melksham and Trowbridge are the nearest towns to the neighbourhood area, it is likely that most residents will access key services and facilities in these towns. **Due to this, the air quality theme has been scoped out for the purposes of the SEA process.**

4. Biodiversity and geodiversity

4.1 This section seeks to summarise nature conservation designations, habitats and species within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

Maps

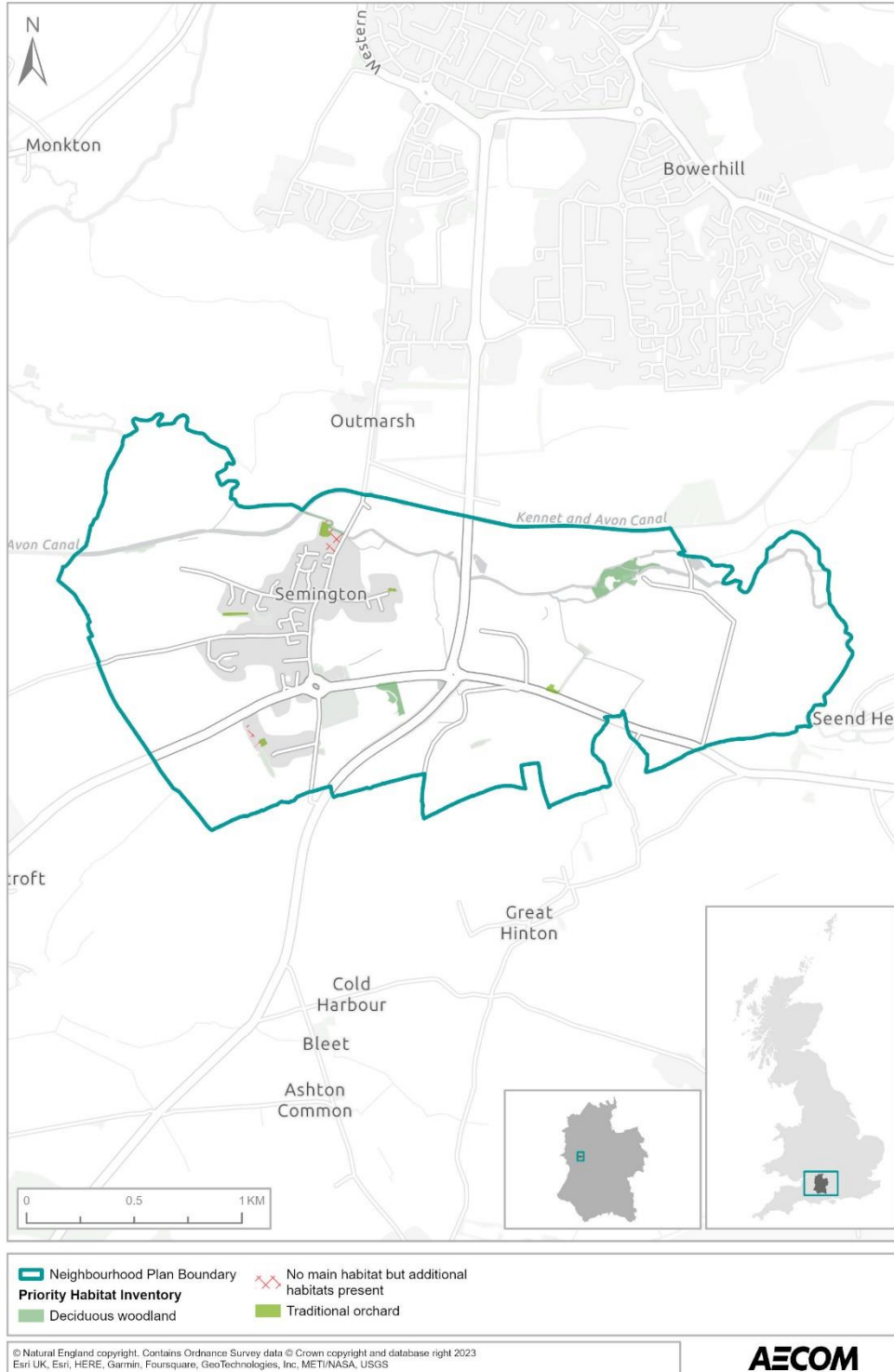


Figure 4.1 BAP Priority Habitats in the neighbourhood area

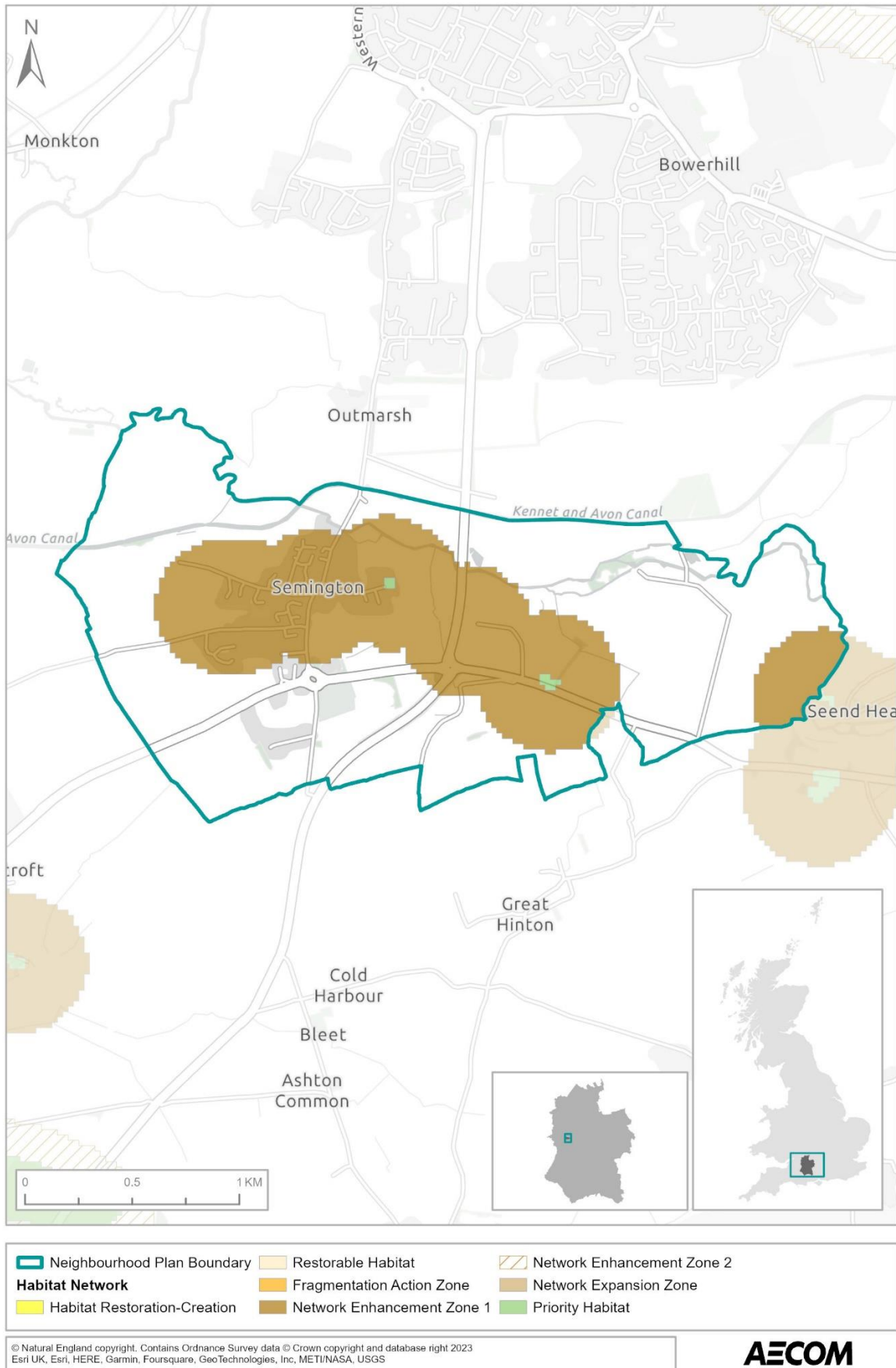


Figure 4.2 National Habitat Network in the neighbourhood area

Key statistics



- The neighbourhood area is in proximity to three bat roost buffer zones to the south (1.8km, 2.4km and 2.9km) associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC.

Key evidence sources

4.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre \(WSBRC\)](#)
- [Bat Special Areas of Conservation \(SAC\) – Wiltshire Council](#)
- [Natural England](#)
 - [National Habitat Network Maps](#)
 - [Protected sites and species](#)
 - [SSSI Citation – Seend Cleeve Quarry](#)
 - [SSSI Citation – Seend Ironstone Quarry and Road Cutting](#)
 - [Designated Site – LNR, Green Lane Wood](#)
 - [Wildlife and habitat conservation](#)

Policy context

Table 4.1: Additional plans and policies relating to biodiversity and geodiversity

Document title	Year of publication
Wiltshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2030	2022
Wiltshire Council – Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015-2026	2015

Commentary

- 4.3 Whilst there are no internationally designated sites for biodiversity in the neighbourhood area, the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 8.8km from the neighbourhood area. This site comprises a network of significant sites in both the Wiltshire and Bath and North East Somerset (BNES) administrative areas.
- 4.4 The grassland, watercourses, scrub and woodland surrounding the SAC are used by bats for feeding. Although these habitats are not included in the SAC designation, they are vital to support the bats which are a feature of the SAC. The network of significant roosts includes sites that are not covered by any statutory designation, such as the breeding colonies of Bechstein's bats at Biss Wood and Green Lane Wood, 75ha of ancient woodlands that are 2.9km and 1.8km respectively to the southwest of Semington. The neighbourhood area

sits within proximity of three buffer zones (two being those noted already, and a Lesser Horseshoe roost located 2.4km to the south) of core roosts that are to the south of the area.

- 4.5 These core roosts provide an opportunity for conservation efforts to extend beyond the current designated area. However, the core roost buffer zones surrounding Semington pose a threat, as development or habitat degradation in these zones could harm these bat species.
- 4.6 There are no nationally designated sites for biodiversity or geodiversity within the neighbourhood area. However, there are two SSSIs within proximity to the neighbourhood area; however, it does not fall within Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for these SSSIs. These are Seend Cleeve Quarry SSSI, located 1.1km to the east of the neighbourhood area and in an unfavourable-declining condition, and Seend Ironstone Quarry and Road Cutting SSSI, also located 1.6km to the east of the neighbourhood area and in a favourable condition.
- 4.7 In terms of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats, the neighbourhood area contains relatively small areas of deciduous woodland and traditional orchard (as shown in **Figure 4.1** above). With regards to the National Habitat Network., the area including and surrounding the BAP priority habitats in the neighbourhood area is within Network Enhancement Zone 1 (as shown in **Figure 4.2** above). This is land that can be used to expand and join existing habitat patches and improve connectivity.

Key issues

- 4.8 Semington is near designated buffer zones for the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. While not part of the SAC, key habitats around Semington are vital for bat species. Conservation opportunities exist but require careful development to avoid harm to these species and habitats.
- 4.9 There are areas within the neighbourhood area that present an opportunity to enhance biodiversity value and connectivity. The Semington NP should take advantage of these opportunities where possible to secure biodiversity net gain in line with national policy.

SEA objective

- 4.10 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme

SEA objective

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

- 4.11 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Protect and enhance nationally and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites?

- Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species, including ancient woodland?
- Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
- Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?

5. Climate change and flood risk

5.1 This section seeks to summarise existing and future flood risk and the wider impacts of climate change, activities in the district which contribute to climate change, and measures to mitigate the effects of climate change and increase resilience.

Maps



Figure 5.1 Fluvial flood risk in the neighbourhood area

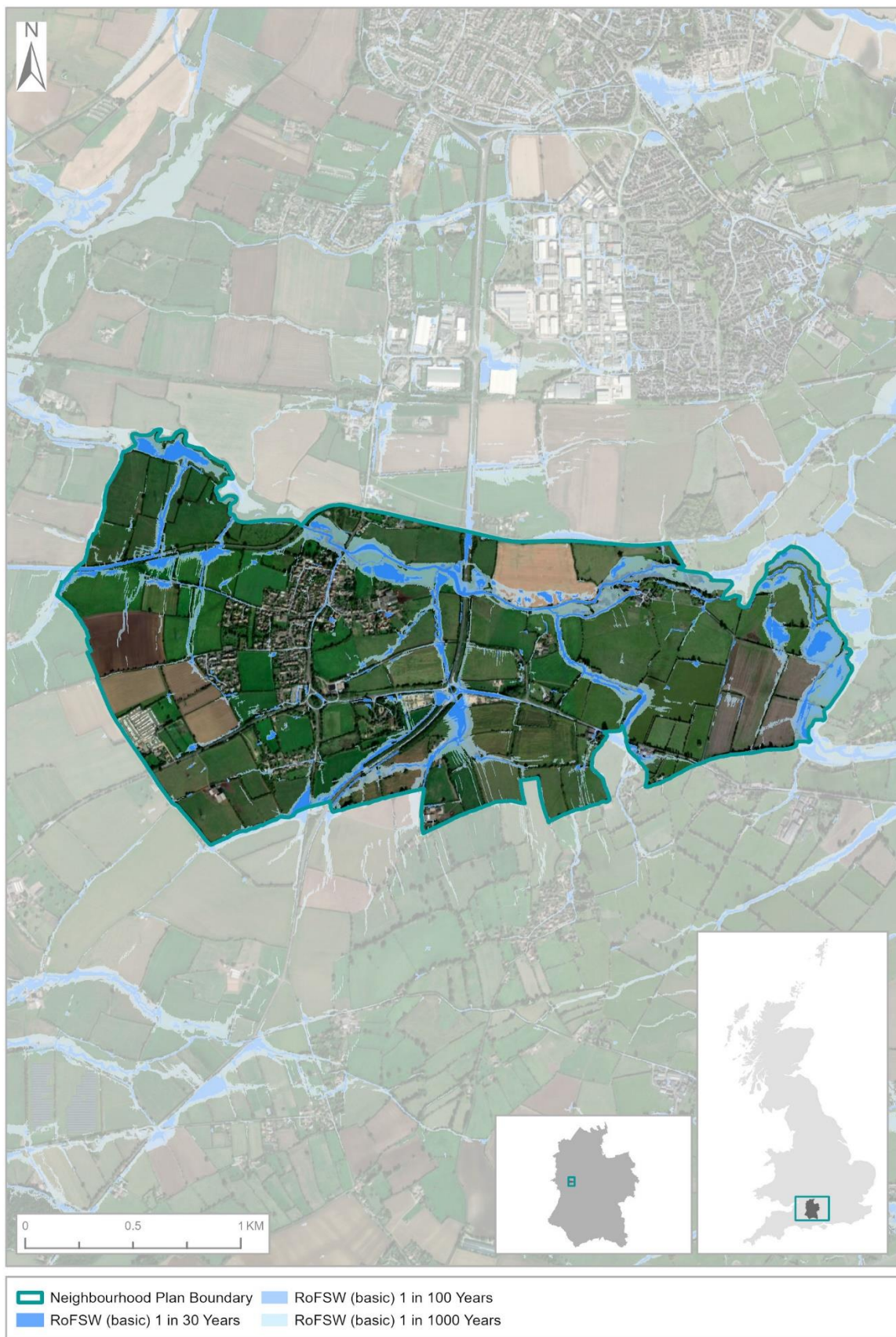


Figure 5.2 Surface water flood risk in the neighbourhood area

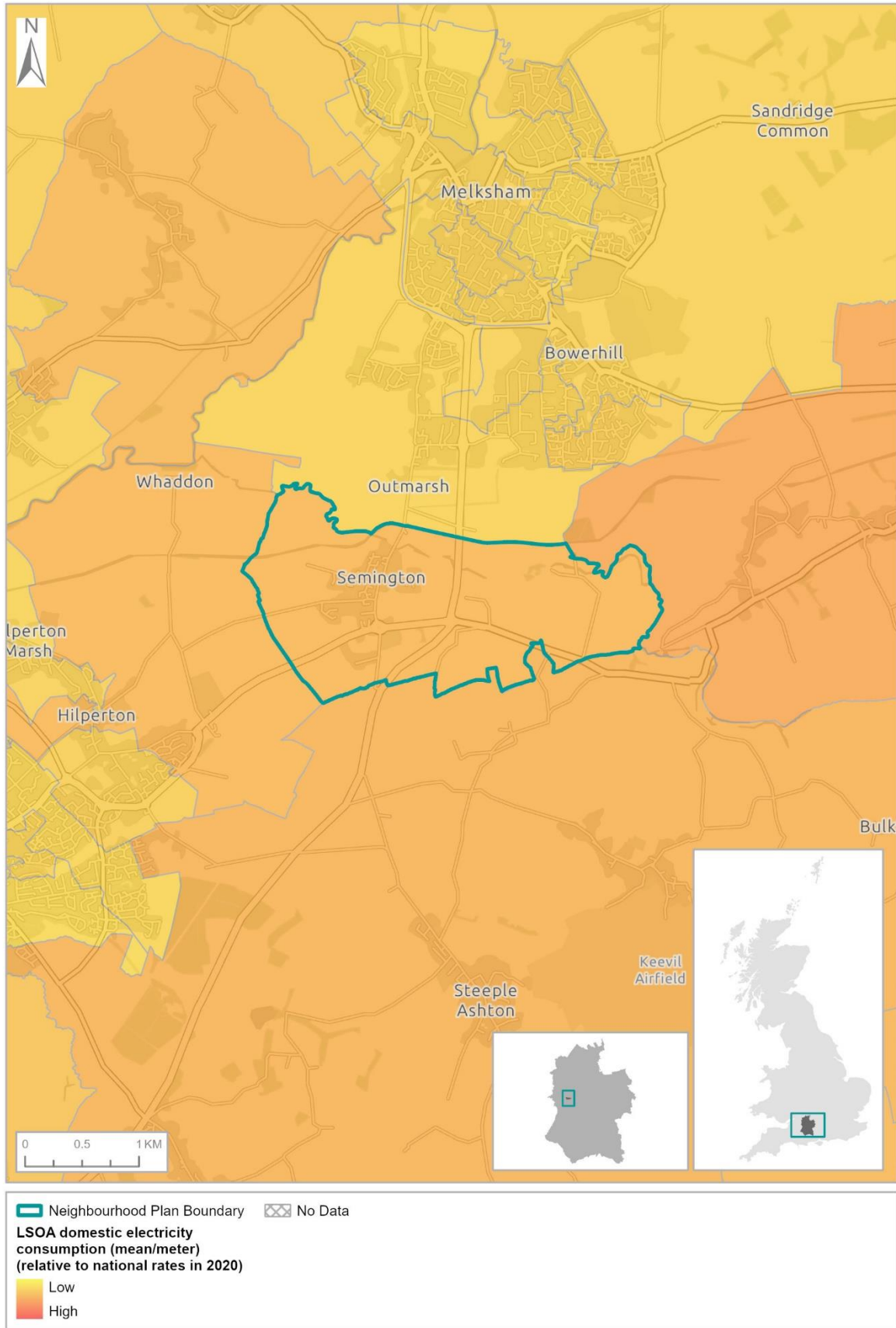


Figure 5.3 Domestic electricity consumption in the neighbourhood area

Key statistics



- The biggest contributor to carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in Wiltshire over the past 14 years has been the transport sector. However, it is noted this sector has experienced an overall decrease in emissions between 2005 and 2019.
- Wiltshire produces more CO₂ emissions per capita compared to the regional and national averages. However, it has experienced a greater decrease in emissions between 2005 and 2019.
- Total emissions in Wiltshire have decreased from 4,231.2 kilotons (kt) CO₂ in 2005 to 2,586.9 kt CO₂ in 2019 – a 1,644.3 kt CO₂ reduction over 14 years.

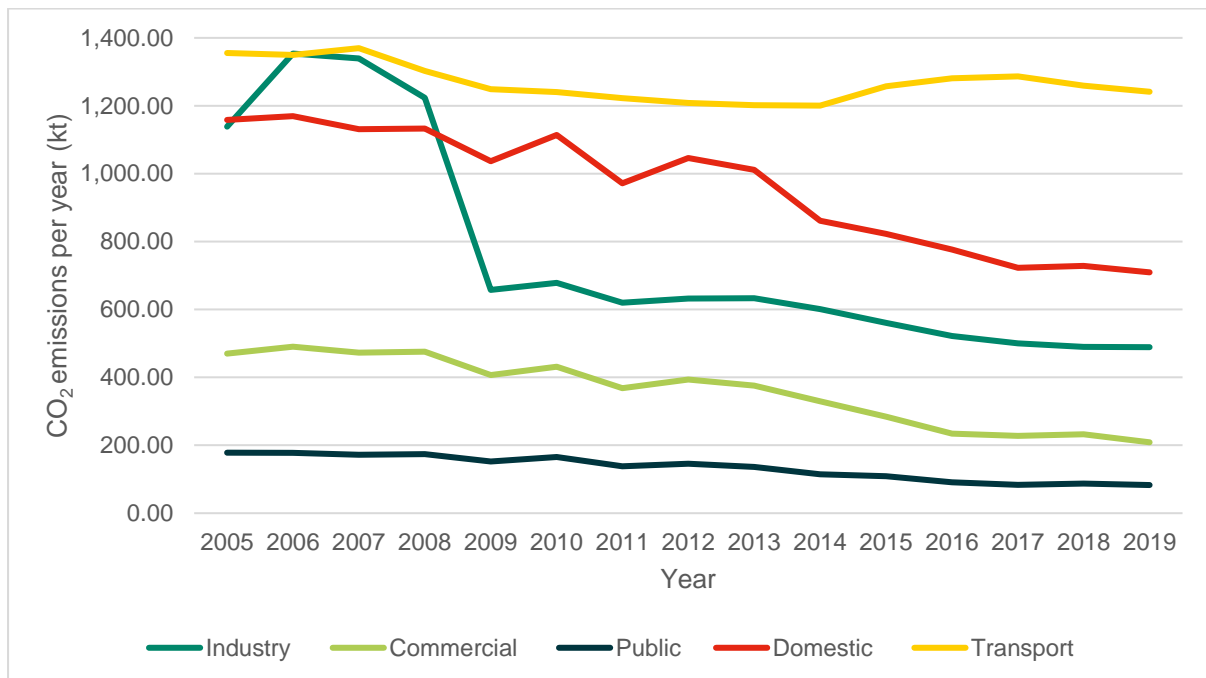


Figure 5.4 CO₂ emissions in kilotons per year for each sector in Wiltshire

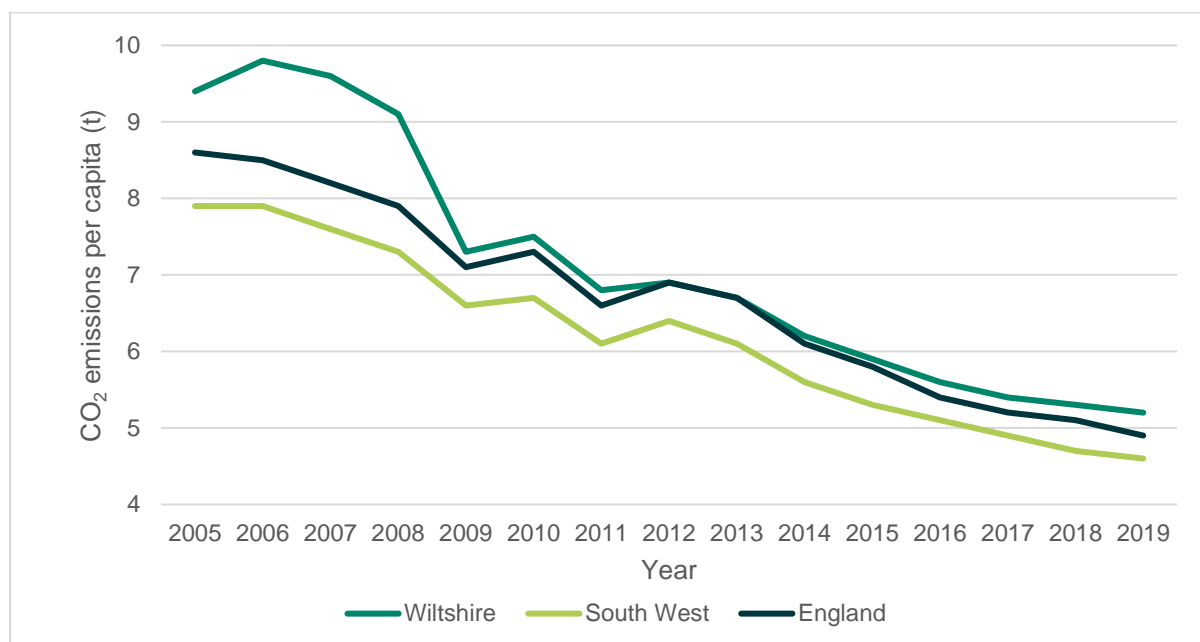


Figure 5.5 CO₂ emissions per capita (in tons) for Wiltshire, the South West, and England

Table 5.1 Average changes in climate variables during winter and summer periods for the South West region under the ‘business as usual’ climate model

Period	Mean Average Air Temperature (°C)		Mean Precipitation Rate (mm/day)		Mean Relative Humidity (%)	
	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer
1981-2000	5.05	15.14	4.11	2.07	87.10	77.55
2021-2040	6.23	17.25	4.32	1.72	86.78	74.14
2061-2080	8.00	20.21	4.97	1.21	86.43	69.58

5.2 **Table 5.1** above indicates that under a ‘business as usual’ (i.e., ‘do nothing’) scenario:

- There could be a 2.95°C increase in mean average winter air temperatures between 1981 and 2080, and an increase of 5.07°C in summer air temperatures over the same period.
- By the 2061-2080 period there could be a 0.86mm / day increase in winter precipitation compared to the 1981-2000 baseline, and a 0.86 mm / day decrease in summer precipitation.
- Winter mean relative humidity could decrease by 0.67%, and summer humidity by 7.97% between 1981 and 2080.

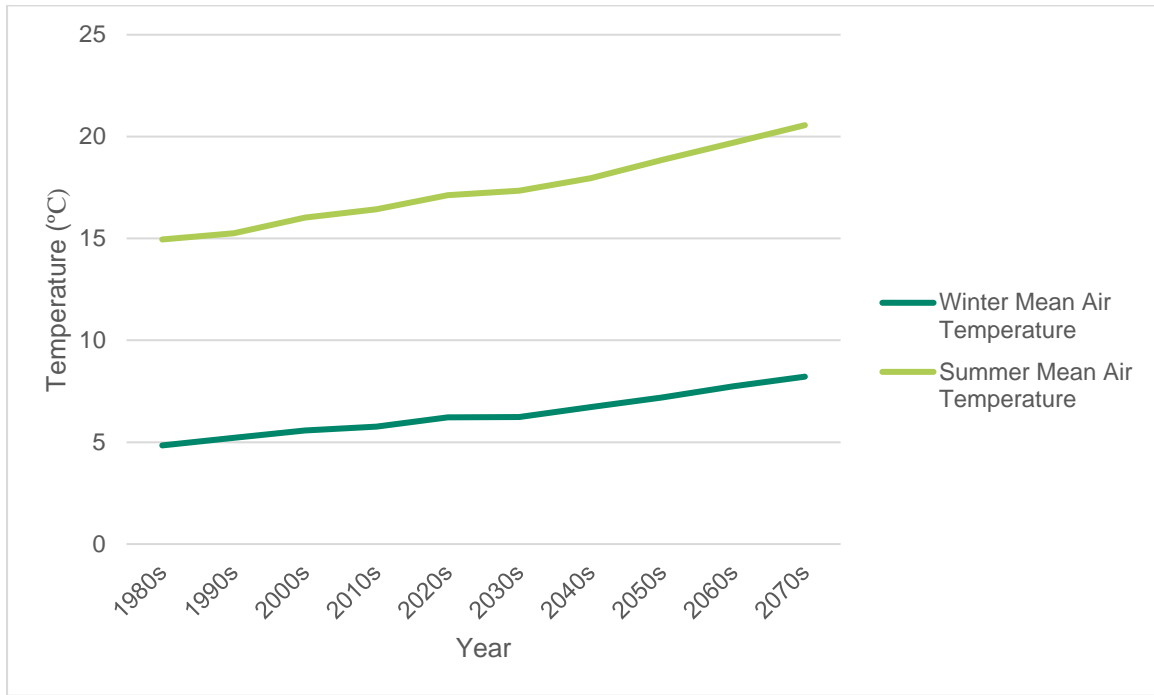


Figure 5.6 The change in mean air temperature (°C) for winter and summer seasons in the South West region (1980s - 2070s)

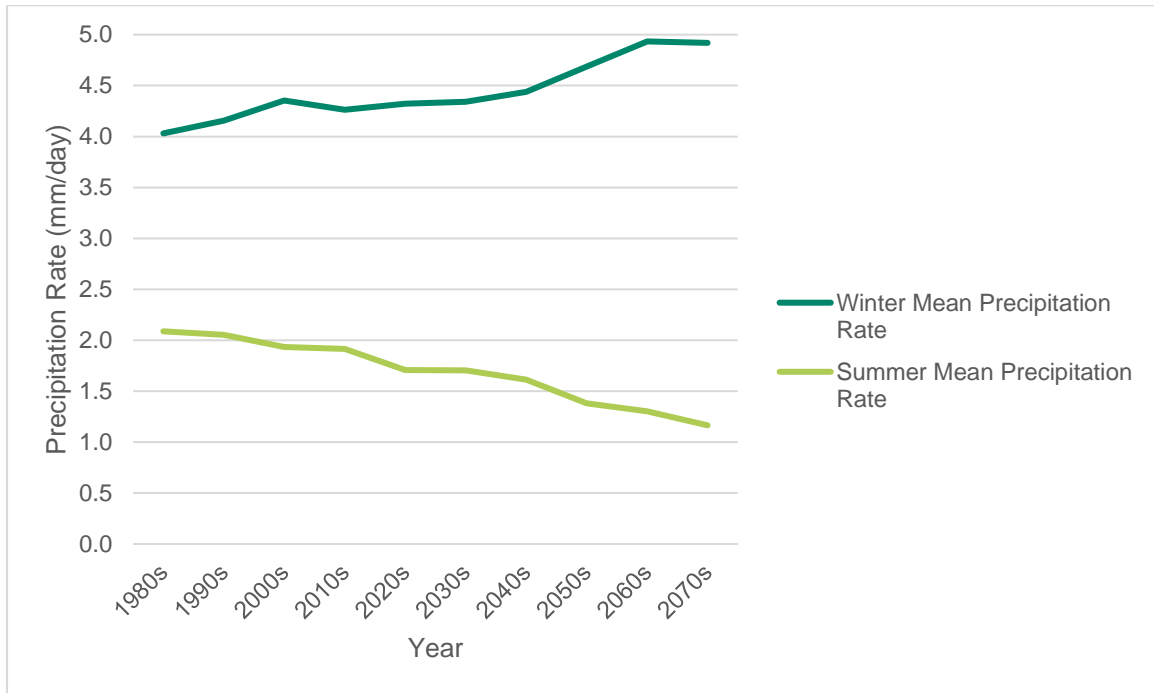


Figure 5.7 The change in mean precipitation rate (mm / day) for winter and summer months in the South West region (1980s - 2070s)

Key evidence sources

5.3 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [Environment Agency's Flood risk information for planning in England](#)
- [Check the long-term flood risk for an area in England](#)
- [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP\)](#)
- [UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019](#)

Policy context

Document title	Year of publication
Wiltshire Council Climate Strategy	2022
Wiltshire Climate Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-2024	2022
Wiltshire Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-2024	2022
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Wiltshire Council	2019
Wiltshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	2015

Commentary

5.4 Areas of Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 are associated with Semington Brook in the northern half of the neighbourhood area (see **Figure 5.1** above). The presence of this watercourse causes a higher risk of fluvial flooding due to its floodplain reach, mostly to the south and east of Semington and Littleton. The Semington Brook also impacts upon surface water flood risk along its course – with areas directly adjacent to the watercourse at a higher risk (see **Figure 5.2** above). Additionally, due to the drainage pattern in the neighbourhood area, it is likely that the area surrounding the section of the A350 to the east of Semington, where the roundabout is, is at a medium to high risk of surface water flood risk.

5.5 Domestic electricity consumption in the neighbourhood area is broadly in line with the national average (see **Figure 5.3** above).

5.6 In line with the UK Government's target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, a climate emergency was declared by Wiltshire Council in February of 2019. The Climate Change Strategy identifies the need to reduce carbon emissions and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and sets out actions and opportunities that should be engaged with.

Key issues

5.7 It is likely CO₂ emissions originating from the neighbourhood area will increase as the population grows. It will be important for new development to adopt best building practices to limit the increase in emissions, such as using sustainable materials and incorporating renewable energy infrastructure.

- 5.8 New development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to exacerbate flood risk if it is built within and in proximity to areas at higher risk of fluvial and surface water flooding. Development should be focused away from these areas where possible.
- 5.9 CO₂ emissions associated with the transport sector remain higher than other sectors in Wiltshire. This highlights the importance of accessible development and the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure.

SEA objective

- 5.10 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.

- 5.11 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?
- Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure?
- Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?
- Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
- Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area?
- Sustainably manage water run-off, and reduce runoff where possible?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

6. Community wellbeing

6.1 This section seeks to summarise population and age structures, deprivation issues, housing mix and affordability, community assets and infrastructure, and influences on health and wellbeing in the neighbourhood area.

Maps

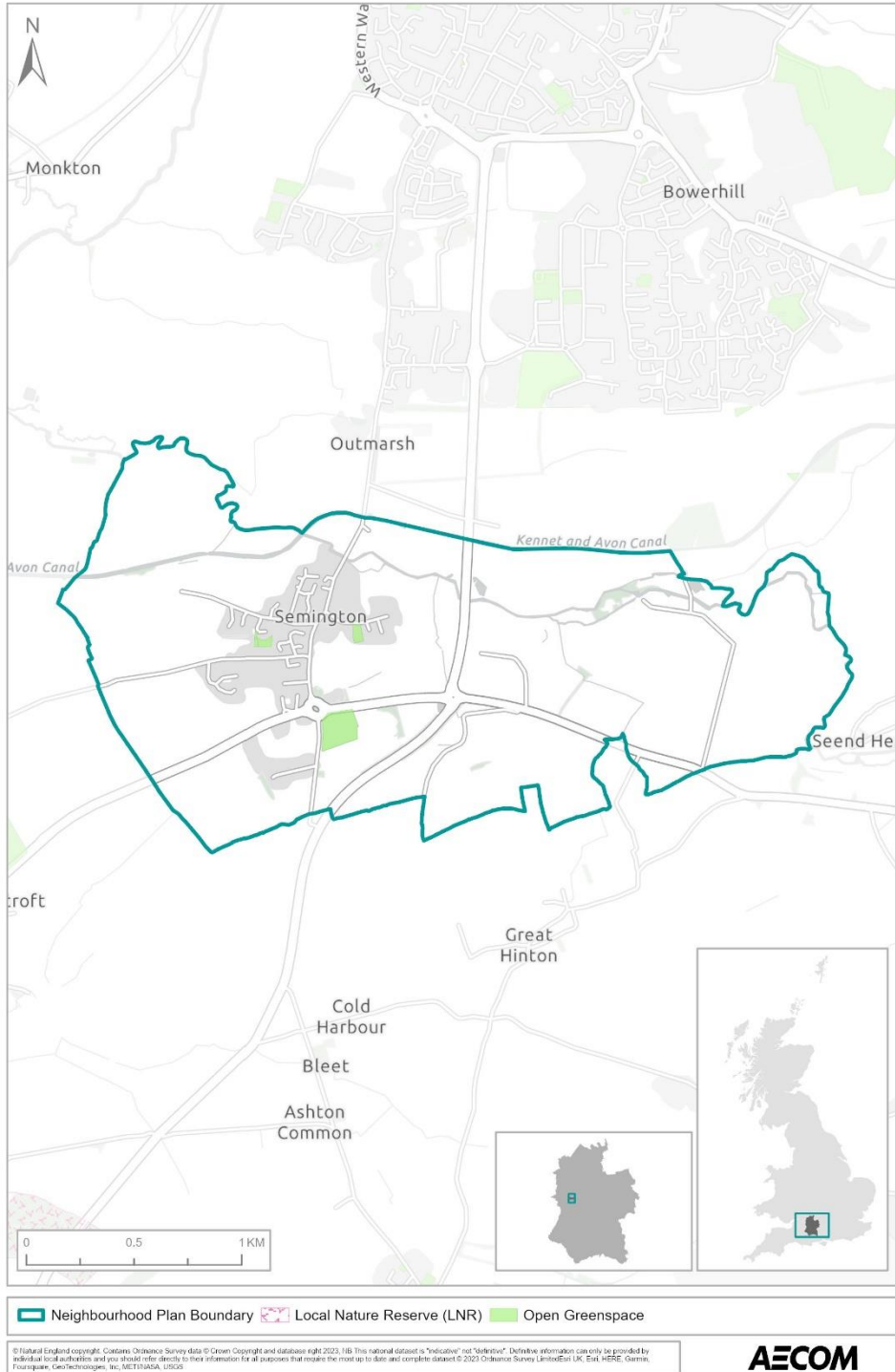


Figure 6.1 Open greenspace in the neighbourhood area

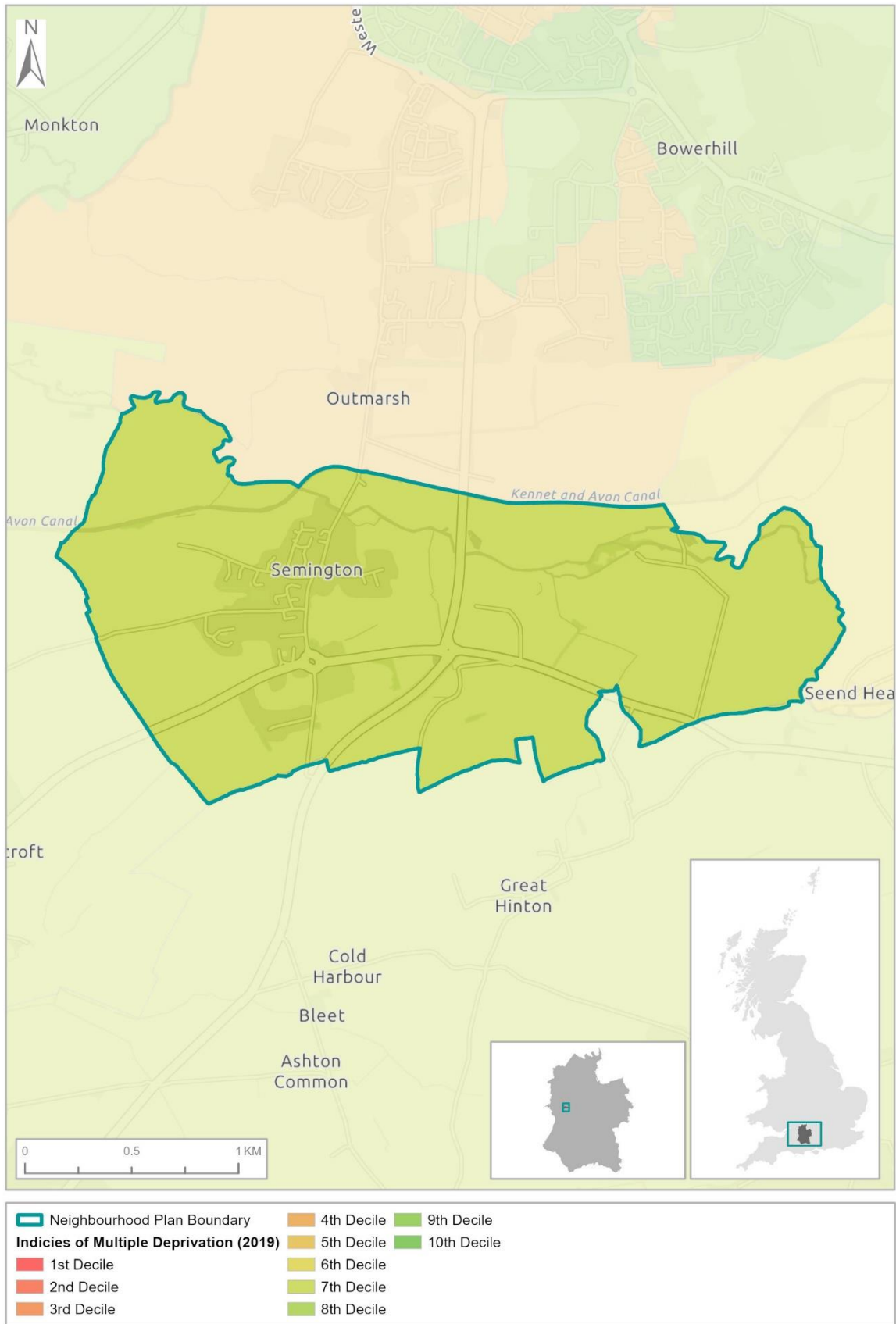


Figure 6.2 Overall IMD in the neighbourhood area (2019)

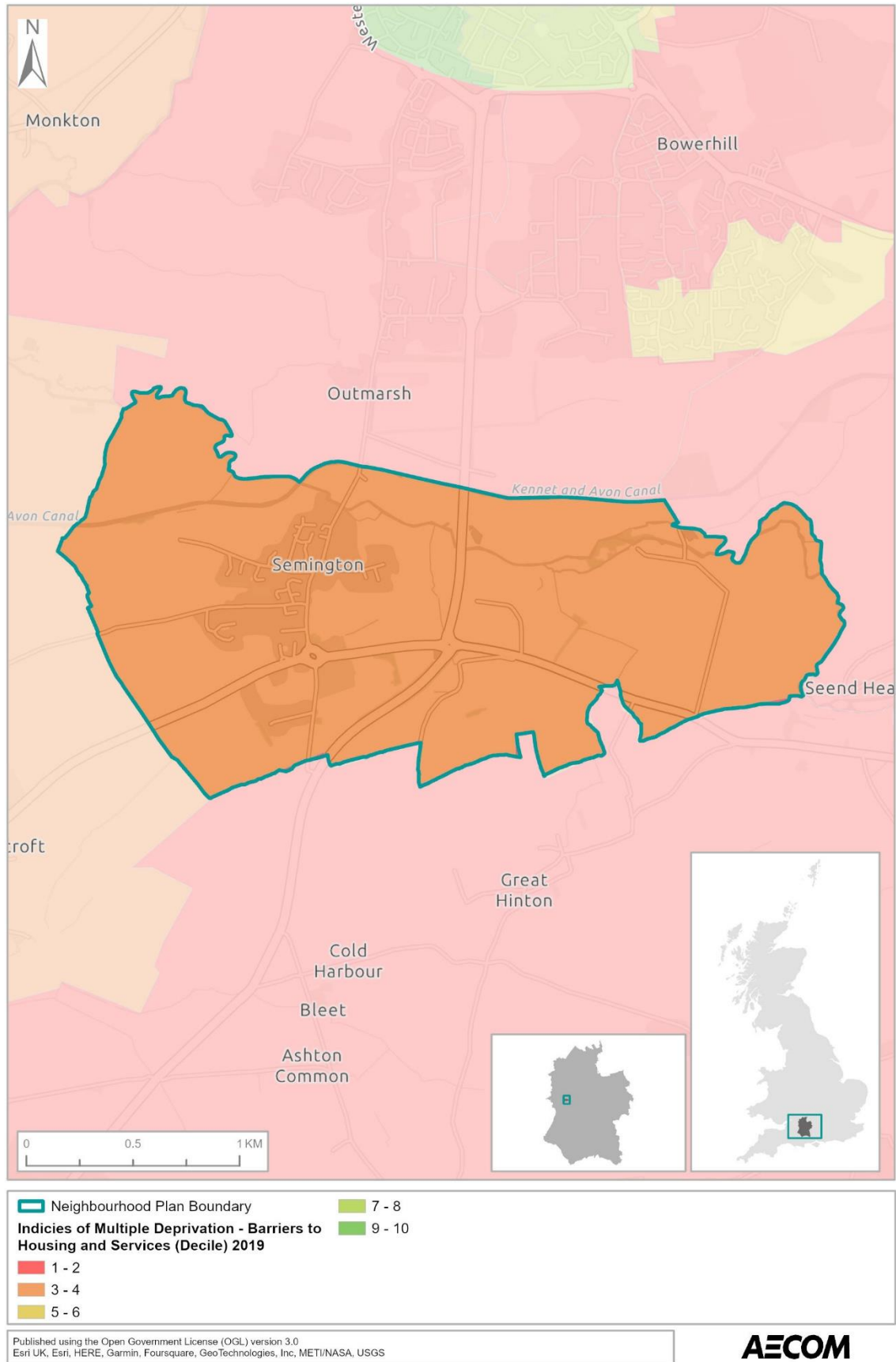


Figure 6.3 IMD ‘barriers to housing and services’ deprivation domain in the neighbourhood area

Key statistics



- The largest age group in the neighbourhood area is 50 to 79. This indicates the neighbourhood area is experiencing an ageing population.
- Residents in the neighbourhood area experience greater levels of good and fair health in comparison to South West and England trends. However, a lower percentage of residents report very good health in comparison to the rest of the South West and England.
- A small majority of households (46%) in the Semington neighbourhood area are owned, either outright or with a mortgage. Shared ownership accounts for 30% of the households in the neighbourhood area – socially rented houses total 7%, and privately rented 18%.

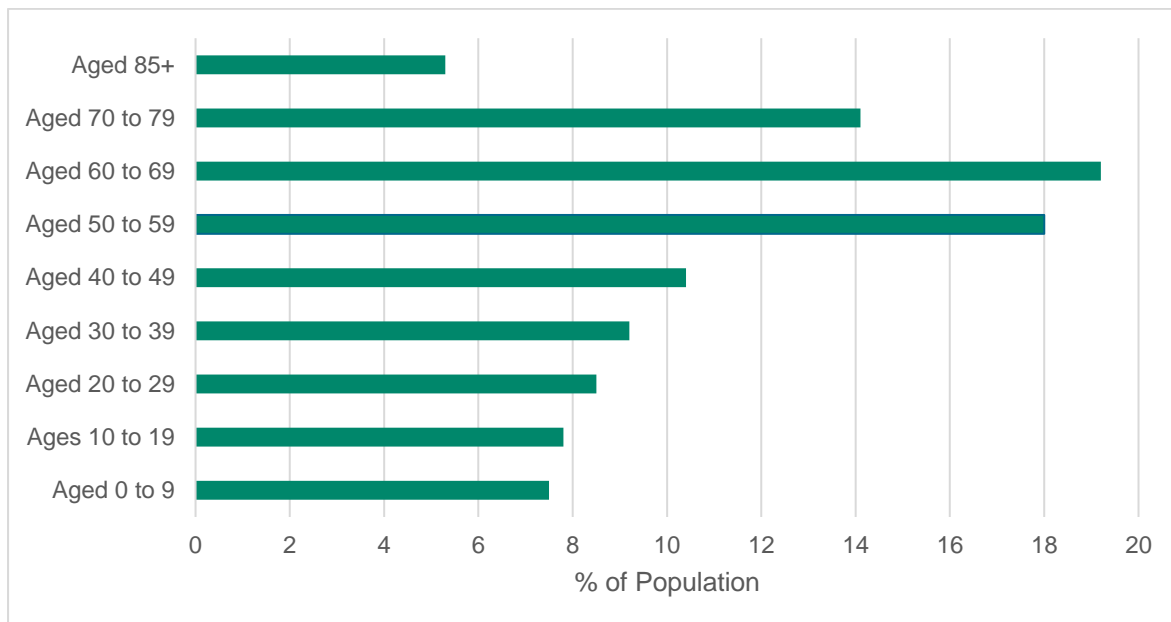


Figure 6.4 Population age structure in the neighbourhood area (Census 2021)

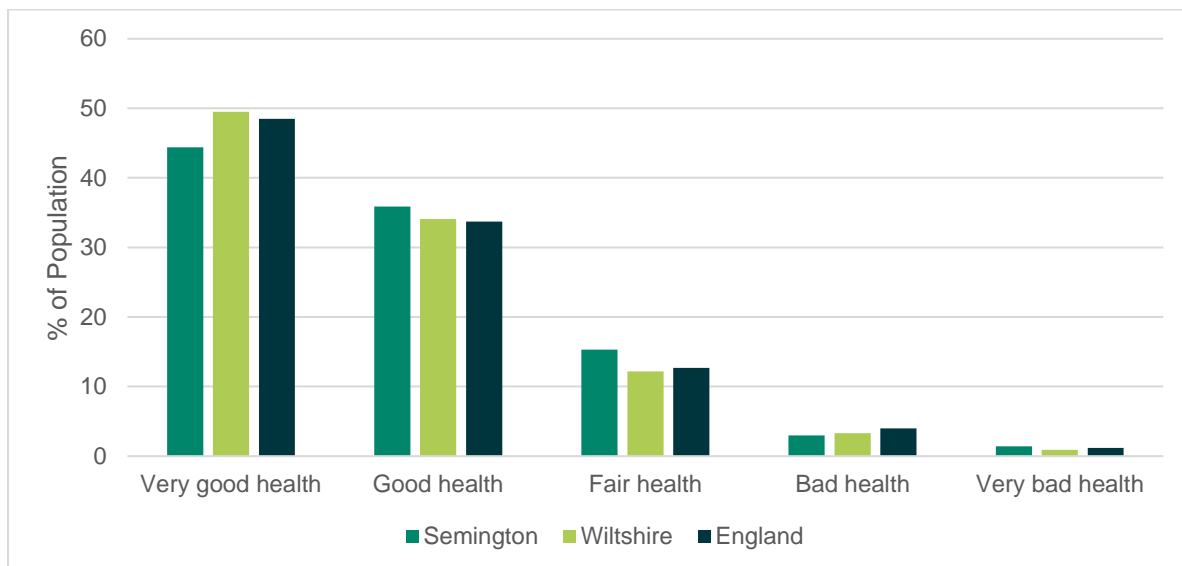


Figure 6.5 Health of residents in the neighbourhood area in comparison to the regional and national averages (Census 2021)

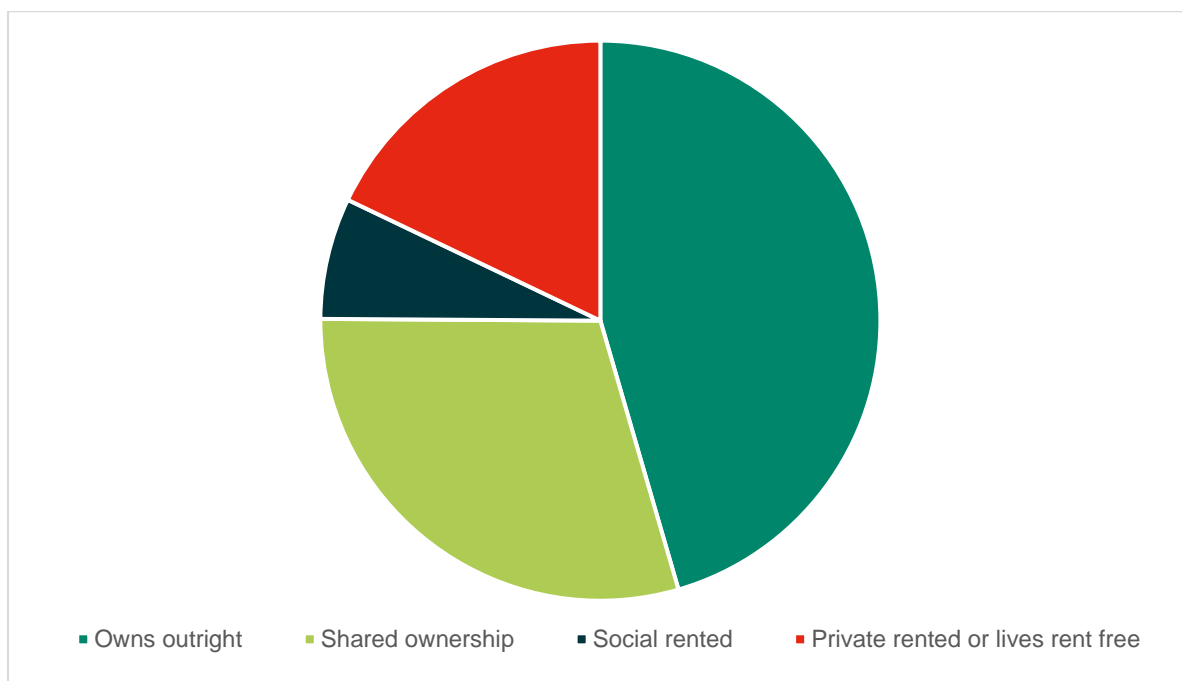


Figure 6.6 Housing tenure in the neighbourhood area (Census 2021)

Key evidence sources

6.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [Indices of Deprivation: 2019 and 2015](#)
- [Office for National Statistics - NOMIS](#)
 - [Topic Summary - TS007A: Age by five-year age bands](#)
 - [Topic Summary - TS037: General health](#)
 - [Topic Summary - TS054: Tenure](#)

Policy context

Table 6.1: Additional plans and policies relating to community wellbeing

Document title	Year of publication
Wiltshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2030	2022
Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2032	2023

Commentary

- 6.3 The neighbourhood area has some community services and facilities. These include a primary school (St George's C of E Primary School), a village hall (Semington Village Hall), a church and grounds (St George's Church), a football club and playing fields (Semington Football Club), a crematorium (West Wiltshire Crematorium), areas of wide grassed verge with benches, and tennis courts. However, due to its rural nature, these services and facilities are limited. Therefore, it is likely that residents in the neighbourhood area will travel further afield (for example to Melksham to the north, or Trowbridge to the southwest) for a greater range of services and facilities (these include, but are not exclusive to, secondary schools, medical facilities such as GPs and hospitals, supermarkets and a wider range of pubs and restaurants).
- 6.4 The neighbourhood area contains three open greenspaces in and around the village of Semington (see **Figure 6.1** above).
- 6.5 The Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) that Semington falls in (Wiltshire 030A) is ranked 231 out of 317 local authorities with regards to the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), where 1 is the most deprived. This is amongst the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods in England as of 2019 (see **Figure 6.2** above). This marks an increase in deprivation since 2015, when it was amongst the 30% least deprived neighbourhoods in England.
- 6.6 Broadly speaking, the Wiltshire 030A LSOA does not experience a notable level of deprivation, however, it does rank slightly higher (more deprived) for the employment; education, skills and training; and living environment deprivation domains. Crucially, the neighbourhood area is within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods for the barriers to housing and services deprivation domain (see **Figure 6.3** above). It is important to note that the neighbourhood area, a rural area, is grouped with Hilperton and Staverton parish, an urban area, in the LSOA data and therefore does not provide a picture of Semington alone.

Key issues

- 6.7 The neighbourhood area experiences higher levels of deprivation with regards to the barriers to housing and services deprivation domain. The Semington NP presents an opportunity to reduce this type of deprivation by encouraging housing development in more accessible locations and more affordable housing.
- 6.8 New housing development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase pressure on existing community infrastructure if this is not improved alongside development. This could lead to negative impacts, especially on the

health of residents if the capacity of health facilities is not increased to cater for the growing population. This could be exacerbated by the ageing population.

SEA objective

6.9 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.

6.10 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing?
- Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?
- Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?
- Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population?
- Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including health infrastructure?
- Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities?
- Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements, including improved access to open space?
- Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?

7. Historic environment

7.1 This section seeks to summarise designated and non-designated heritage assets (including archaeology) and their settings, within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area.

Maps

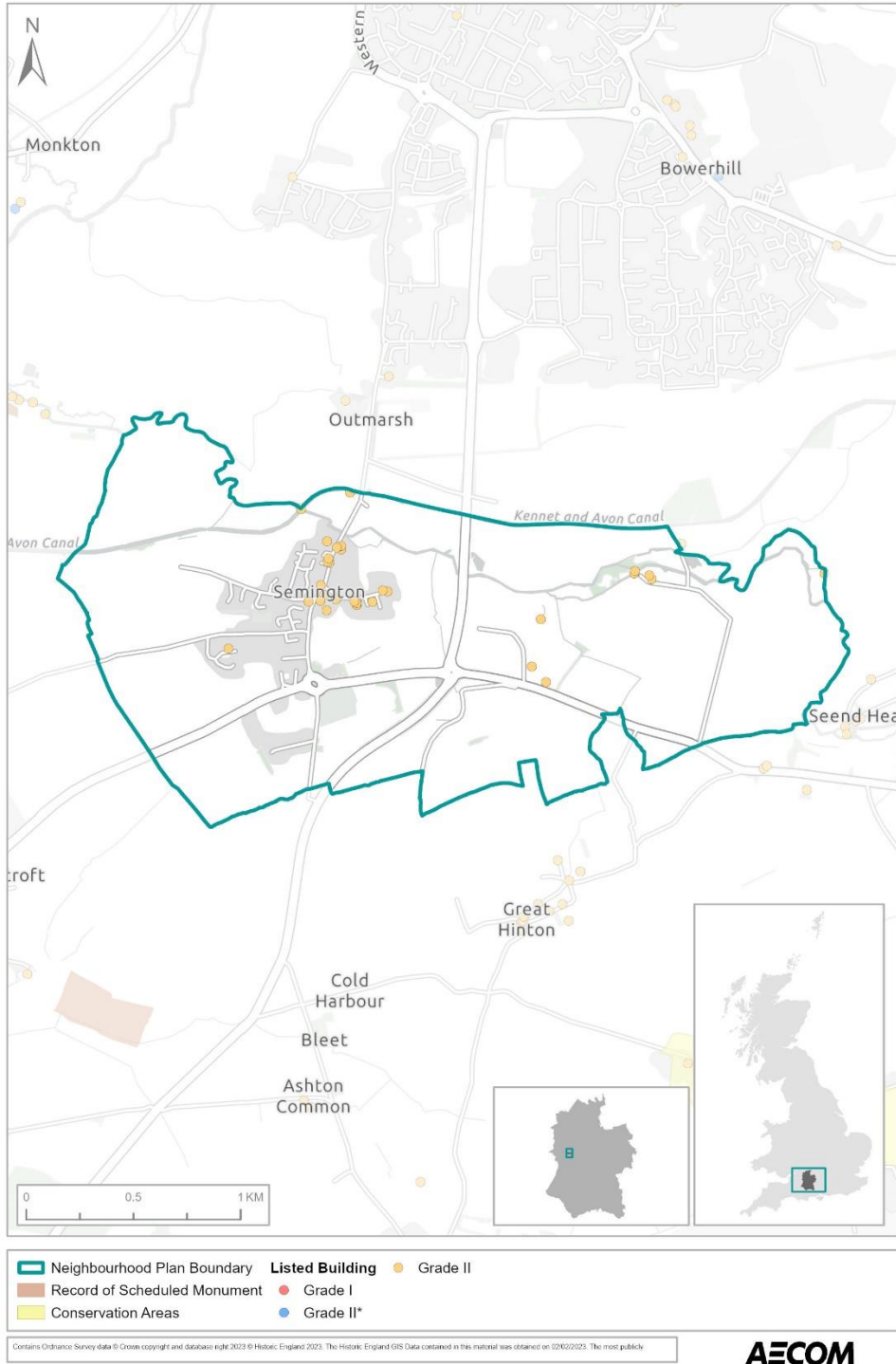


Figure 7.1 Designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area

Key statistics



- There are 33 Grade II listed buildings within the neighbourhood area.
- None of the nationally designated heritage assets within the neighbourhood area are on the Heritage at Risk Register 2023.
- The Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) returns 61 results for the neighbourhood area.

Key evidence sources

7.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Heritage Gateway](#)
- [Historic Environment Records | Wiltshire Council](#)
- [Historic England](#)
 - [Heritage at Risk Register 2023 – South West](#)
 - [Search the List - Advanced Search](#)

Policy context

Document title	Year of publication
Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Evidence Base for the Semington Neighbourhood Plan	2022
Semington Parish Character Statement	2023

Commentary

7.3 There are 33 Grade II listed buildings in the neighbourhood area (see **Figure 7.1** above). These notably include [St George's Hospital](#) (former Victorian Poor Law Workhouse, since converted to residential use), [Church of St George](#) (16th Century church, restored in 1860), [the Somerset Arms](#) (18th Century public house) and [the Semington Aqueduct](#) (Late 18th Century to early 19th Century, carrying the Kennet and Avon Canal over Semington Brook). However, these heritage assets are not covered by a conservation area.

7.4 Locally important, non-designated heritage assets are also an important part of the historic environment of Semington. The Wiltshire and Swindon HER returns 61 results in the neighbourhood area. Non-designated assets include (but are not limited to): pill boxes and other WWII relics, Georgian and earlier stone houses, and an early 18th Century packhorse bridge.

Key issues

- 7.5 There are several designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area, all of which present a constraint to future development due to the need to avoid impacts to the features and their settings. The Semington NP can help maintain and enhance the historic environment by ensuring that development is sensitive to the historic setting of these assets in terms of design and layout.
- 7.6 The Semington NP presents an opportunity to provide policy and guidance that protects the key historic characteristics of the neighbourhood area, which could extend to protecting non-designated assets and their settings.

SEA objective

- 7.7 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

- 7.8 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):
- Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings?
 - Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Wiltshire and Swindon HER?
 - Protect the integrity of WWII relics in the area?
 - Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?
 - Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?

8. Land, soil and water resources

8.1 This section seeks to summarise the quality of soil resources, the extent of mineral resources, water supply resources, and water quality within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

Maps

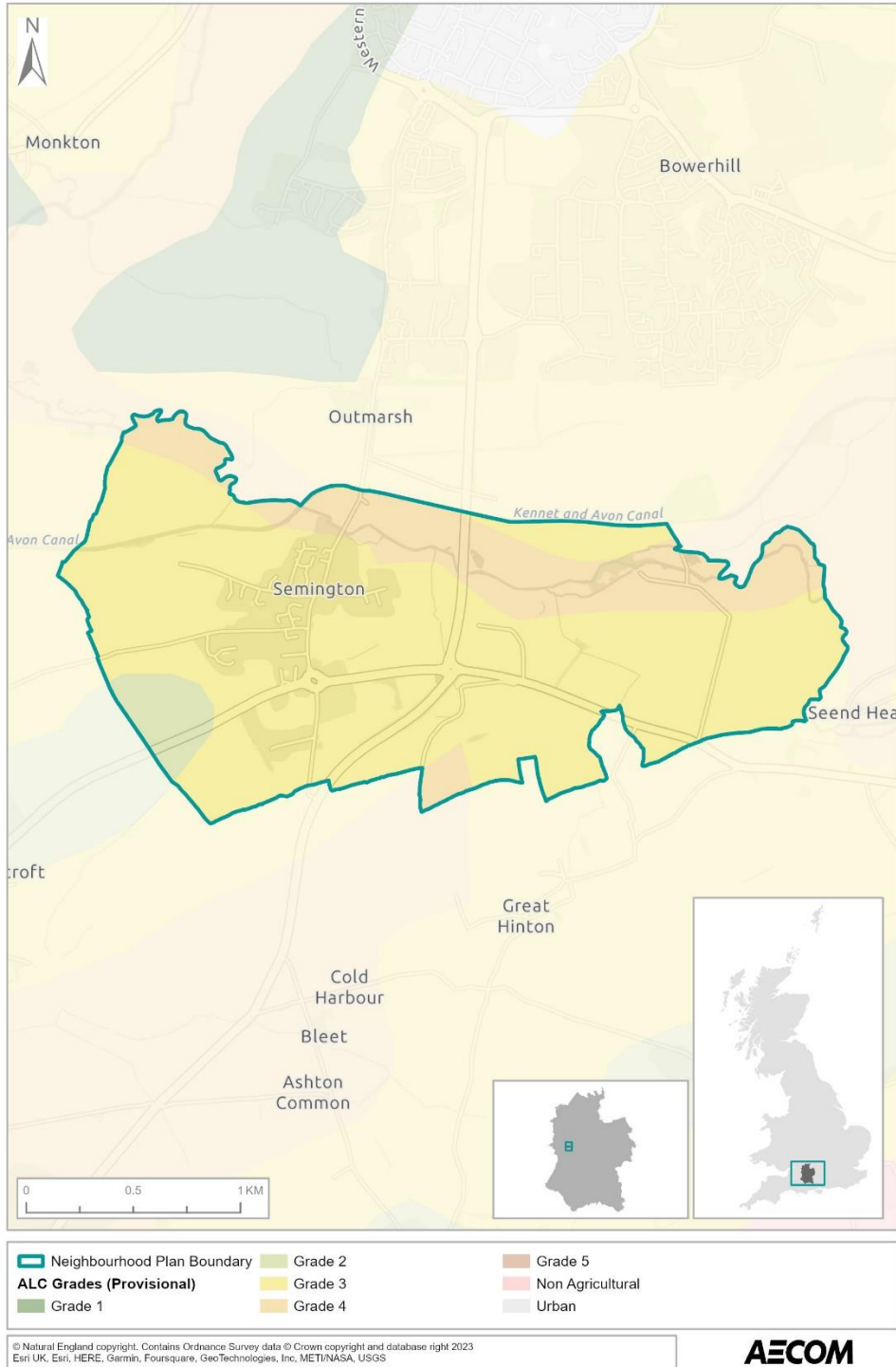


Figure 8.1 Provisional ALC in the neighbourhood area

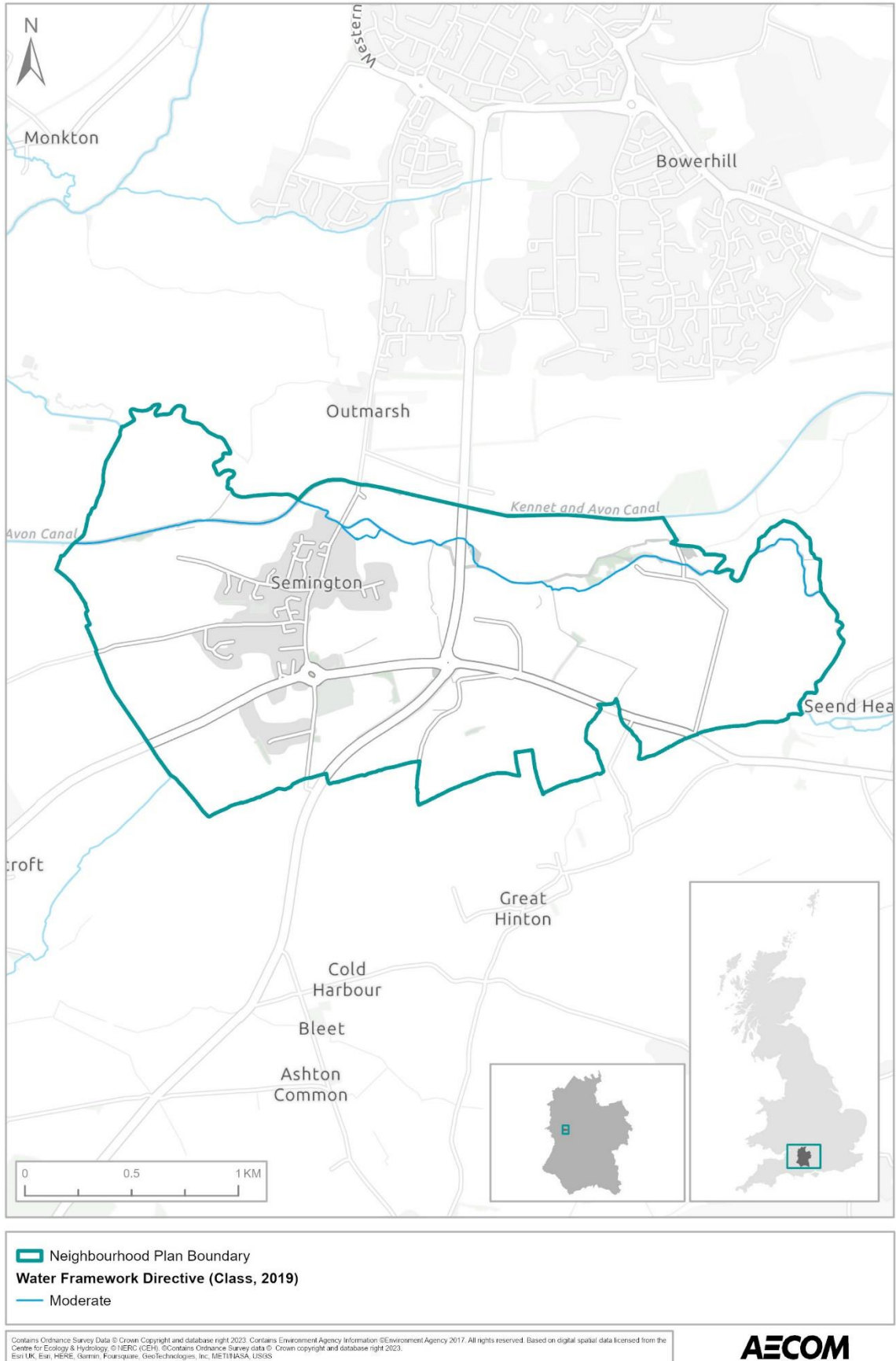


Figure 8.2 Water quality of waterbodies in the neighbourhood area

Key statistics



- The neighbourhood area falls into the Avon Bristol Rural Operational Catchment.
- The neighbourhood area is not in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) but is 727m to the west of the Summerham Brook NVZ.
- The ecological status of the Semington Beck (Milebourne Stream to confluence with River Avon (Bristol)) that runs through the neighbourhood area has been moderate since 2014 (and was poor from 2009 until 2014). The chemical status was not tested in 2022.

Key evidence sources

8.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Environment Agency - Check for Drinking Water Safeguard Zones and NVZs](#)
- [Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer – Avon Bristol Rural Operational Catchment](#)
 - [Semington Bk-Milebourne Str to conf R Avon \(Bristol\) Water Body](#)
- [Natural England](#)
 - [Agricultural Land Classification Map South West Region](#)
 - [Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile \(BMV\) Agricultural Land – Strategic Scale Map South West Region](#)

Policy context

Table 8.1: Additional plans and policies relating to land, soil, and water resources

Document title	Year of publication
Bristol Avon Catchment Flood Management Plan	2012
Bristol Avon Catchment Action Plan 2022-2027	2022
Severn River Basin Management Plan	2022
Wessex Water Water Resources Management Plan	2019
Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy 2006-2026	2009
Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy 2006-2026	2009

Commentary

- 8.3 The provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) dataset provided by Natural England indicates the majority of the neighbourhood area comprises Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural land (see **Figure 8.1** above). Some of the land in the north of the neighbourhood area is considered to be Grade 4 'Poor', whilst a small section of Grade 2 'Very Good' land can be found in the southwest of the neighbourhood area. It is not possible to determine whether the Grade 3 land is Grade 3a (better quality) or Grade 3b (poorer quality).
- 8.4 In terms of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, the majority of the neighbourhood area has a low likelihood (<20%) of being underlain by BMV land. However, there are areas in the west of the neighbourhood area with a moderate (20-60%) and high (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land.
- 8.5 Water is supplied to the neighbourhood area by Wessex Water, who are also responsible for sewerage services in this area. Their Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) identifies how they expect to balance the demand for water with available supplies over a 25-year plan period. The WRMP indicates that there is adequate supply over this period without a need to develop new sources of water.
- 8.6 The neighbourhood area is located within the Avon Bristol Rural Operational Catchment. The Semington Beck (Milebourne Stream to confluence with River Avon (Bristol)) waterbody runs through the north segment of the neighbourhood area and down to the east. This waterbody has a moderate ecological status (see **Figure 8.2** above).
- 8.7 The neighbourhood area is not in a NVZ but is 727m to the west of the Summerham Brook NVZ.

Key issues

- 8.8 Allocating land for development could influence changes to land, soil and water resources. It will be important for development to be focused away from BMV land and consider potential impacts on the overlapping waterbody catchments and water quality. This could include implementing mitigation measures to ensure water pollution does not occur throughout the development phases.

SEA objective

- 8.9 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.

- 8.10 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible?
- Identify and avoid the development of BMV agricultural land?

- Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?
- Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality?
- Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development?
- Protect waterbodies from pollution?
- Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling?
- Avoid any negative impacts on mineral and waste infrastructure?

9. Landscape

9.1 This section seeks to summarise landscape character and key landscape features and sensitivities in the neighbourhood area.

Maps

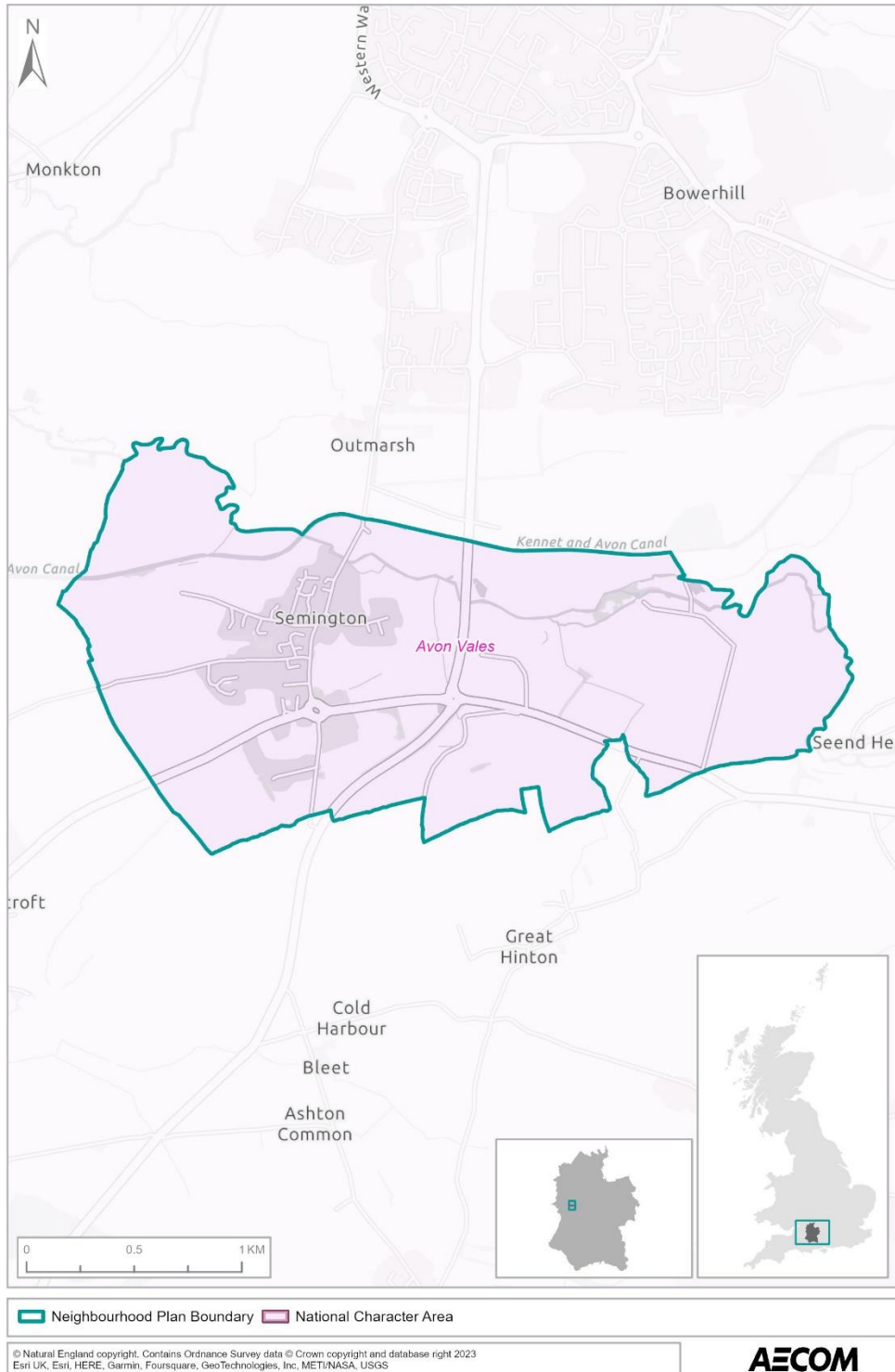


Figure 9.1 National Character Areas (NCAs) in the neighbourhood area

Key statistics



- The latest available brownfield register for Wiltshire indicates there are no brownfield sites within the neighbourhood area.
- There are some tree preservation orders (TPOs) within the neighbourhood area – however all affected trees are situated in the centre of Semington village.
- The neighbourhood area sits within the Avon Vales National Character Area (NCA).

Key evidence sources

9.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [Wiltshire Council](#)
 - [Brownfield Register 2022](#)
 - [Tree Preservation Order – Online Map](#)

Policy context

Table 9.1: Additional plans and policies relating to landscape

Document title	Year of publication
A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire 2022-2030	2022
West Wiltshire District Landscape Character Assessment	2006
Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Evidence Base for the Semington Neighbourhood Plan	2022
Semington Parish Character Statement	2023
NCA Profile: 117 Avon Vales (NE522)	2014
Landscape Type 12: Open Clay Vale	2005

Commentary

9.3 Whilst the neighbourhood area does not overlap with an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is located approximately 6.1km east of the Cotswolds AONB and approximately 10.7km west of the North Wessex Downs AONB. However, due to the distance of the neighbourhood area to these AONBs, future development is unlikely to impact their setting.

9.4 The neighbourhood area is within NCA 117: Avon Vales (see **Figure 9.1** above). This area features a low-lying landscape with mixed agriculture, small towns along the River Avon, and higher surrounding land. It's predominantly agricultural (over 80%) with limited urban development (less than 10%). Historical traces include Saxon place names, prehistoric hill forts, and medieval arable cultivation. The region's history is reflected in late medieval churches,

merchant houses, and stream-side mills. Smaller settlements are connected by narrow lanes, and flood meadows, drainage ditches, and wetlands dominate valley floors. Key characteristics of the NCA include (but are not limited to):

- An undulating clay vale with a mix of arable and pasture.
- Small and medium-sized fields with mostly hedgerow boundaries with few hedgerow trees, varying in shape from irregular piecemeal enclosure to rectilinear planned enclosure.
- Numerous low ridges with local views over towns and villages.
- Transport corridors along roads and watercourses, heavily influential on all development in the NCA.

9.5 The neighbourhood area falls within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 12B: Avon Open Clay Vale. The majority of its identified key characteristics are exhibited within the neighbourhood area. These key characteristics are listed below (but are not limited to):

- Level landform with wide open skies and views to ridges and downs.
- Pastoral land use with some arable.
- Large scale geometric fields with hedgerows or open drainage channels defining boundaries.
- Presence of rivers, tributaries, drainage channels and open water bodies.
- Watercourses lined with riparian vegetation with prominent lines of willows (some pollarded).
- Floristically rich hay meadows.
- Settlement pattern varies from large towns and small scattered villages to sparse farmsteads.
- Buildings in varied materials of brick, render and stone.
- Crossed by major transport corridors, and a network of minor roads linking settlements.
- Historic use for transport evident in canals.

9.6 Key sensitivities and values for this LCA include (but are not limited to):

- Rural tranquillity.
- Hedgerow pattern.
- Water bodies and water ways of varied character and ecological value.
- Streamside willows and other riparian vegetation.
- Remnant hay meadows.
- Wide open views.
- Settlement pattern of nucleated villages with variety of vernacular building materials.

9.7 The broad management objectives for this LCA include:

- Retain and manage the hedgerow network and nurture new hedgerow trees.
- Promote appropriate management of arable land including retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields to encourage wildlife, particularly farmland birds.
- Retain and manage hay meadows.
- Introduce new tree planting along watercourses using typical riparian species such as alder and willow.
- Take opportunities to extend and enhance the varied wetland habitats (reed beds, wet grassland, and wet woodland) of the Cotswold Water Park through appropriate restoration of mineral workings.
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.

9.8 The neighbourhood area was examined in the 2023 Semington Parish Character Statement. The Character Statement highlighted the locally distinctive features of the parish:

- **Rural Landscape:** The expansive and open landscape that simultaneously connects and sub-divides the distinct parish settlements and those beyond.
- **Semington Historic Core:** The linear core reflecting Semington's historic economic relationship with the Kennet and Avon and Wilts and Berks Canals. Also, with nucleated pattern of mediaeval villages and ancient meadows and grazing patterns.
- **Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Semington:** The distinct twentieth and twenty-first century housing growth largely to the west, reflecting the village's changing role and attractiveness as a place to live and changed approaches to house building.
- **Semington Industrial Area:** A distinct employment focus to the south of the village characterised by single storey industrial units and depot at the southern gateway to Semington.
- **Littleton:** A historic rural hamlet set within a level landscape of mature hedgerow and trees-lined lanes with dispersed farms and large houses in substantial plots.
- **Little Marsh:** A small community to the south of Semington village focused on a single cul-de-sac lane set within a level rural landscape.

9.9 The Bristol and Bath Green Belt, whilst not a landscape designation, is located approximately 2.8km west of the neighbourhood area. However, given this distance – and given the rural nature of the neighbourhood area – this is unlikely to be contribute to development pressures in Semington.

Key issues

9.10 There are some TPOs in the neighbourhood area, which are important features that likely to contribute to landscape and villagescape character. New development through the Semington NP should avoid visual impacts to and

from these TPOs where possible to maintain the character and quality of more built-up areas in the neighbourhood area.

- 9.11 The Semington Character Statement outlines the significance of specific features within the neighbourhood area, which the Semington NP should seek to protect and enhance. The Semington NP should steer development away from these areas where possible to ensure landscape quality is maintained in these parts of the neighbourhood area.
- 9.12 It will be important for the Semington NP to protect the local landscape, including its coherence and characteristics. This will bring benefits to other SEA themes, including biodiversity and climate change, by maintaining features which support wildlife and natural processes, such as gardens and groups of trees.

SEA objective

- 9.13 Considering the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.

- 9.14 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Protect and / or enhance local landscape character and quality of place?
- Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?
- Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place?
- Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the neighbourhood area's rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?

10. Transportation and movement

10.1 This section seeks to summarise transport infrastructure, transport usage, traffic flows and congestion, accessibility, and public rights of way within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

Maps

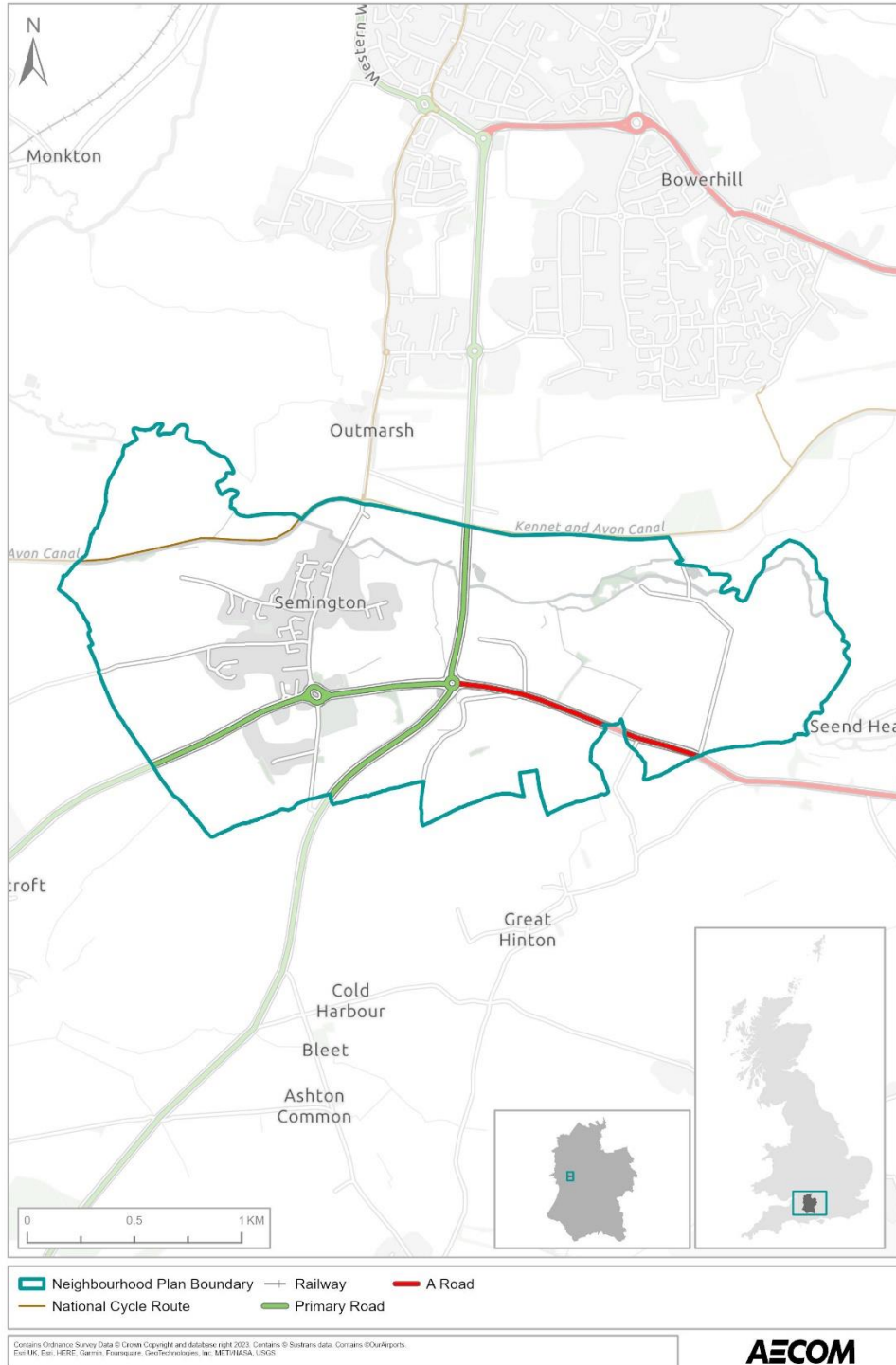


Figure 10.1 Key transport infrastructure in the neighbourhood area

Key statistics

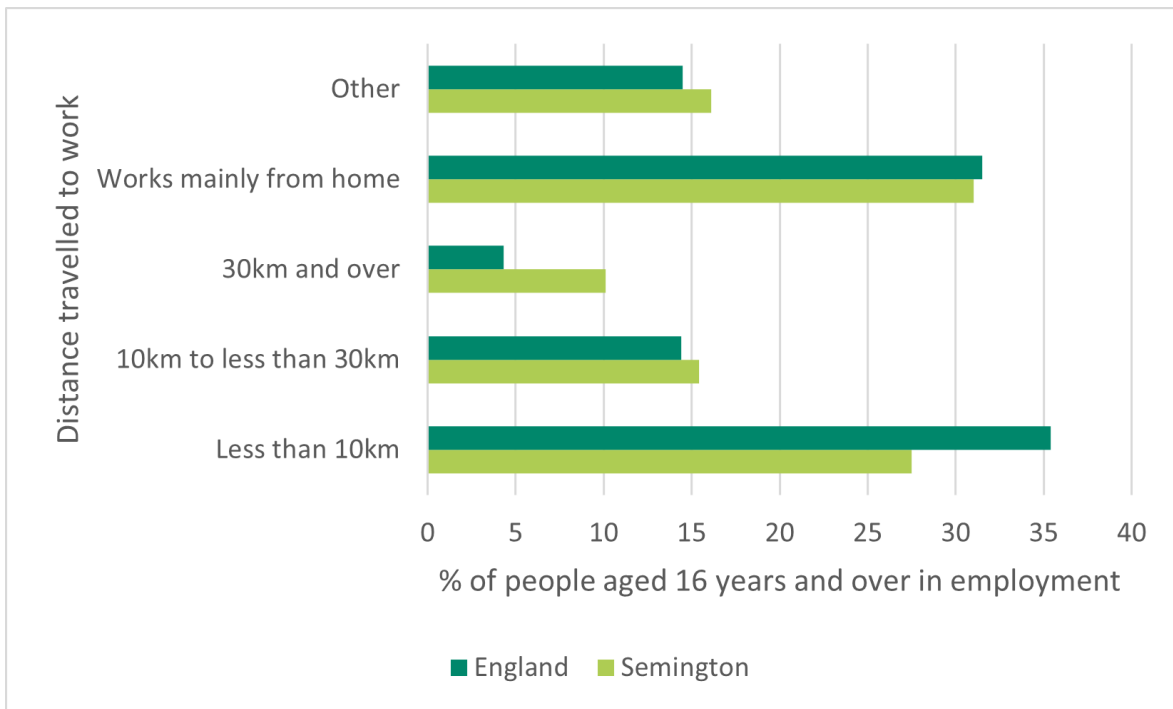


Figure 10.2 Distance travelled to work in the neighbourhood area compared to the national average (Census 2021)

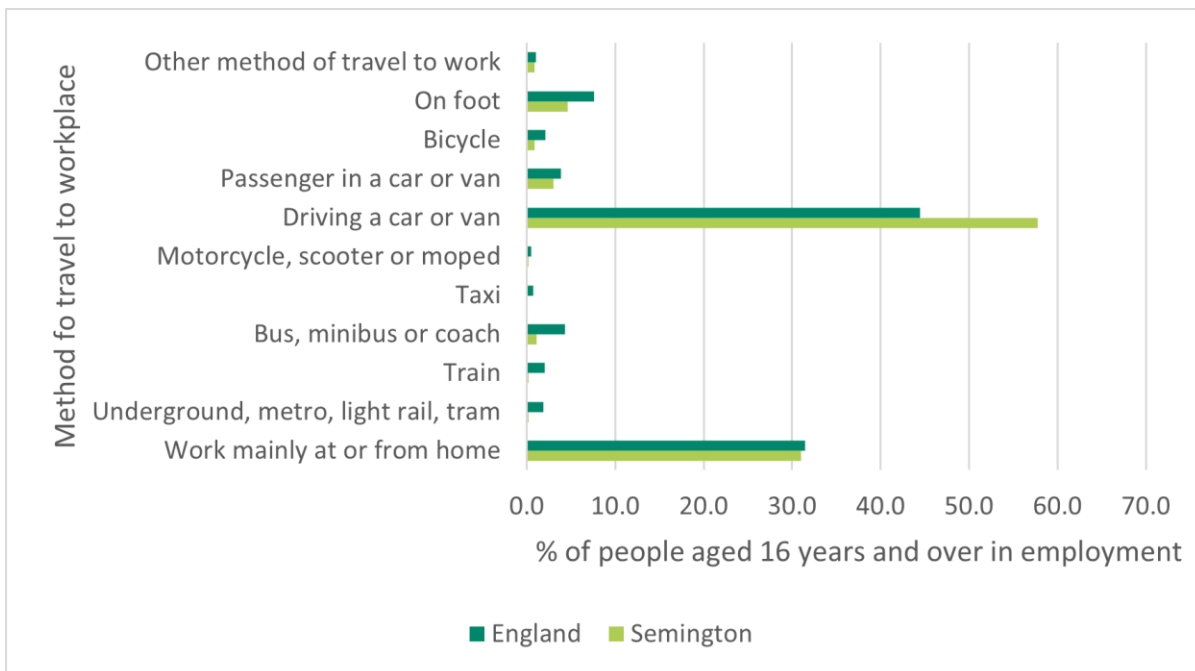


Figure 10.3: Method of travel to workplace in the neighbourhood area compared to the national average (Census 2021)

Key evidence sources

10.2 Evidence sources which have informed the development of key issues include:

- [Bustimes - Semington](#)
- [Stagecoach 49 Bus Route and Timetable \(Swindon - Devizes - Trowbridge\)](#)
- [Faresaver X34 Timetable \(Frome – Trowbridge – Chippenham\)](#)
- [Libra Travels X84, X85 \(Semington - Staverton - Bath\)](#)
- [Great Western Railway](#)
- [Google Maps](#)
- [Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Explorer](#)
- [Office for National Statistics – Build a custom area profile \(Census 2021\)](#)

Policy context

Table 10.1: Additional plans and policies relating to transportation and movement

Document title	Year of publication
Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026	2011
Wiltshire Council's Bus Improvement Plan	2021

Commentary

10.3 There are no railway stations within the neighbourhood area. The closest railway station is located in Melksham, located approximately 3.3km north of the neighbourhood area, followed by Trowbridge, located approximately 4.2km to the southwest of the neighbourhood area. Trowbridge Railway Station provides regular services to several locations (including but not limited to): Bristol Temple Meads, Bath Spa, Cardiff Central, Gloucester and Swindon. Melksham Railway Station provides a less frequent service to Swindon and Westbury (including other stops).

10.4 According to Bus Times and local bus timetables, there are four services that run through the neighbourhood area. The Stagecoach service, the 49, runs every hour with reduced service on Sundays from Swindon through Devizes to Trowbridge and vice versa. The Faresaver X34 runs every half hour from Frome through Trowbridge to Chippenham and vice versa, Monday through Saturday. The Libra Travels X84 runs on Fridays and X85 on Tuesdays from Semington, through Staverton to Bath at 0940 and return at 1255. These are 'shoppers trips' buses and so only run at these times on these days.

10.5 There are two primary roads in the neighbourhood area (see **Figure 10.1** above). These are:

- The A361 runs south of the village of Semington and links the neighbourhood area with Trowbridge, Devizes, Frome and Shepton Mallet.
- The A350 runs north to south through the centre of the neighbourhood area, from the M4 to the north of Chippenham to Poole in Dorset. It is considered a significant corridor through west Wiltshire and links the neighbourhood area with Westbury and Melksham. Given the high volume of traffic, the A350 is of concern as it passes through residential areas, severs access to retail and the rail station, and crosses several busy junctions. It can also suffer from slow moving traffic as a result of various speed limits, capacity constraints, road conditions and layout, and access requirements for adjacent commercial and retail uses.

10.6 The Public Right of Way (PRoW) map provided by Wiltshire Council indicates that the neighbourhood area contains a number of public footpaths, bridleways and byways within its boundary. The majority of these connect Semington village to other locations in the neighbourhood area such as Littleton, but also to locations outside of the neighbourhood area, such as Hilperton. Some of the central roads, such as the High Street in Semington, are also paved on at least one side for pedestrians.

Key issues

10.7 Future development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase the number of private vehicles on local roads, given the limited public transportation opportunities within the neighbourhood area. This could exacerbate existing traffic and congestion during peak periods and potentially lead to parking issues in the neighbourhood area.

10.8 A greater level of development within the neighbourhood area could encourage improvements to public transportation infrastructure and services. This could include an increase in the number of bus services.

SEA objective

10.9 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

10.10 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Support the objectives within the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes?
- Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements?
- Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?
- Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?

- Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change?
- Improve road safety and reduce pollution from vehicles?

11. Proposed SEA framework

- 11.1 The SEA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position and policy context that has been explored for a range of SEA topics (as set out in **Chapters 3 to 10**).
- 11.2 The framework consists of a set of headline objectives and supporting assessment questions, which will be used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft Semington NP (and reasonable alternatives).
- 11.3 **Table 11.1** below outlines the proposed SEA framework, bringing together the objectives and assessment questions that have been set out at the end of each SEA topic.

Table 11.1: The proposed SEA Framework

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Air quality	Support objectives to improve air quality within and surrounding the neighbourhood area and minimise impacts on the nearby AQMA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to improvements to air quality in the AQMAs in proximity to the neighbourhood area? Implement measures (such as green infrastructure), which will help to support good air quality in the neighbourhood area? Promote and encourage more sustainable transport options? Encourage development which reduces the need to travel?
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance nationally and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species, including ancient woodland? Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks? Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity? • Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel? • Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure? • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area? • Sustainably manage water run-off, and reduce runoff where possible? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing? • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population? • Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including health infrastructure? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements, including improved access to open space?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Wiltshire and Swindon HER? • Protect the integrity of WWII relics in the area? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible? • Identify and avoid the development of the BMV land? • Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste? • Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development? • Protect waterbodies from pollution? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling? • Avoid any negative impacts on mineral and waste infrastructure?
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and / or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the water setting, or rural setting, including trees and hedgerows? • Support the objectives within the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes? • Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement? • Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area? • Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change? • Improve road safety and reduce pollution from vehicles?

12. Future baseline

- 12.1 In the context of SEA, there is a need to consider the future baseline. The future baseline is the expected continuation and / or evolution of aspects of the baseline, based on what we know today. The future baseline is inevitably uncertain and unpredictable.
- 12.2 In the future, development (housing, employment, and wider infrastructure) will continue to come forward without a neighbourhood plan. This will either be allocated through the Local Plan, or speculatively through the planning system. In this respect a 'business as usual' approach means that development in line with Local Plan policies and the NPPF is likely to continue as a natural evolution of the baseline.
- 12.3 In accepting a 'business as usual' approach, it is also accepted that increases in absolute carbon emissions are likely to continue (in the absence of strategic, including global, action). A focus is therefore paid to per capita emissions, whereby planning can influence root behaviours and support lifestyle changes which have a recognisable and measurable localised impact.
- 12.4 It is assumed that development would be delivered alongside suitable, and widely accepted, mitigation in line with Local Plan and national policies. This would include sustainable drainage systems, efficiency standards, sequential and exception testing etc. More recently, it is recognised that a biodiversity net gain standard (10%) is being embedded in development standards nationally.
- 12.5 Furthermore, it is recognised that assets are afforded a level of protection, according to their significance, through the planning system (with internationally and nationally designated features afforded greater weight in planning decisions). It is assumed that existing national and local planning and policy protections will remain in the future as a key consideration for the development management process.
- 12.6 These assumptions will be considered throughout the assessment process, whilst recognising that uncertainty remains, and a precautionary principle will still be required.

13. Next steps

Subsequent stages for the SEA process

13.1 Scoping (the current stage) is the second stage of the SEA process:

- Screening.
- **Scoping.**
- Assess reasonable alternatives (to inform preparation of the draft plan); and
- Prepare the Environmental Report (to inform consultation and plan finalisation).

13.2 The next stage will involve appraising reasonable alternatives for the Semington NP. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be fed back to Semington Parish Council so that they might be considered when preparing the draft Semington NP.

13.3 Once the draft ('pre-submission version') plan has been prepared, it will be subjected to SEA, and the prepared Environmental Report will go out to consultation alongside it.

13.4 Following consultation on the draft Semington NP and the Environmental Report, the Semington NP will be finalised and submitted to Wiltshire Council for Independent Examination.

Consultation on the Scoping Report

13.5 At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies. The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report; in particular, the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues, and the proposed SEA framework.

13.6 The consultation period runs from Monday 20th November to Wednesday 27th December. Comments on the Scoping Report should be sent to:

Emma Hazell, AECOM

Email address: emma.hazell@aecom.com

13.7 All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.