



Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT AND HABITATS
REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT**

SCREENING DOCUMENT

Prepared by Stratford-on-Avon District Council

March 2015

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This screening report has been prepared to determine whether the Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan (WANDP) should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.2. A SEA is required for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. This particularly relates to plans which designate sites for development.
- 1.3. The purpose of SEA is to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate considerations of the environment into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.
- 1.4. The SEA process sets out criteria for assessing the significance of the impact of a plan on the environment. For example, if a plan proposes a housing development, it may have an impact on the wildlife of the area or have an impact on the landscape. If a significant effect is possible, the assessment requires the consideration of options and for the evaluation of the potential effects on the environment.
- 1.5. To ascertain if SEA is required, a 'screening' exercise is undertaken which looks at the proposals in a Neighbourhood Plan to see if a significant effect is likely. The criteria for this screening are set out in the relevant legislation (Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule I of Regulations as set out in Table 2 of this report).
- 1.6. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a process which looks at the potential impact of proposals within a plan on internationally designated wildlife sites. For the purposes of HRA, internationally designated wildlife sites are Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar wetland sites.
- 1.7. The initial stage of the HRA process involves consideration of the reasons for designation and the conservation objectives of each internationally designated wildlife site within a reasonable distance of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and the potential impact of the proposals within the Plan on these sites.
- 1.8. This report details the assessment of the WANDP against the need for an SEA or HRA to be produced to accompany the Plan.
- 1.9. This report has been sent to the three statutory consultees of the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England to elicit their views on its contents. The results of this consultation and a screening determination will be issued indicating the outcome of the screening stage.

2. European Directives

- 2.1. The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is the European Directive 2001/42/EC. It is transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or

the SEA Regulations. The Government has published detailed guidance on the SEA regulations in 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM, 2005).

- 2.2. Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive) and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent projects, must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 2.3. The 2008 Planning Act requires that plan making bodies to comply with the SEA Directive by screening the plan's potential effects on the environment.

3. Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan

- 3.1. The Neighbourhood Development Plan was initiated following the enactment of the Government's Localism Act 2012. The Act sets out a series of measures to shift power away from central government towards local communities. A key component of the Localism Act is neighbourhood planning; as a new tier of planning policy which enables local people to have a greater say about future development in their communities.
- 3.2. The neighbourhood planning process for Welford-on-Avon began in late 2012, following the creation of a steering group and the plan has been informed by numerous consultation events with the local community.
- 3.3. The consultation findings have been used to develop the vision, objectives and policies of the draft plan.
- 3.4. After pre-submission consultation on the draft plan, any responses will be taken into account and used to develop the 'submission' draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. This version of the plan will be subject to inspection by an independent examiner. If the examiner approves of the WANDP, it will be subject to a local referendum. If 50% or more of people voting in the referendum support the plan, the WANDP will be adopted by the District Council as part of its development plan.

Size

- 3.5. The neighbourhood plan area of Welford-on-Avon includes the village of Welford-on-Avon outlying properties and farmsteads. The settlement of Welford-on-Avon has been designated as a category 2 Local Service Village within the settlement hierarchy of the District Council's emerging Core Strategy. The estimated total population for the parish of Welford-on-Avon is 1,377 (ONS 2011). There are some 622 dwellings situated in the plan area.
- 3.6. The neighbourhood plan area for Welford-on-Avon covers the administrative boundary of Welford-on-Avon Parish (see map at Appendix 1).

Location

- 3.7. Welford-on-Avon is a small village that is situated approximately 4 miles south-west of Stratford-upon-Avon. The River Avon runs along the north-west boundary of the Parish, with a large area being located within the associated flood zone, as indicated on the map at appendix 5.
- 3.8. The village of Welford-on-Avon has a Conservation Area and has 65 listed buildings; including the Grade I listed St. Peter's Church, as shown on the map at appendix 2.
- 3.9. The map at appendix 3 indicates the extent of Grade 2 and 3A agricultural land on the periphery of the village.
- 3.10. The village has a number of areas of open space, playing fields and allotments, as indicated on the map at appendix 4 and has a Site of Special Scientific Interest at the northwest corner of the neighbourhood area, as indicated on the map at appendix 6.

Nature

- 3.11. The WANDP is a land use plan, prepared for town and country planning and land use and sets out a framework for future development within the Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan area. The WANDP is a lower tier of the planning hierarchy, and it must conform with upper tier plans such as the Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Local Plan and national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) but also have regard to the policies set out in the Council's emerging Core Strategy.
- 3.12. Following extensive public consultation, the neighbourhood plan group developed a Vision and a set of Strategic Objectives to be addressed in the WANDP. The vision identified Welford-on-Avon to be:
 - A thriving, inclusive community which conserves and enhances the village and surrounding parish and meets the aspirations of those who live, work and visit here
- 3.13. Following on from this vision, the key objectives for the WANDP were identified as set out below (in no particular order):
 - The heritage assets of the village (including listed buildings, conservation area, cherished views, SSSIs, river amenity areas and other specified sites), its character and street scene will have been conserved
 - The rural nature of the parish with open spaces, mature woodland and pleasant vistas set in a green environment will have been preserved
 - The separate identity of Welford-on-Avon and adjacent settlements will have been maintained
 - Excellent infrastructure will support an expanded range of community and business activities including a flourishing home working economy
 - Infrastructure to meet the needs of all developments which impact on the parish will have been secured in advance of their construction
 - A mix of market and affordable housing developments that achieve the ambition of the Local Plan in the period to 2031 will have been provided in a sustainable, phased manner and sympathetically integrated into the village environment

- Excellent design of all new development reflecting the character of the village will be championed
 - A multi-purpose community meeting place and sports facility will have been created to support recreational and sporting activities for all age groups
 - Traffic will have been managed and through traffic will have been controlled thus ensuring the village roads are safe for all residents
 - Public transport will have been improved and the extent of footpaths and cycle ways further developed
 - Sustainable green and low energy consumption using existing and emerging technologies will have been championed
 - River and surface water flooding will have been controlled
- 3.14. At this stage of the Plan making process, the plan includes draft policies covering the following topic areas:
- Heritage and Environment
 - Infrastructure
 - Economic Development
 - Housing and Land Use

4. Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

- 4.1. The process for determining whether or not a SEA is required is described as screening. In order to screen, it is necessary to determine whether a plan would have significant environmental effects by using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations. A determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted, comprising English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency.
- 4.2. The plan makers must publish a statement with the decision within 28 days of the determination of the screening. If it is determined that a SEA is not required, the statement should include the reasons for this decision.

5. The Screening Process

- 5.1. The Localism Act requires Neighbourhood Plans to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. The District Council's Core Strategy had its EiP throughout January this year and the examiner's interim report is due late March. The WANDP must be in general conformity with the policies of the Core Strategy.
- 5.2. The Core Strategy was subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. This integrated the SEA Directive's requirements to assess the plan for significant effects on the environment, and provided mitigation measures recommendations, where relevant.
- 5.3. **Figure 1** shows a flow diagram prepared by ODPM (2005), setting out the sequential approach to the application of the SEA process to plans and programmes. This is used to screen the WANDP.

Figure1: shows the Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (ODPM 2005)

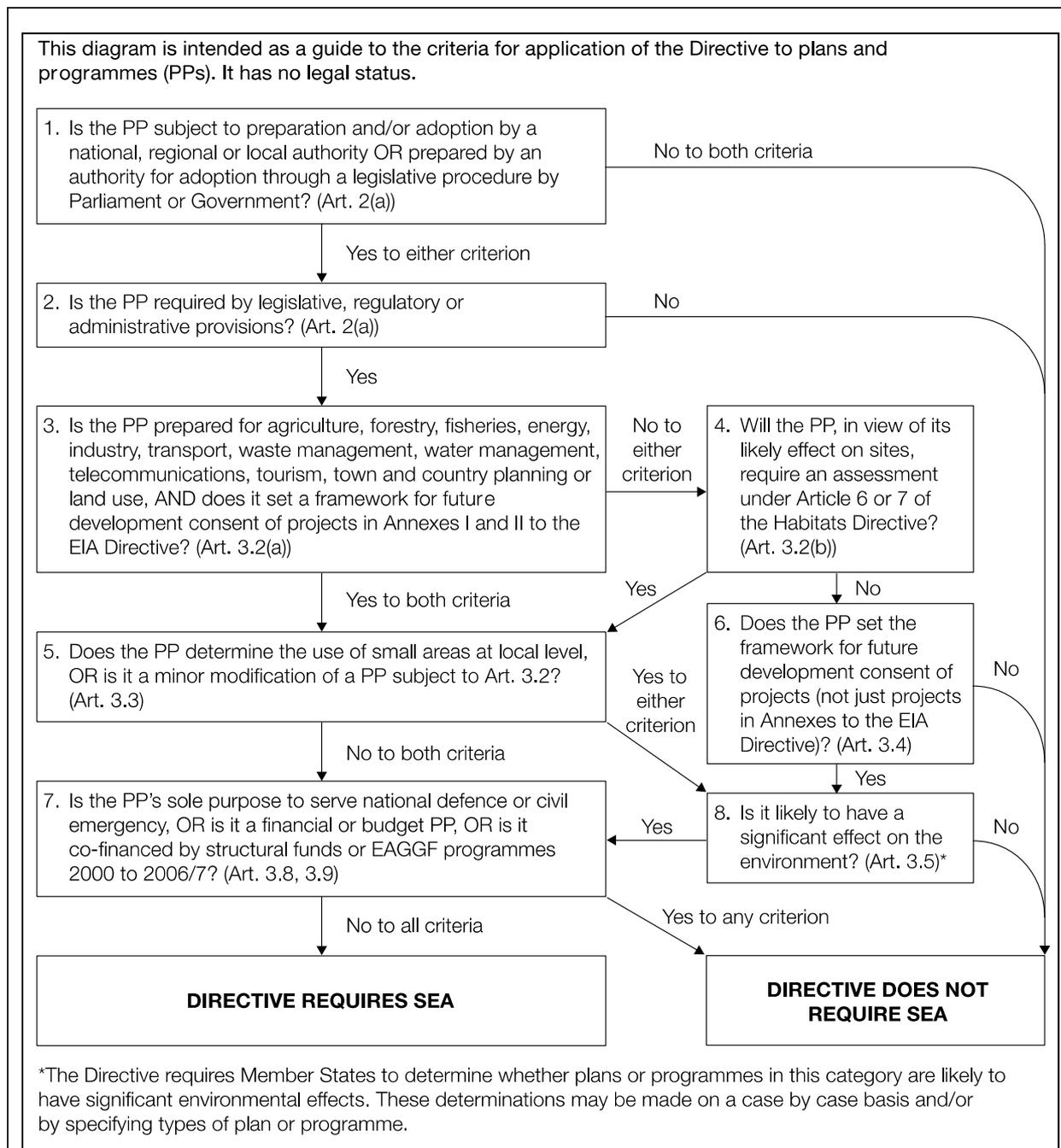


Table 1: shows the stages involved to establish whether a SEA is required.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the pp (plan or programme) subject to preparation and /or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament of Government? (Art.2 (a))	Y	The plan comprises a NDP, which is prepared by a qualifying body under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The NDP will be adopted by Stratford District Council if it is successful at referendum, receiving 50% or more of affirmative votes.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? Art.2 (a)	N	The Localism Act 2012 enables communities to prepare a NDP. However, it is not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. On successful adoption by the District Council, it will form part of the development plan for the area, and as such, it should continue to be screened under the SEA Directive.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning and land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consents of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2 (a))	Y	The WANDP is a land use plan and sets the framework for future development consents within plan area. It is unlikely that plan would contain development projects contained in Annex I. However, it may be possible that the NDP could contain infrastructure projects, listed in Annex II of the Directive 97/11/EC, such as urban development, which is subject to a EIA if they considered to have significant effects on the environment.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	HRA screening was undertaken for the Stratford-on-Avon District Council Core Strategy and has been screened out of further assessment. Therefore the NDP is unlikely to require a HRA.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art 3.3)	N	The NDP does not identify or allocate any specific sites for development over the plan period.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consents	Y	A NDP forms part of the Development Plan and will be used

of projects (not just projects in the annexes of the European Directive)? (Art. 3.4)		in the decision making process on planning applications. Therefore, it sets the framework for future developments at a local level.
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it co-financed by structural funds of EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N	A NDP does not deal with these issues.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	A NDP could potentially have an effect on the environment. However, whether it is significant depends upon the proposals within the NDP. This requires individual assessment (see Section 6, below).

6. Determination of significant effects

6.1. The criteria from Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) can be used to determine whether the plan would result in likely significant effects. Question 8 with the ODPM guidance (see Table.1) refers to whether the NDP would have a significant effect on the environment. Table 2 below discusses the likely effects of the WANDP.

Table 2: Criteria and response of screening

Criteria (from Annex I of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response
Characteristics of the plans and programmes	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The WANDP will establish the development control framework for the parish of Welford-on-Avon. The WANDP is prepared for town and country planning. The plan does not include housing allocations, but looks to protect the natural and historic environment and support economic development in line with the emerging Core Strategy. It is highly unlikely that any projects would fall under 10 (a) of Annex II of the EIA Directive.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The NDP is the lower tier of the planning hierarchy and as such must conform to plans in the upper tiers rather than influence them. In this case, the WANDP must conform with the Stratford-on-Avon

	District Local Plan and the NPPF as well as having regard to the submission version of the District Council's Core Strategy. It is not considered to have significant influence on other plans and programmes or their effects on the environment.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The WANDP contributes, as required, to the achievement of sustainable development at the neighbourhood area level. Policies set out in the WANDP are planned to have a positive impact on the local environmental assets and places valued by local people in the NDP area. The likelihood of significant effects on the environment is therefore minimised.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	<p>Key issues taken from the Stratford-on-Avon District Council Scoping Report and SA of the Intended Proposed Submission Core Strategy relevant to the plan include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The impact of traffic and noise in Welford-on-Avon village through any additional development. 2. Potential surface water and fluvial flooding is a concern within the village of Welford-on-Avon and climate change is likely to increase this risk, resulting from heavier and more intense periods of rain fall during future winters. 3. The protection and enhancement of biodiversity landscape. 4. The effects on the historic environment from inappropriate and poor quality design and layout of any new development. The village of Welford-on-Avon has a Conservation Area and has a number of listed buildings. <p>Any existing environmental problems could be tackled through the implementation of the plan.</p>
(e) relevance of the plan or programme to the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	<p>The WANDP is a land-use plan and sets the framework for future development consents in the Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Plan Area.</p> <p>The WANDP sets out policies which planning applications within the NDP area</p>

	<p>must adhere to.</p> <p>The Welford-on-Avon NDP has to be in conformity with the Local Plan. The Local Plan has had regard to European community legislation on the environment and therefore this legislation will not be relevant for the NDP.</p>
<p>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</p>	
<p>(a) probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development in the neighbourhood plan area is likely to lead to increased traffic generation given the levels of development proposed in the plan. Any effect is not likely to be reversible and would constitute a long-term effect. 2. Any effects on biodiversity are likely to be long-term and irreversible. However, this is dependent upon locations for development and the WANDP does not specifically allocate sites for development 3. The historic environment is an important receptor. There is a Conservation Area within the NDP area within which are a number of listed buildings. Any adverse effects are likely to be irreversible, meaning historic assets will require protecting through sensitive and appropriate design and location of new development. 4. The areas of open space, allotments, recreation ground and other green areas in the NDP area are examples of Green Infrastructure (GI) and are vital to the health and wellbeing of residents as well as providing a stronghold for biodiversity in the area. These features provide an opportunity for improvement in the long-term. 5. Climate change predictions forecast that the frequency, probability and duration of flood events are likely to increase in the long term. Climate change is an important receptor to consider. The River Avon runs to the east, north and west of the village of Welford-on-Avon, with large tracts of land lying within the flood plain and as such, flood risk likely in certain parts of

	<p>the village of Welford-on-Avon.</p> <p>6. Apart from the existing built-up areas, the entire NDP area is classified as Grade 2 or 3 agricultural land. How this important natural resource is used is vital to sustainable development. This includes taking the right decisions about protecting it from inappropriate development.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	Given the scale of development proposed within the NDP, the cumulative effects of the proposals are unlikely to be significant on the local environment.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	Given the scale and type of development proposed within the NDP, any effects would be localised in nature and are unlikely to have a significant impact on neighbouring areas.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	The NDP may generate additional traffic; however it is unlikely to cause a health risk to the local population, to the degree to which it would require a SEA or EIA to avoid and mitigate the effects.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Welford-on-Avon NDP is concerned with development within the neighbourhood area. Given the scale of development proposed within the NDP, the potential for wide-reaching environmental impacts are likely to be limited and minimal.
<p>(f) the value and vulnerability of the areas likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</p> <p>(iii) intensive land use</p>	<p>(i) There is a Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings located within the NDP area. The area surrounding the village is generally farmland. Given the limited scale of development proposed, any effects would be unlikely to have a significant impact on natural characteristics or cultural heritage.</p> <p>(ii) There is no AQMA in place in the plan area. Given to the quantum of development proposed over the plan period, it is unlikely to exceed any environmental quality standard or limit values.</p> <p>(iii) Not applicable.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national,	The NDP area is not covered by recognised national landscape protection

community or international protection status	<p>status (i.e. Green Belt, AONB).</p> <p>There are no nationally designated sites of biodiversity interest within the NDP area. There is a SSSI on the periphery of the NDP area, but no development is earmarked to be located close to this site. The NDP also seeks to protect open and green spaces. As such, given the scale of development proposed, any effects would be unlikely to have a significant impact on areas of landscape with protected status.</p>
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7. Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 7.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. The HRA therefore looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. European wildlife sites are:
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
 - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)
- 7.2 In addition to SPAs and SACs sites Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although they are not covered by the Habitats regulations, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites should be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites. European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.
- 7.3 The legislation sets out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan on internationally designated sites. The first stage of this process is a “screening” exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the Plan to have an impact on the site.
- 7.4 Under Criteria 6 of the assessment in Figure 2.2, it was concluded that a NDP may have an impact on internationally designated wildlife sites and that a case by case assessment was required. For the purposes of the “screening” assessment the potential impact of the Neighbourhood Development Plan on sites within 20km of the Neighbourhood Plan area are assessed.
- 7.5 There are no European wildlife or Ramsar sites within the NDP area or within 20km of the NDP area.

8. Screening Outcome and reasons for determination

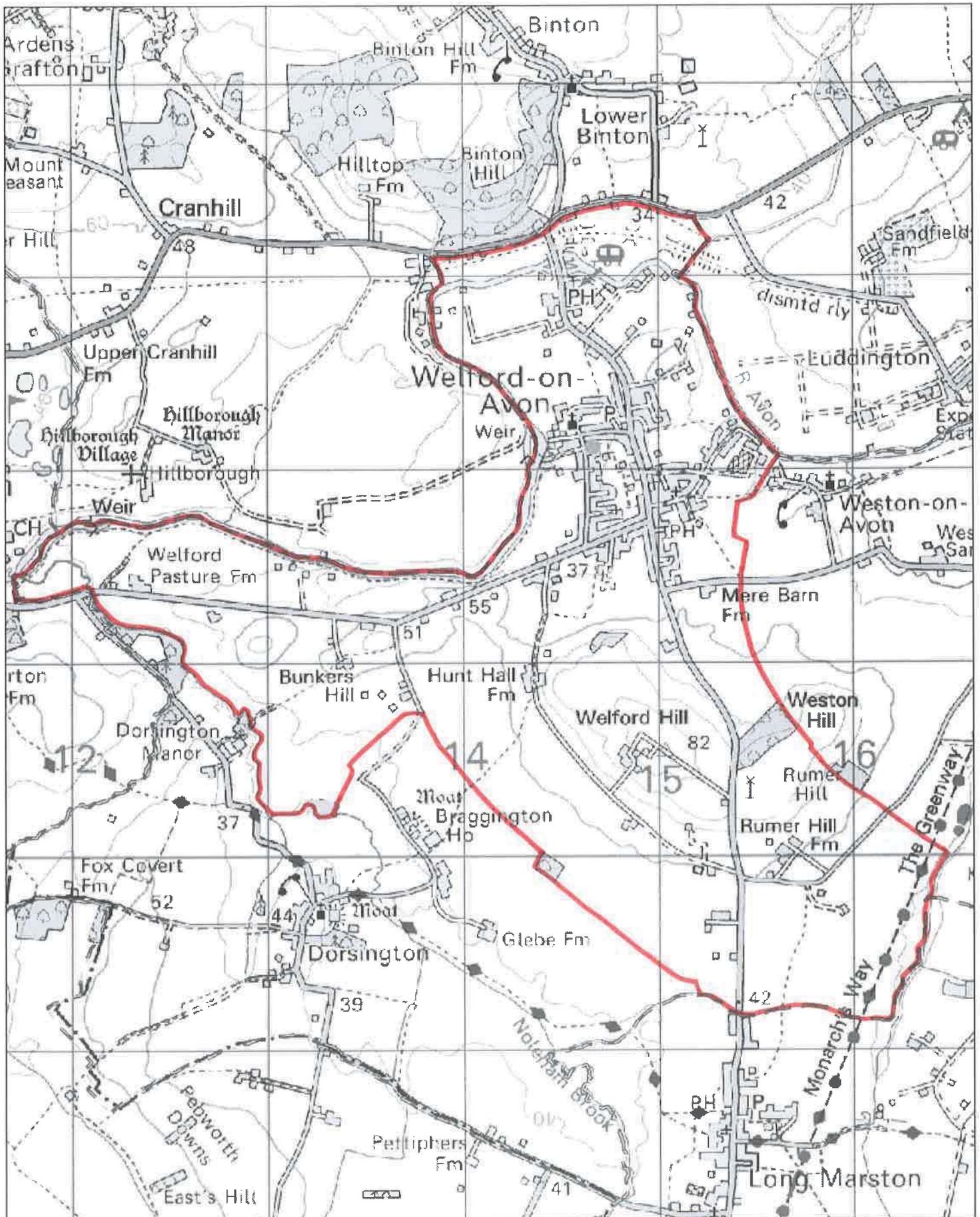
- 8.1 The WANDP will conform with the strategic influence of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Core Strategy. Whilst not specifically allocating sites, the NDP will influence the location of housing and employment and its design in the plan area for the period of the plan. These factors can have significant environmental determinants.
- 8.2 This screening report has explored the potential effects of the proposed WANDP with a view to determining the likely requirement for an environmental assessment under the SEA directive. Results of the screening process indicate that there is uncertainty associated with the size, nature and location of likely proposals in the NDP.

SEA Assessment

- 8.3 On the basis of the SEA Screening Assessment set out in Table 2 above, it is concluded that the WANDP will not have significant effects in relation to any of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, and therefore does not need to be subject to a SEA report.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 8.4 There are no internationally designated wildlife sites within the Neighbourhood Area or within 20km of it. The WANDP will not, therefore, have an adverse effect on the integrity of internationally designated sites either on its own or in combination with other plans and does not need to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment.



Legend

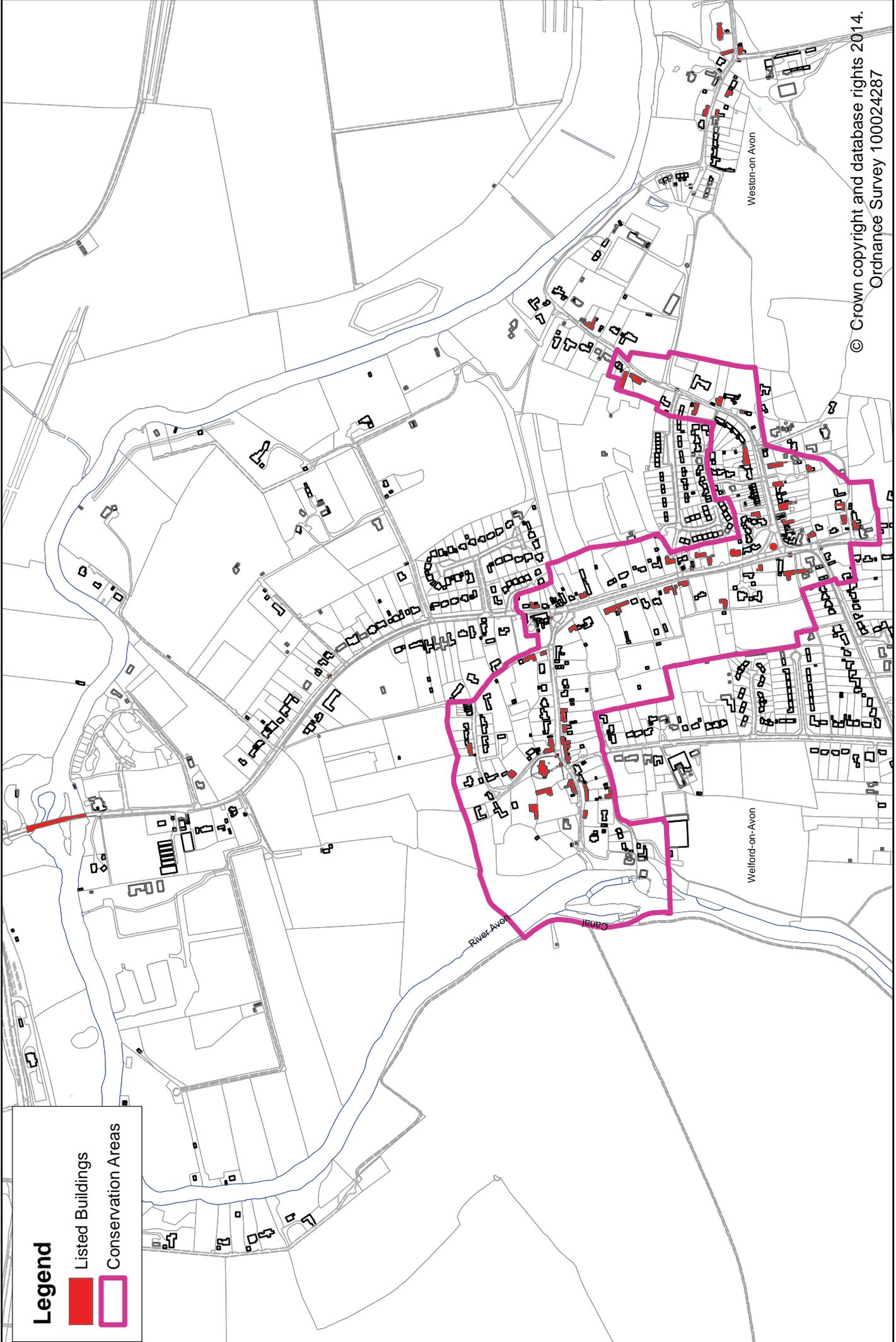
 Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Plan Area



Scale 1:25,000



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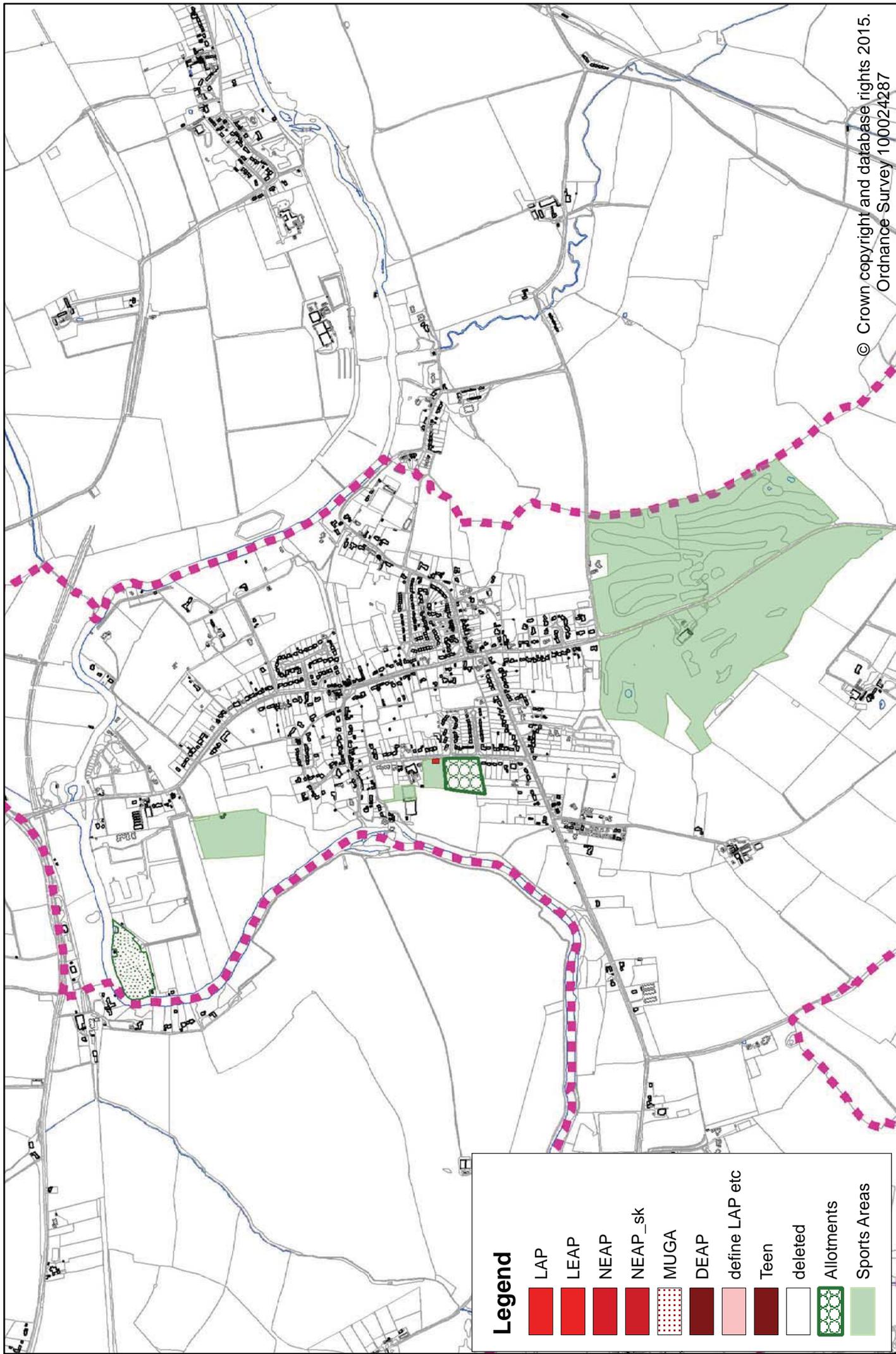
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 Listed Buildings

 Conservation Areas

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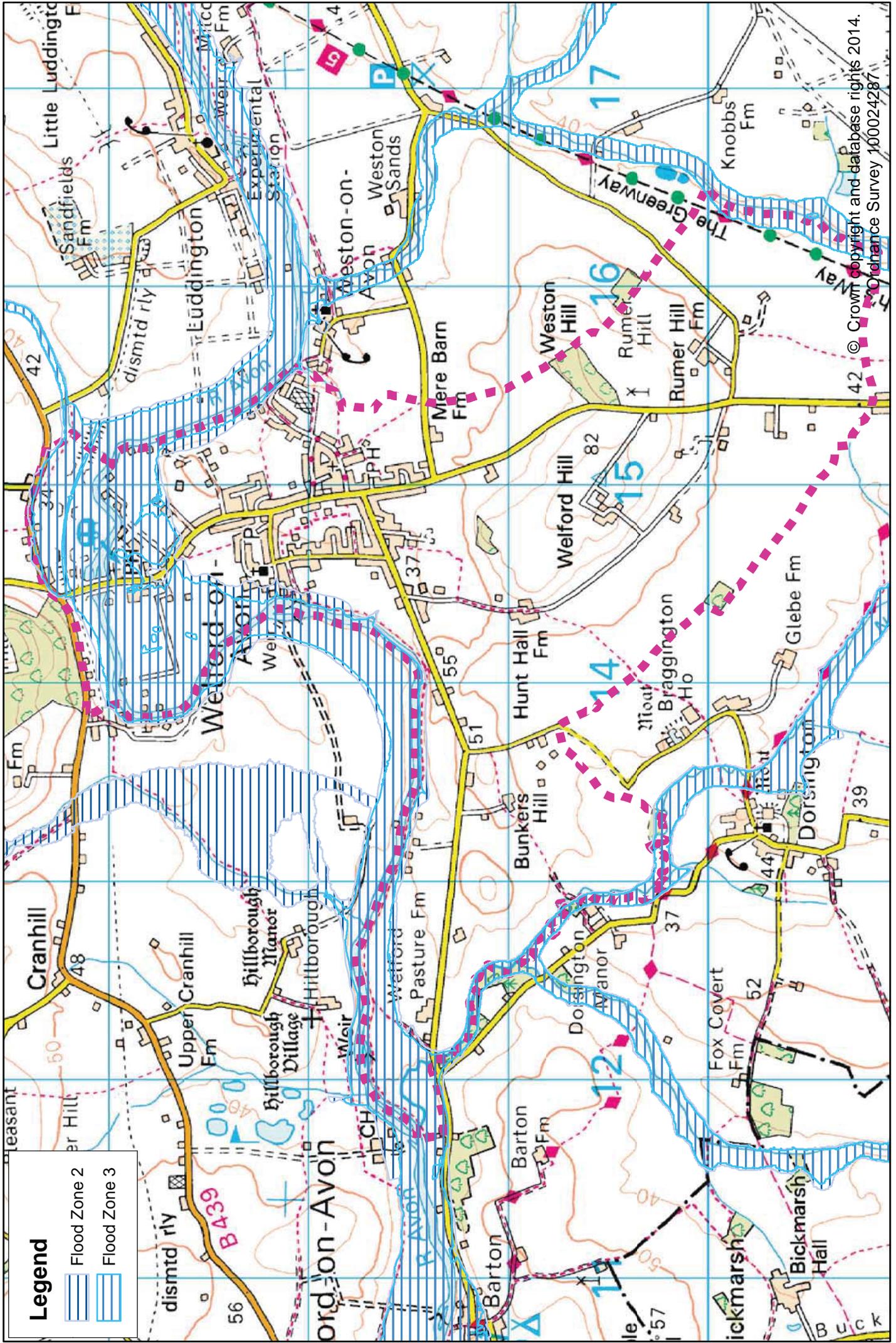
Welford-on-Avon



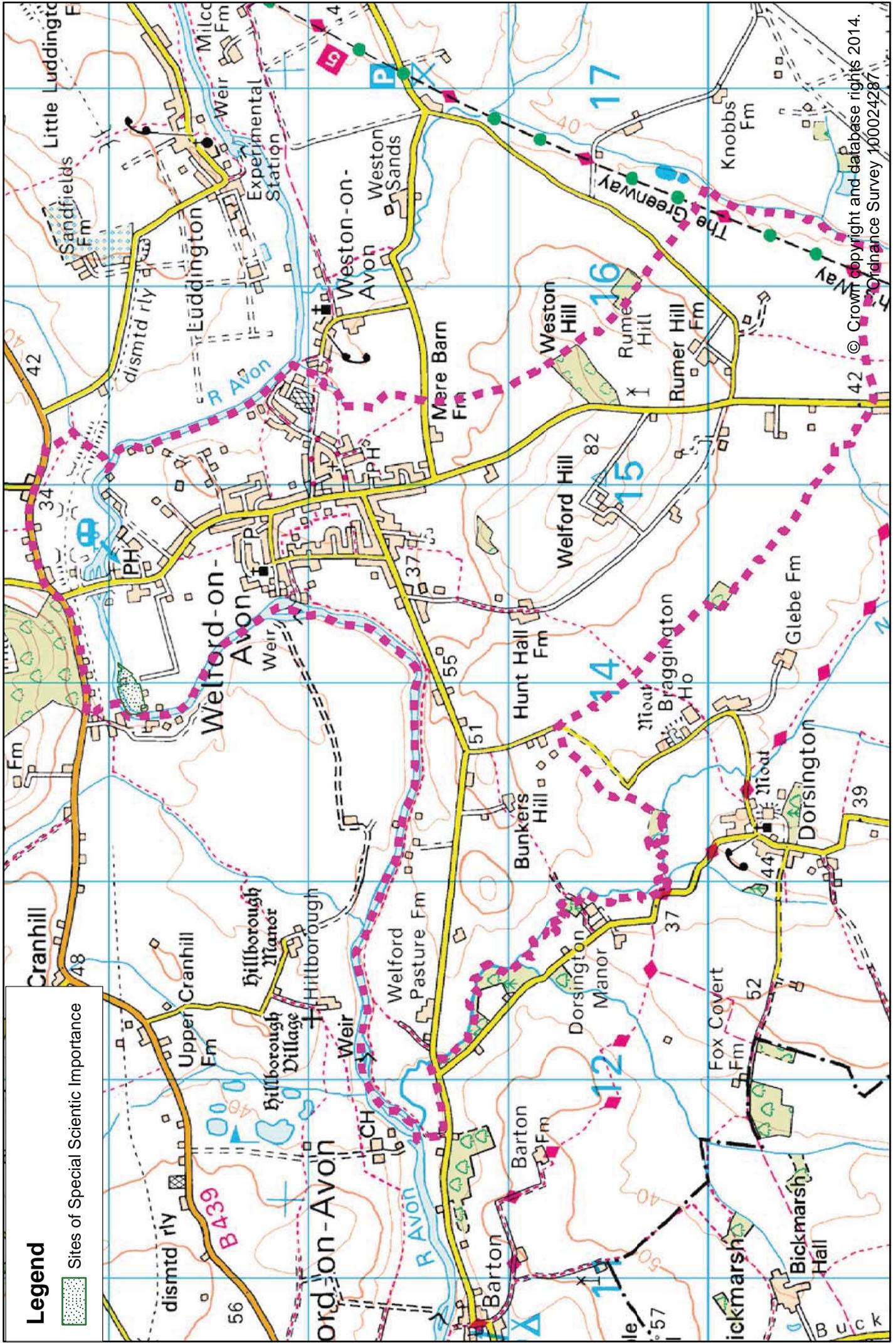
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- NEAP
- NEAP_sk
- MUGA
- DEAP
- define LAP etc
- Teen
- deleted
- Allotments
- Sports Areas

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