

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Framework Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document

SEA Screening Document

December 2022



LEPUS CONSULTING
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Acronyms & Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
EU	European Union
GI	Green Infrastructure
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSE	Likely Significant Effect
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PP	Policy or Programme
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage System
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
WIC	Wellesbourne Innovation Campus

1 Introduction

1.1 This report

1.1.1 This Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening report has been prepared to determine whether the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Masterplan Framework Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should be subject to an SEA, in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive)¹ and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations)².

1.1.2 This SEA screening report is based on the proposed content of the SPD, as set out in the 'Draft V2' of the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Masterplan Framework SPD, dated 11/11/22, prepared by the Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Detailed guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive'³ and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 'Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal' section⁴.

1.2.2 Under the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, certain types of plans that set the framework for the consent of future development projects must be subject to an environmental assessment.

1.2.3 A previous Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was carried out alongside the development of the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy⁵ that examined the social, environmental and economic impacts of the Strategy. Mitigation measures were suggested where adverse impacts were identified (p8, para 1.36):

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=en> [Date Accessed: 14/12/22]

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date Accessed: 14/12/22]

³ ODPM (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguides_ea.pdf [Date Accessed: 13/12/22]

⁴ SEA/SA Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> [Date Accessed: 14/12/22]

⁵ Sustainability Appraisals Technical Evidence. Available at: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-building/sustainability.cfm> [Accessed: 16/12/22]

Increasing job opportunities in the area could help reduce out-of-village commuting and provide less dependence on the two local employment sources. Wellesbourne needs a strong emphasis on local job provision to overcome some of the potentially adverse outcomes associated with the dominance of cars and the transport network.

The new pedestrian and cycling links would provide good local opportunities to travel sustainably and would also benefit health through open air recreation by linking up with Charlecote Park and Compton Verney.

- 1.2.4 The University of Warwick Campus, close to Wellesbourne, is the subject of Proposal RURAL.2 in the Preferred Options Site Allocation Plan (SAP)⁶ An SA⁷ was also undertaken. which found that *“transportation is the only issue which needs to be mitigated, due to the limited catchment of Wellesbourne and the size of the centres it is competing with it would be most efficient to facilitate travel to these larger settlements in a sustainable manner. Ensure that the current facilities remain strong and can service some of the everyday needs of residents, but focus on public transport and walking and cycling routes.*

1.3 Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Masterplan Framework SPD

- 1.3.1 The SPD establishes high-level design principles that the Council will use to guide development proposals and assess planning applications within the Wellesbourne Campus of the University of Warwick. Its role is to establish the principles that will direct individual development proposals to come forward in a coordinated manner, allowing for the delivery of wider public realm, community, environmental, and infrastructure benefits, and not just to lay out a detailed design for what the Wellesbourne Campus will look like.
- 1.3.2 The site boundary for Wellesbourne Innovation Campus (WIC) is shown in Figure 1.1. The site is made up of around 190ha of mostly agricultural land that is predominantly used for research. A cluster of campus-style buildings are located close to A429 highway which borders the campus and in the north-eastern part of the plan area. The mix of historic and new building structures in the campus are connected by a network of roads and pathways that make it easier for users to travel on foot and by car.
- 1.3.3 A number of agricultural fields which border the site is indicative of its rural setting. The built-up area of Wellesbourne borders the site to the southeast. The Campus shares its south-eastern site boundary with the main rural service centre of the village of Wellesbourne. Wellesbourne offers a range of local amenities and services, including a post office, convenience stores and supermarkets, medical practices and public houses and restaurants.

⁶ Stratford-on-Avon District Council. Site allocations Plan. Available at: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-building/site-allocations-plan.cfm> [Accessed: 16/12/22]

⁷ Sustainability Appraisals Technical Evidence. Available at: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-building/sustainability.cfm> [Accessed: 16/12/22]

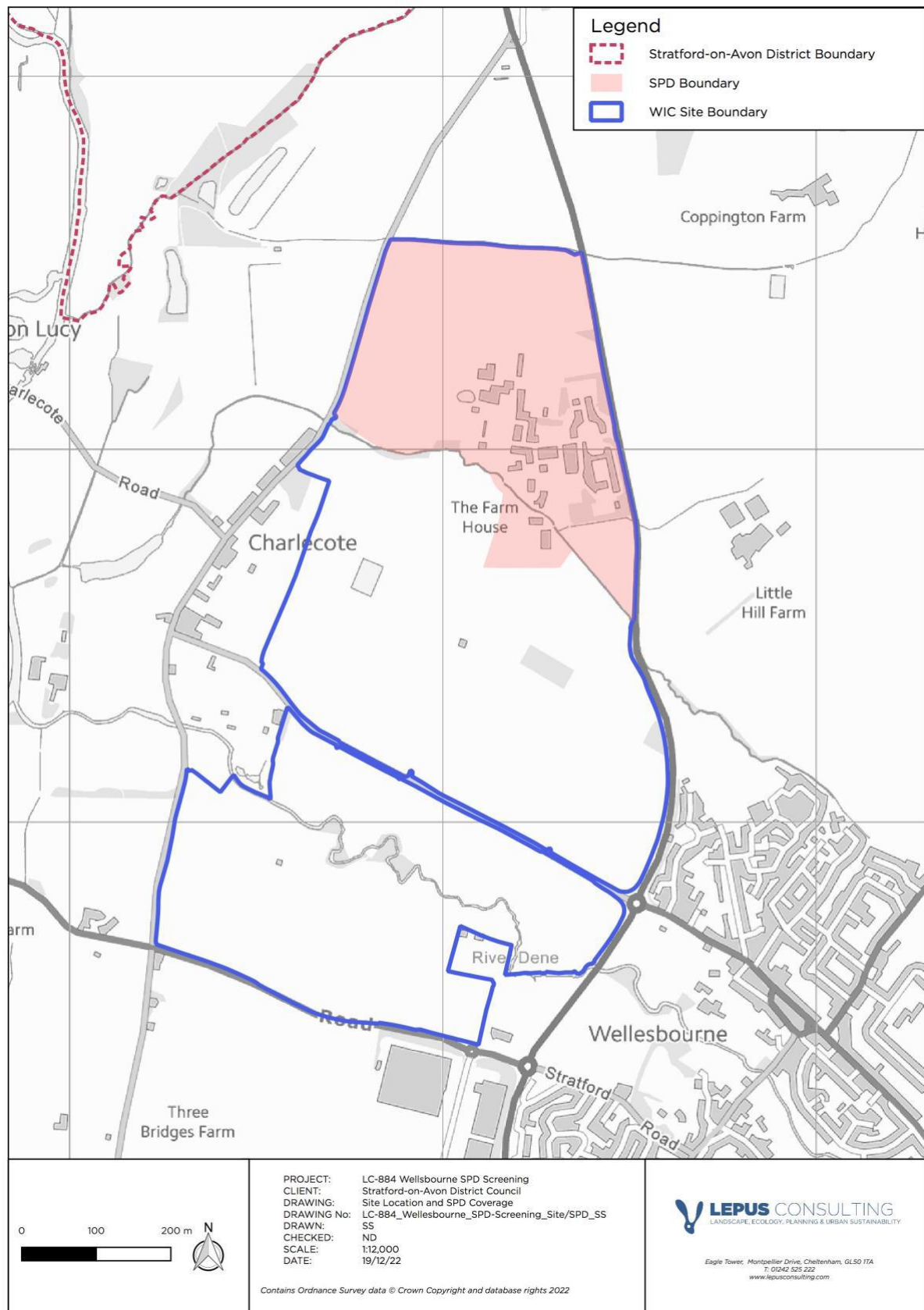


Figure 1.1 Site Location and SPD Coverage

1.4 Consultation

- 1.4.1 The SPD is subject to public consultation, which provides an opportunity for the public and local organisations to comment on the SPD. After consultation, responses are taken into account and, if relevant, are used to prepare an updated version of the SPD.
- 1.4.2 The updated version is then adopted by the Council, following the formal adoption procedure for an SPD⁸.

1.5 Relationship to Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy and South Warwickshire Local Plan

- 1.5.1 The planning policy context for the Wellesbourne Campus is set by the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy (adopted July 2016). The policies and proposals included within the Core Strategy have been prepared within the context of the NPPF, the overarching aim of which is to achieve sustainable development.
- 1.5.2 The policy of particular relevance in the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy is Policy AS.9 which is an over-arching Area Strategy for Wellesbourne. The policy covers three key themes: environmental, social and economic. The reference to the Campus is under the 'economic' theme and included at criterion 6, which states: *"Support the use of the Horticultural Research International (Warwick University) site for research and development and educational purposes"*
- 1.5.3 Interpretation of this policy is provided in the supporting text, at Paragraph 6.9.19 which states:
- 'Just to the north of the village is Horticulture Research International, which is part of the University of Warwick. It is a well-established base for research and teaching in plant and environmental sciences. There is some uncertainty about the future of some of the current uses on the site, with the prospect of certain activities moving to the main University campus. However, it provides a significant opportunity to expand research activities and jobs in the District in an accessible and attractive location.'*
- 1.5.4 The SPD has therefore been produced in the context of Policy AS.9 of the Core Strategy.
- 1.5.5 In January 2021 the Council commenced a review of its Core Strategy, working with Warwick District Council to prepare a new Local Plan for South Warwickshire. Part 1 of the Plan is expected to replace the strategic policies of the existing Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy and Warwick District Local Plan, both of which have plan periods that run to 2031.
- 1.5.6 Besides the South Warwickshire Local Plan, the Stratford-on-Avon District Council is also preparing a Site Allocations Plan (SAP), which will serve as guidance for certain types of development plans and their execution. The University of Warwick Campus, close to Wellesbourne, is the subject of Proposal RURAL.2, which outlines the Council's expectations for the general needs for development that will take place at the campus site between 2021/22 and 2030/31.

⁸ The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Part 5 Supplementary Planning Documents. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/2004/2204/part/5/made> [Date Accessed: 13/12/22]

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- 1.5.7 This masterplan will be used in conjunction with the Council's Development Plan, in particular the adopted Core Strategy and subsequently the emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan and the Stratford-on-Avon Site Allocations Plan (SAP) once they are adopted. The SPD will provide additional policy guidance to help shape development proposals at Wellesbourne Campus.

2 SEA Screening

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.1.1 SEA seeks to ensure that environmental considerations are part of the process of preparing certain plans and programmes. The objective of the SEA Regulations is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes, with a view to promoting sustainable development. It helps to ensure that, in accordance with the SEA Regulations, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

2.1.2 The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called screening. In order to screen, it is necessary to determine if a plan will have significant environmental effects using the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule I of the SEA Regulations. Regulation 9(2)(b) states that a determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted: The Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England.

2.1.3 A specific time limited consultation period with the three statutory bodies is not prescribed in law but a period of three weeks is considered appropriate. Following receipt of consultation comments, the Council may then finalise the screening determination. Regulation 11 (1) states that within 28 days of its determination, the local planning authority must send a copy of the determination, setting out its decision to the consultation bodies. Where the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has determined that an SEA is not required, the determination must include the reasons for this. The determination should also be shared with the public.

2.2 The screening process

2.2.1 Paragraph 008 (Revised 06/03/2014) of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 'Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal' section states:

'Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies.'

2.2.2 Paragraph 047 of this PPG (Revised 22/07/2019) also states

'An appropriate assessment, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), identifies whether a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This assessment must determine whether significant effects on that site can be ruled out on the basis of objective information.'

If the conclusion is that the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site then an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan for the site, in view of the site's conservation objectives, must be undertaken. If the plan is determined to require an appropriate assessment then it will normally also require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.'

2.2.3 Figure 2.1 presents a diagram prepared by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM, 2005). This shows the application of the SEA process to plans and programmes. The sequential approach in the flow diagram can be used to screen the Wellesbourne SPD.

2.2.4 Table 2.1 uses the questions presented in Figure 2.1 to establish whether the Wellesbourne SPD is likely to require an SEA or not.

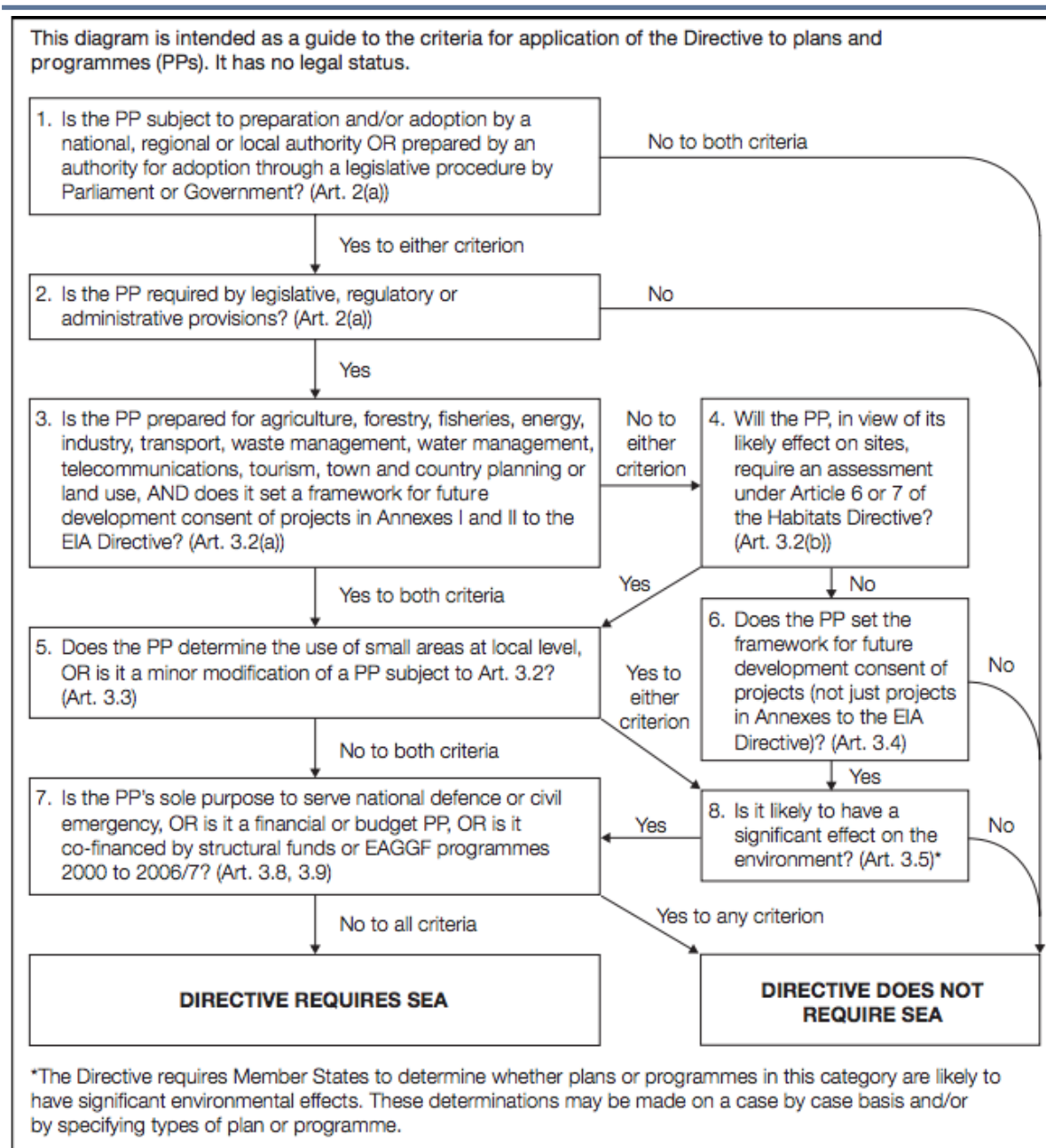


Figure 2.1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)

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⁹Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C. (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook (October) (2018) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited. Available at: www.dtapublications.co.uk

Table 2.1: Establishing whether there is a requirement for SEA.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	The SPD is prepared by, and will be adopted by, the local authority (Stratford-on-Avon District Council).
Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	<p>The SPD is prepared under the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012. The SPD is a requirement of the emerging Stratford-on-Avon Site Allocations Plan (Revised Preferred Options version) which states that for Site RURAL.2 (University of Warwick Campus, near Wellesbourne) "A comprehensive Masterplan for the Campus site as a whole should be produced in conjunction with the University of Warwick, with input from local communities and appropriate agencies".</p> <p>The SPD provides further detail and design principles for development of the Wellesbourne Campus site, taking forward Policy AS.9 of the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy.</p>
Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes	The SPD is being prepared to inform the design principles of the RURAL.2 site in the emerging SAP and Policy AS.9 of the adopted Core Strategy. The SAP establishes the development framework and sets the requirement and high-level specification for the SPD. The SPD will form a material consideration which will be considered by the Local Planning Authority when determining any future planning applications for the area; these might be subject to EIA.
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))	No	The HRA of the Core Strategy (2021) ¹⁰ looked at likely significant effects upon Habitats sites within 20km of the plan area focusing specifically on hydrological pathways of impact. Taking into consideration higher level water related protective policy (the Water Resource Management Plan) and the outputs of a Water Cycle Study, the HRA concluded that there would be no adverse impacts on the integrity of a Habitats site either alone or in-combination.

¹⁰ Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment Technical Evidence Base Available at: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-building/sustainability.cfm> [Date accessed: 16/12/22]

Stage	Y/N	Reason
		The SPD is produced on the context of Policy AS.9 of the Core Strategy. The draft SPD does not propose any new development outside of Policy AS.9, but provides a design framework for future development at the location all of which would be subject to separate planning controls.
Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Yes	The SPD will set out the Framework Masterplan, which establishes high-level design principles that the Council will use to guide development proposals and assess planning applications. The SPD will provide further guidance on the design principles to be applied at this site as stated in the SAP and Core Strategy.
Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment (Art 3.5)?	No (see body of assessment presented in rest of Chapter 2)	No likely significant effects have been identified.

2.3 Relevance to the SEA Directive

2.3.1 Question 8 within the ODPM guidance flowchart (see Figure 2.1) refers to whether the SPD would have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria from Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 can be used to consider the relevance of the Plan to the SEA Directive. Sections 2.5 – 2.12 consider the likely environmental effects of the plan.

Table 2.2: The Wellesbourne SPD and the SEA Regulations

Criteria (from Schedule I of SEA Regulations)	Response
The characteristics of 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 Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Framework Masterplan SPD sets a framework by providing detail regarding the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus site, as set out Policy AS.9 of the adopted Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy, relating to Site RURAL.2 in the emerging Stratford-on-Avon Site Allocations Plan. The SPD will form a material consideration for the nature and operating conditions of the developments.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The SPD provides additional guidance and design principles regarding the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus site. It does not create new policies.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	There are opportunities to integrate environmental considerations within the Framework Masterplan SPD. The SPD aims to conserve important aspects of the built and natural environment, by ensuring that the development is of a scale and form that is appropriate to the context of the wider area's rural and historic character. The SPD seeks to adopt sustainable design principles, improve links between the campus and the surrounding area, and facilitate the creation of an attractive and socially cohesive community.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	The potential characteristics and effects of the SPD, which include consideration of existing environmental problems, have been screened in sections 2.4 – 2.11 of this document.
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	The SPD is a land use plan and sets the framework for future development consents within the adopted Core Strategy and emerging SAP.

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected

- (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects
- (b) the cumulative nature of the effects
- (c) the transboundary nature of the effects
- (d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)

(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

- (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage
- (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values
- (iii) intensive land-use

(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status

Response: The potential characteristics and effects of the SPD have been screened in **sections 2.4 – 2.11** of this document.

2.4 Likely Significant Effects

2.4.1 A summary of the baseline conditions and a screening assessment of the potential effects of the SPD against each of the topics set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations is presented in the following sections.

2.5 Biodiversity, flora and fauna

2.5.1 The closest European designated Habitats site to the WIC is Bredon Hill Special Area of Conservation (SAC), situated approximately 31.5 km away. Ensors Pool SAC is located approximately 33km to the north. It is unlikely that the proposed development outlined within the SPD will lead to any likely significant effects (LSEs) on Habitats sites.

2.5.2 There are several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the surrounding area, the nearest being 'Loxley Church Meadow' (located approximately 3.5km to the south), 'High Close Farm, Snitterfield' (located approximately 4km to the north-west) and 'Sherbourne Meadows' (located approximately 4.7km to the north-west) which are approximately 2.1 km and 4.8 km away respectively. The site coincides with SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) which do not indicate the proposed development as a particular threat to the surrounding SSSIs (see Figure 2.2).

2.5.3 There are no nationally designated biodiversity sites within, or in close proximity to, the campus area. Welcombe Hills Local Nature Reserve is located approximately 5.1 km away to the east of the campus site.

2.5.4 The WIC site does not coincide with any ancient woodland, with the closest being Wellesbourne Wood located 1.5 km away to the south. Several other ancient woodland sites such as Moreton Wood, Wigerlands Wood and Hampton Wood are located within the proximity of 2.5 to 3.5 km from the campus site as shown on (see Figure 2.2).

2.5.5 The WIC site coincides with the 'River Avon and Tributaries' Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and is in close proximity to several other LWSs including: River Dene, Wellesbourne Dene Meadows, River Dene Floodplain Meadows and Charlecote Park (see **Figure 2.3**). The new development adjacent to the LWS could potentially lead to a risk of contamination of the watercourse with potential adverse impacts on biodiversity.

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- 2.5.6 Priority habitats on site include species-rich hedgerows and deciduous woodland¹¹. The Wellesbourne Campus University of Warwick SPD Ecology Briefing Note (TEP, 2022, unpublished) emphasises that *"there are opportunities for the SPD masterplan to be designed with an aim to retain and avoid impacts on important ecological features"*.
- 2.5.7 Other than the River Avon and its Tributaries LWS, the proposed built-up area in the WIC masterplan does not coincide with any other designated biodiversity asset.
- 2.5.8 Besides the LWS, the campus site features several ecological assets (identified through detailed arboricultural and ecological surveys) and local habitats, including mature trees and woodland. The SPD proposes retaining and enhancing the existing tree and hedgerow vegetation to protect the biodiversity corridors, which is expected to include the River Avon and its Tributaries LWS. The masterplan also seeks to retain the existing features to mitigate potential impacts of the development.
- 2.5.9 Based on mitigation measures set out in the form of development guidelines in the SPD, it is unlikely that any significant effects on biodiversity will occur.

¹¹ Wellesbourne Campus University of Warwick SPD Ecology Briefing Note (Unpublished)

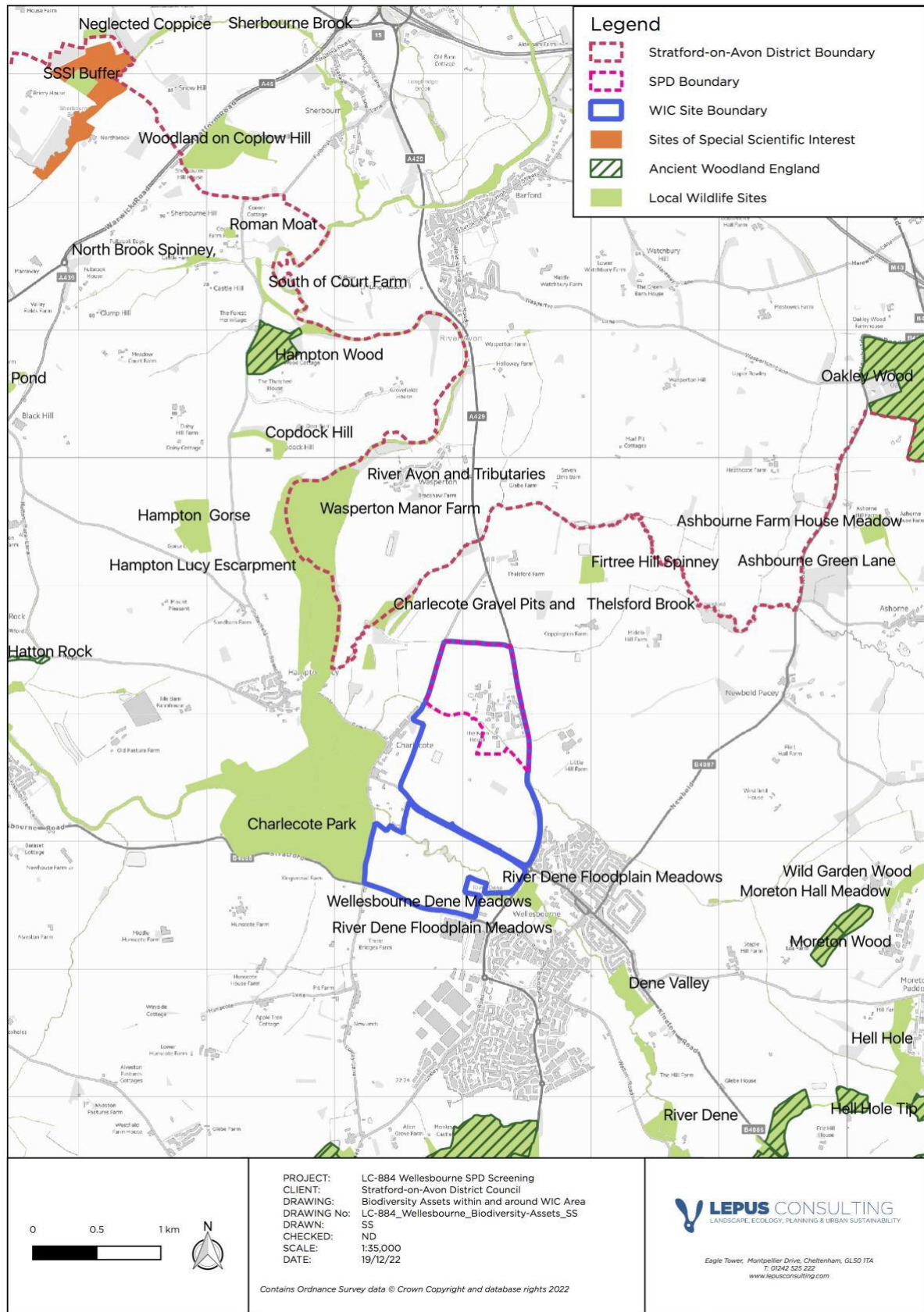


Figure 2.2 Biodiversity assets in and around WIC Masterplan (Source: Natural England and Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

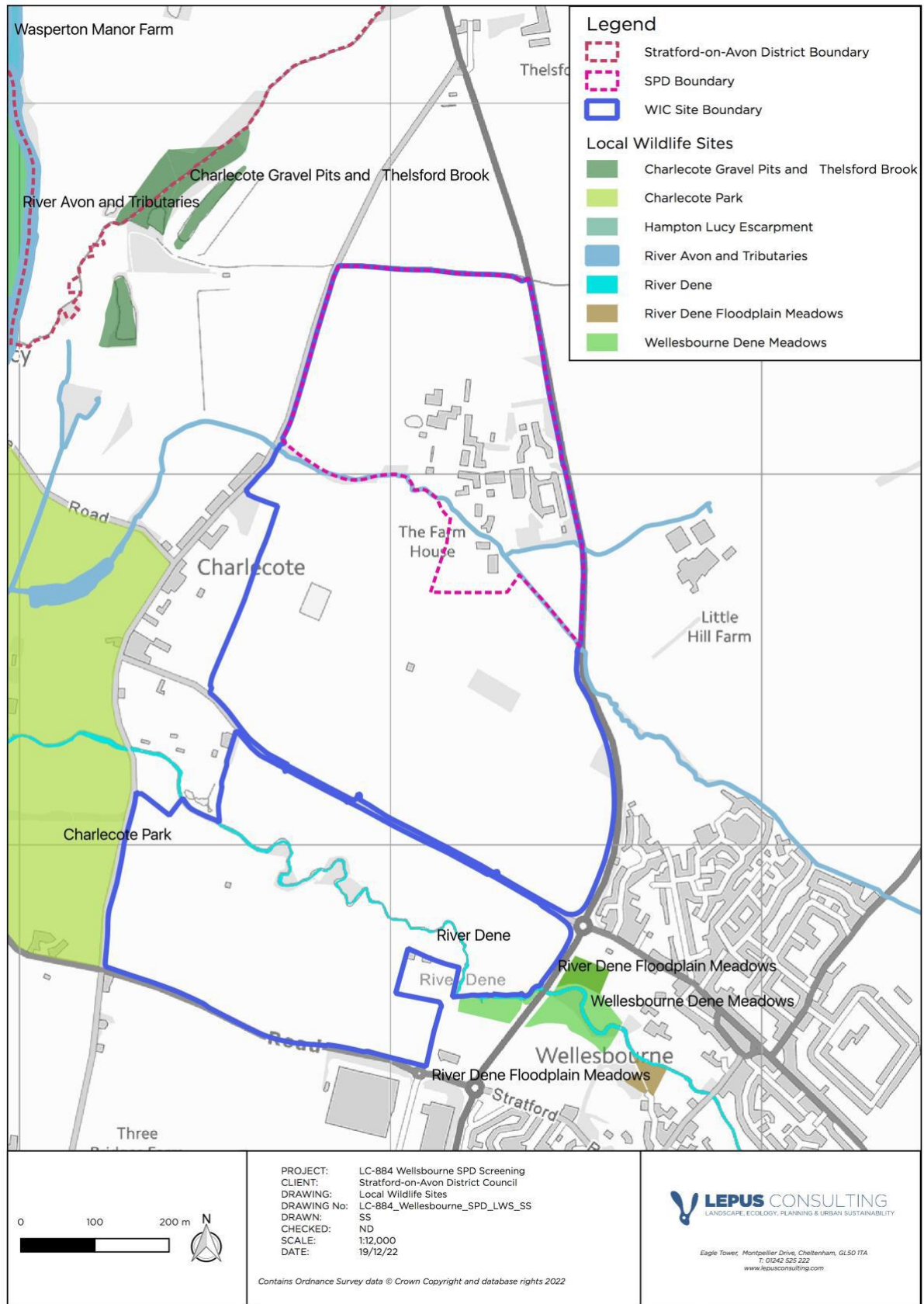


Figure 2.3 Local Wildlife Sites in and around WIC Area

2.6 Population and human health

- 2.6.1 There are no local shops or services within the masterplan area. The nearest local stores can be found in Wellesbourne Village, including Sainsburys, which is located approximately 2 km away.
- 2.6.2 The nearest primary schools are Wellesbourne Church of England (C of E) Primary School (approximately 0.8km away) and Hampton Lucy C of E Primary School (approximately 0.9km away) whereas the nearest secondary schools are King Edward VI School, Stratford-upon-Avon School and Stratford Girls' Grammar School (located within 6.0 and 8.0 km away, respectively; see Figure 2.4).
- 2.6.3 The nearest GP surgery, Hastings House Surgery, is situated approximately 0.8km away. The nearest hospital with an A&E department is Warwick Hospital, located about 8.5km away to the north of the site. Stratford Leisure Centre is located approximately 5.6km away from the campus site (see Figure 2.5).
- 2.6.4 The SPD seeks to enhance active travel through walking and cycling infrastructure. The proposed development also integrates the PRow SD131a, located along the northern boundary of the site connecting A429 to Charlecote Road. It is therefore expected to improve connectivity and promote community integration and well-being, and thus have a positive impact on the population.
- 2.6.5 Overall, the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Masterplan SPD would not be expected to lead to any likely significant effects on the local population and health within and around the WIC area.

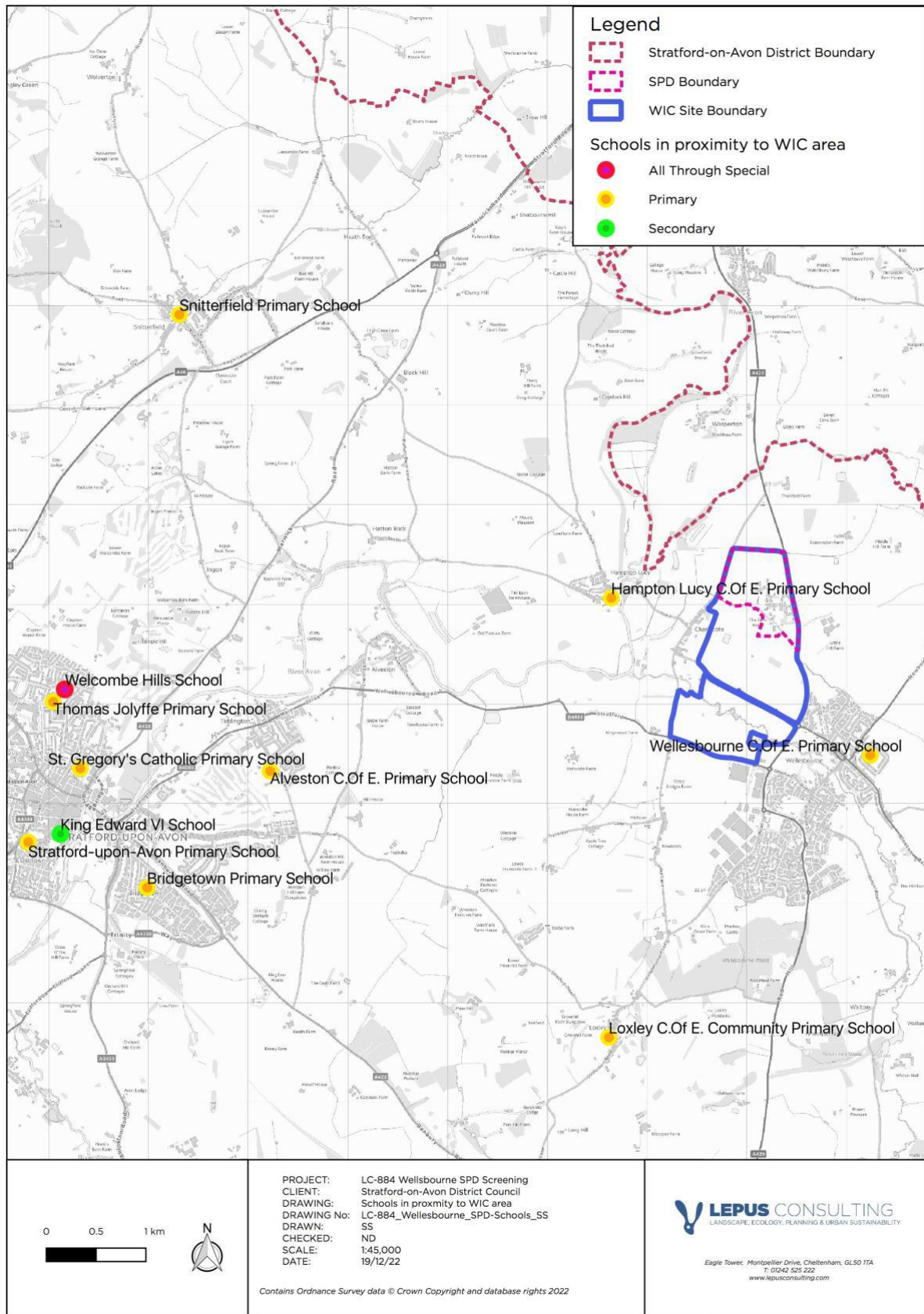


Figure 2.4 Schools in proximity to the WIC Masterplan

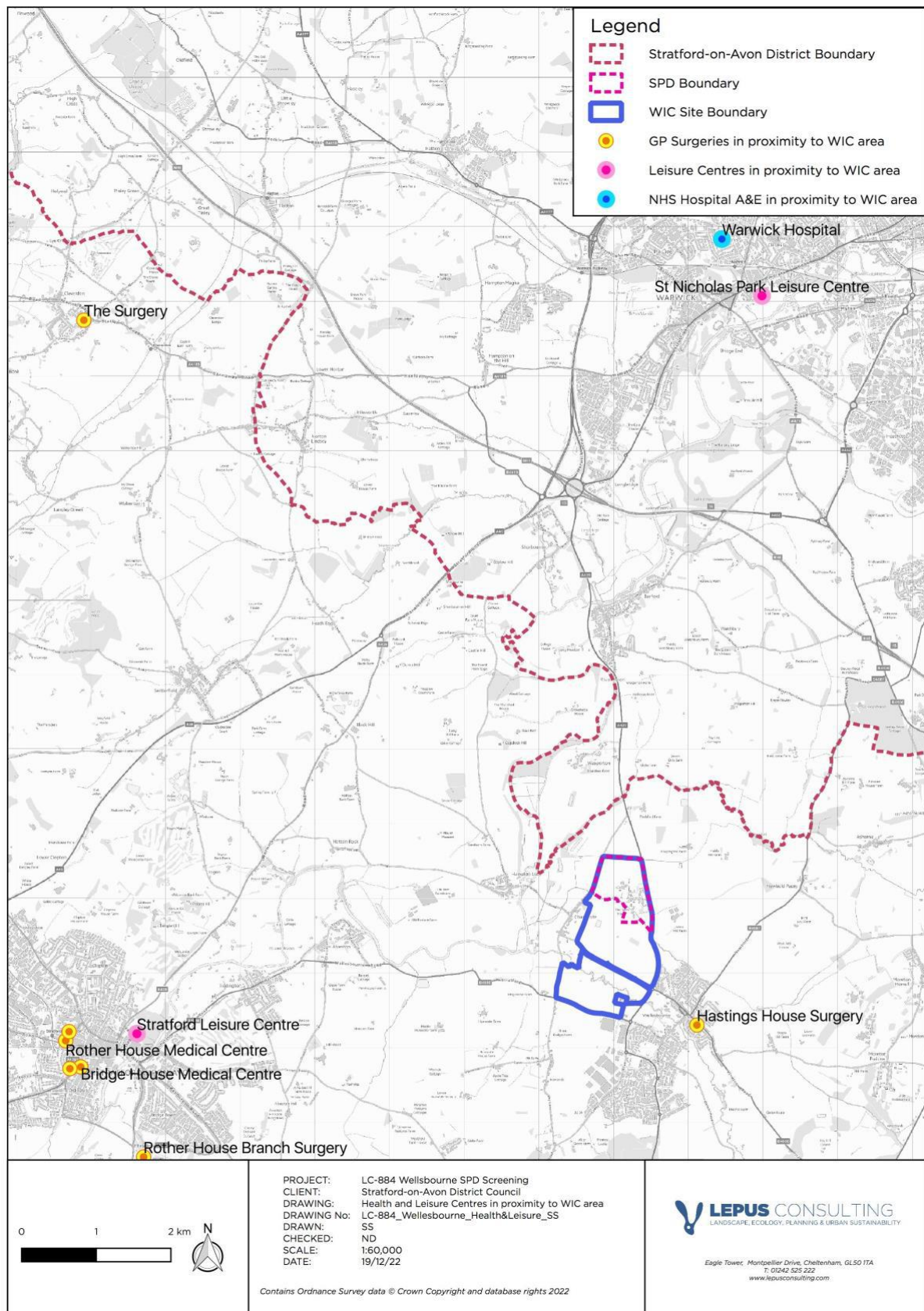


Figure 2.5 Health and Leisure Centres in proximity to the WIC Masterplan

2.7 Material assets

- 2.7.1 The material assets topic considers social, physical and environmental infrastructure. This sub-section should be read alongside 'Population and human health', which details health and social infrastructure implications of the SPD; 'Climatic factors', which considers transport infrastructure in terms of sustainable transport; 'Soil, water and air', which considers water infrastructure and agricultural land classification; the 'Biodiversity, flora and fauna' sub-section, which considers environmental infrastructure; and the Transport and Accessibility sub-section.
- 2.7.2 The A429 borders the campus on the east and provides vehicular access to the site. It is located along an important route linking Warwick with Wellesbourne, Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold and Cirencester. Junction 15 of the M40 is located approximately 5km to the north. The wider WIC area is connected via several minor roads and network of internal roads.
- 2.7.3 The WIC area does not have access to direct rail travel. Warwick, Warwick Parkway, Leamington Spa and Stratford-upon-Avon are the closest train stations and lie within a radius of 10km from the site (see Figure 2.6). Major destinations such as London Marylebone, Birmingham, Worcester and Solihull are connected from these stations.
- 2.7.4 The campus site can be accessed through buses. The nearest bus stops are located on Charlecote Road and Wellesbourne Road (along A429). As per the SPD, no buses currently operate along the A429 in this location. Additionally, there are several other bus stops close to the masterplan area and it is anticipated that current bus routes would be expanded to facilitate the requirement to ensure provision of public transport to the site.
- 2.7.5 The site is served by Stagecoach services operating between Wellesbourne and Stratford. Moreover, the University campus is also served by demand responsive transport (DRT) wherein passengers make bookings via an application. The service operates across the University's Main Campus, Kenilworth, Warwick Parkway, Coventry, Leamington Spa and the Wellesbourne Campus.
- 2.7.6 Parking spaces within the campus are available for University staff, postgraduate students, occupiers and residents, along with designated spaces for the visitors.
- 2.7.7 Route 41 of the National Cycle Network runs along Charlecote Road to the west and Loxley Lane south- west of the site. Dirt tracks which are unsuitable for all types of cycles during the winter months, and unattractive and narrow routes along the high-speed traffic road for access via A429 are issues that have been identified in the SPD.
- 2.7.8 Public Right of Way (PRoW) SD131a forms the northern boundary of the masterplan site (see Figure 2.7), running east-west between the A429 and Charlecote Road.
- 2.7.9 The masterplan lays out several objectives for sustainable development such as (para 3.6, p21):
- "Reducing the reliance on the private car through encouraging access to the Campus via alternative modes of travel including cycling and public transport and providing a campus that is flexible to respond to advances in automotive technology including the use of autonomous vehicles."*

-
- 2.7.10 The SPD emphasises strategies for active travel, public transportation, logistics and services, and parking. The zero carbon strategies, proposal for mobility hubs, and incorporation of woodland pathways and strategic cycle routes in the indicative masterplan seek to ensure sustainable development through improved connectivity and transport in the campus site.
- 2.7.11 There is unlikely to be a strategic impact on material assets and no likely significant effects are anticipated.

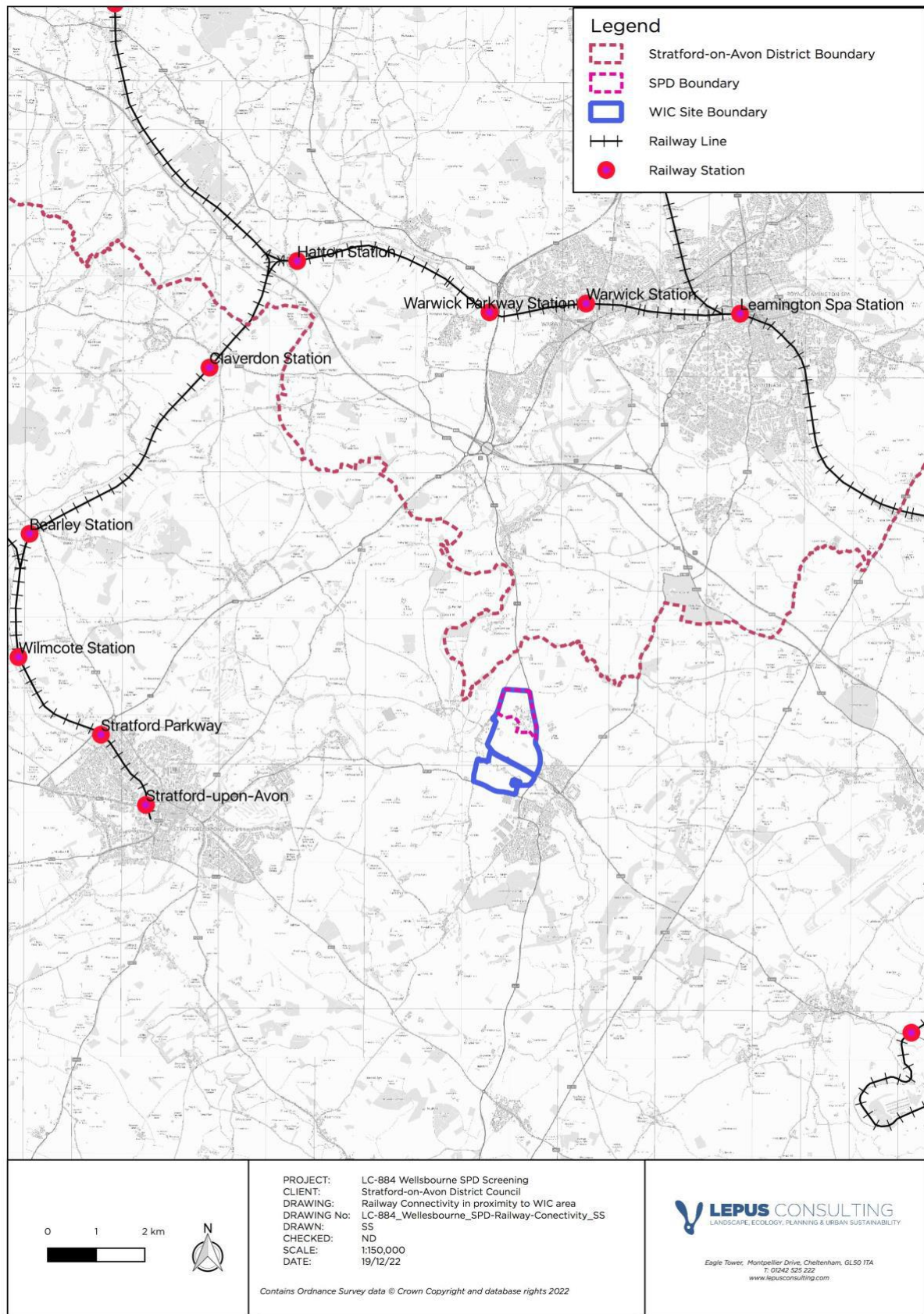


Figure 2.6 Railway Connectivity in proximity to WIC Area

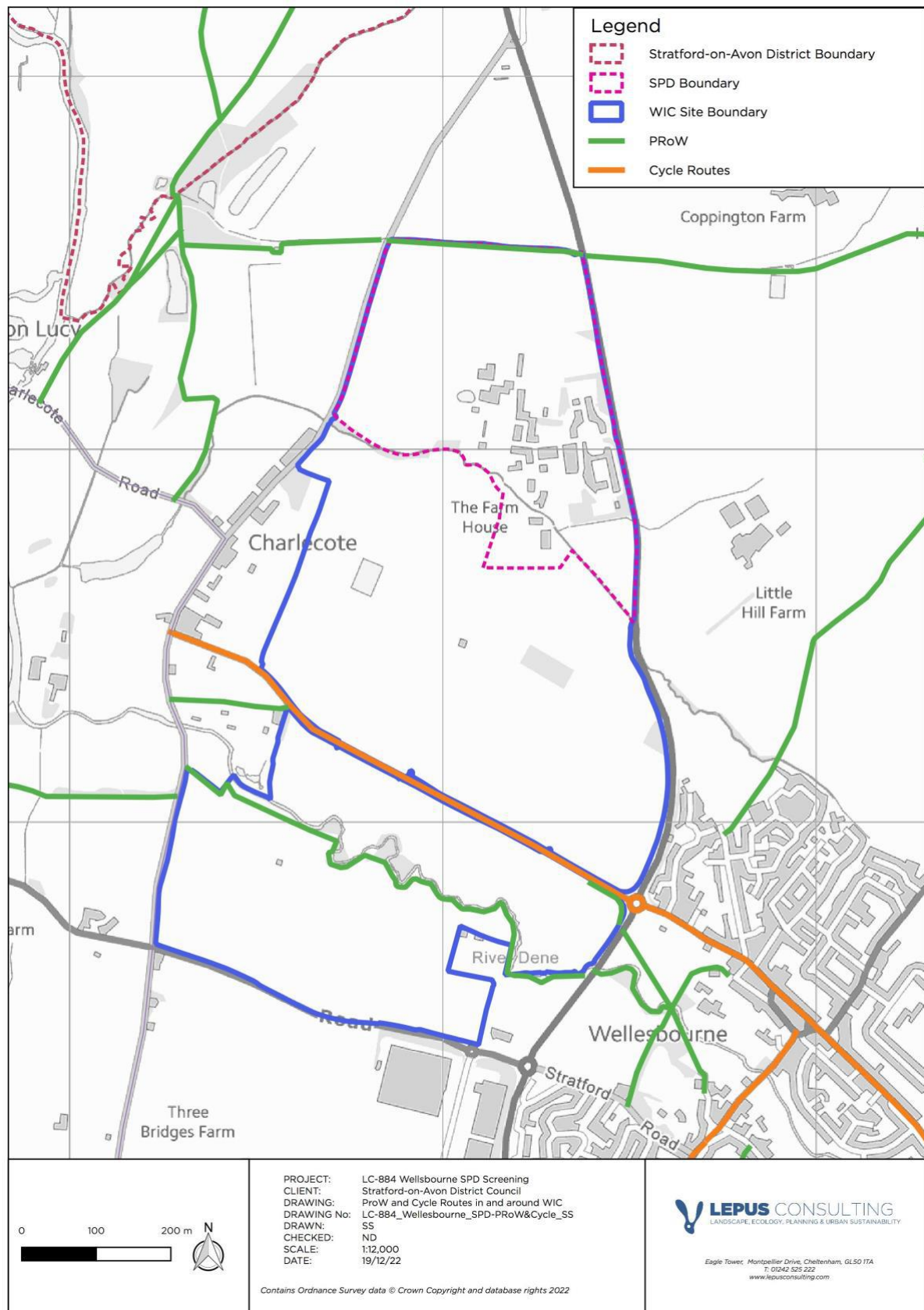


Figure 2.7 PRoW and Cycle Routes in and around WIC area

2.8 Soil, water and air

- 2.8.1 The proposed development of the campus area (Character Area Zone 1, 2 and 3) comprises previously undeveloped land which coincides with approximately 20ha of Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Grade 2 land (see Figure 2.8), which is 'best and most versatile' (BMV) agricultural land. This would lead to loss of this important and irreplaceable soil resource. A proportion of the site also comprises previously developed (brownfield) land, which would help to reduce the risk of overall soil contamination and permanent significant adverse effect.
- 2.8.2 The WIC area comprises of Flood Zones 2 and 3 along the brook (River Avon and its Tributaries) that traverses across the campus and the River Dene to the south of the site. There are areas within the masterplan area identified as being at low, medium and high risk of surface water flooding (see Figure 2.9 and 2.10). As highlighted in the SPD, the site is also susceptible to groundwater flooding which has been confirmed by occurrences of shallow puddles following heavy rainfall.
- 2.8.3 It is stated that the *"development will meet the requirements of Policy CS.4. Water Environment and Flood Risk and the Flood-Risk and Drainage strategy sets out measures for improving water quality and minimising flood-risk from all sources"* (SPD, para 4.11, p63). The Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) installation is recommended by the SPD in order to manage and limit the existing unrestrained discharge to the site's watercourses. This will mitigate any risk of flooding both on- and off-campus.
- 2.8.4 The site does not coincide with any AQMA, therefore the air quality in this area is expected to be generally good.
- 2.8.5 Overall, the mitigation proposals which include careful landscaping and biodiversity enhancement of the area will help retain soils where possible will help avoid any likely significant effects in terms of loss of the soil resource, flooding and water quality.

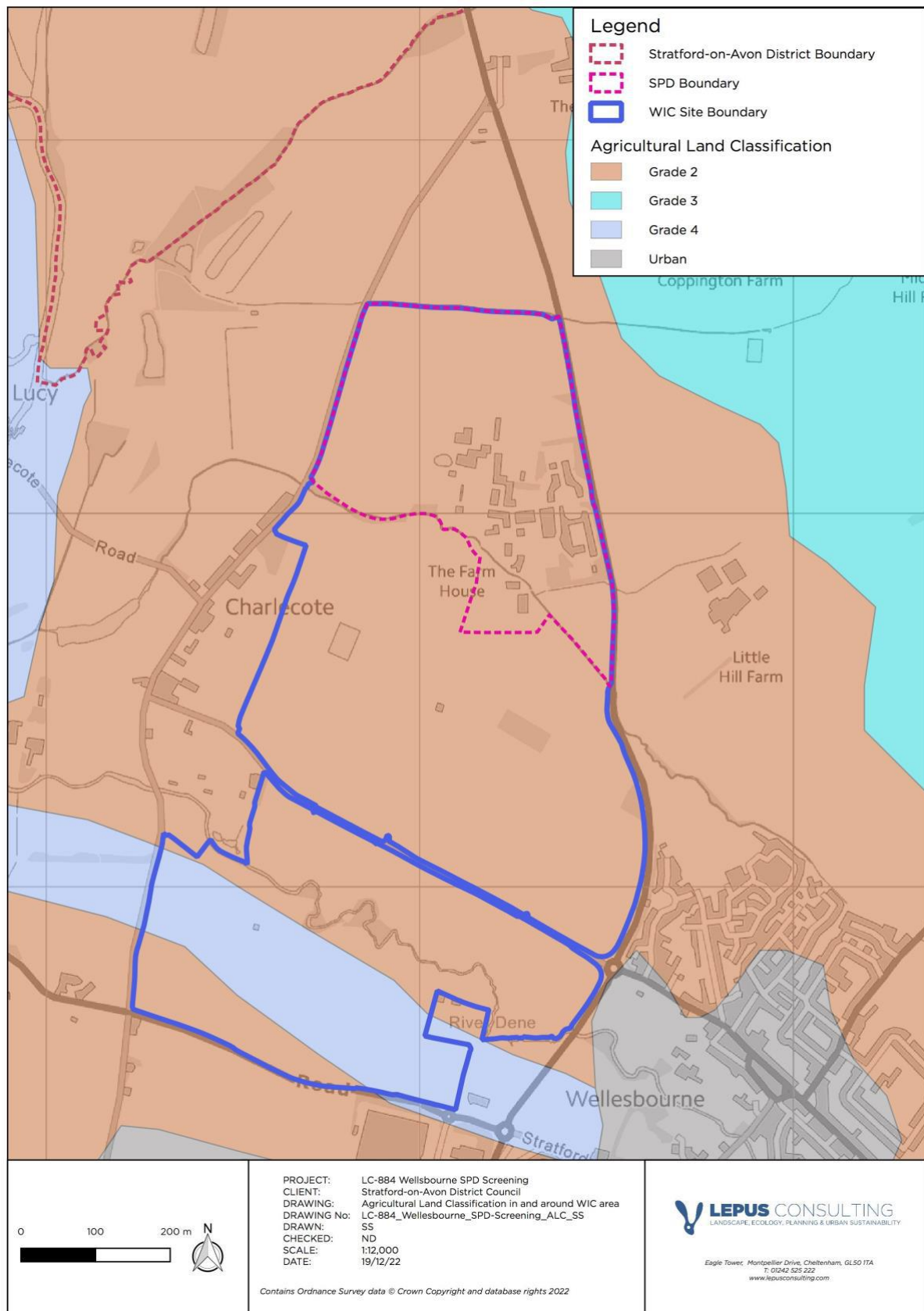


Figure 2.8 ALC in and around WIC Masterplan (Source: Natural England and Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

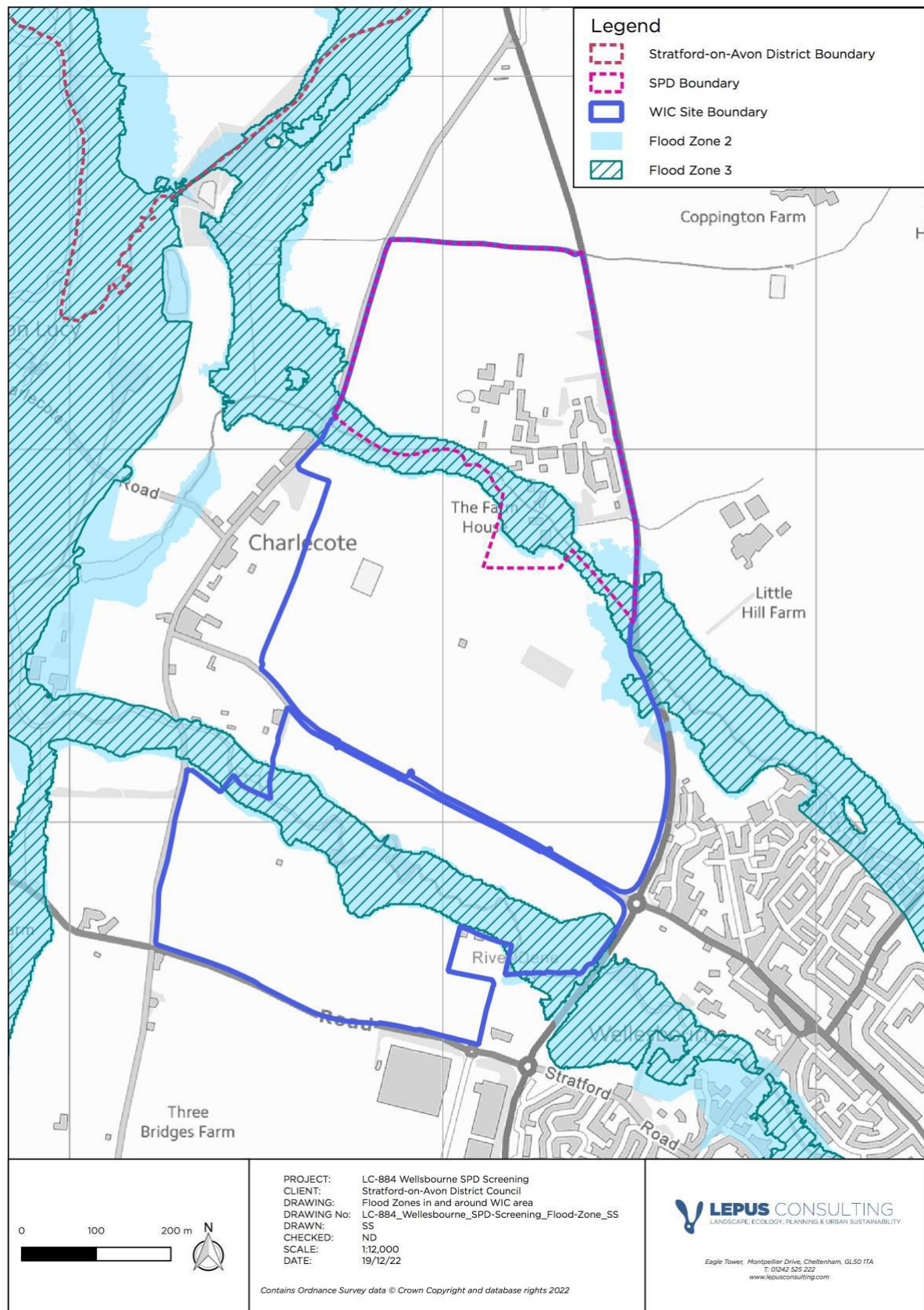


Figure 2.9 Flood Zones in and around WIC Masterplan (Source: Natural England and Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

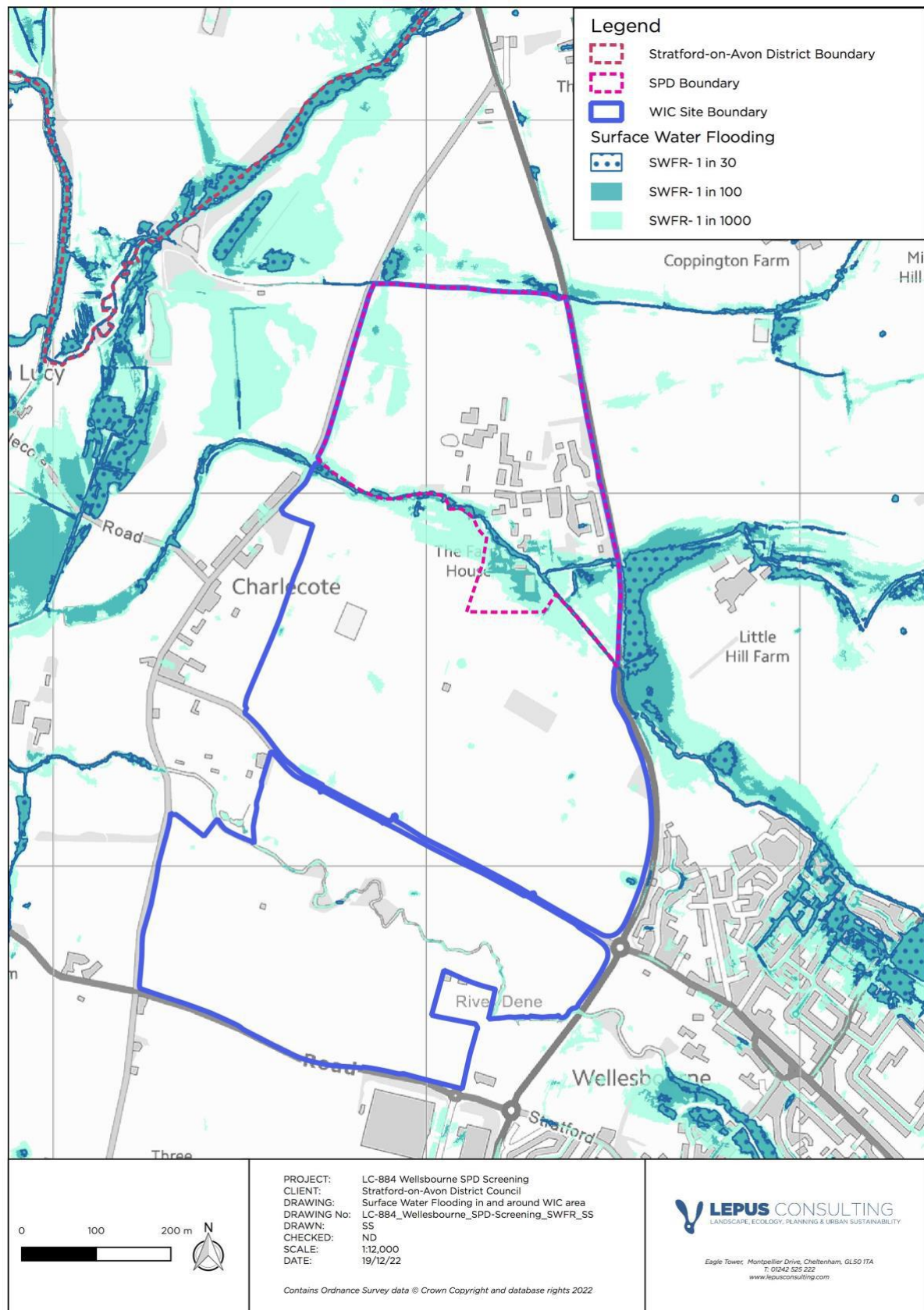


Figure 2.10 Surface Water Flooding Risk in and around WIC Masterplan (Source: Natural England and Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

2.9 Climatic factors

- 2.9.1 In conformity with Policy CS.2 of the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy, development proposals must demonstrate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, including designs that reduce carbon emissions and promote renewable energy schemes.
- 2.9.2 Development associated in the SPD is likely to increase the overall carbon footprint of land at this location. Considering the relatively isolated rural character of the masterplan area, an increase in vehicular movements can be expected. This will lead to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and ultimately short-term cumulative impacts on climate change.
- 2.9.3 The South Warwickshire Local Plan will set out a long-term spatial strategy for climate change, besides housing, jobs and infrastructure for both districts up to 2050. It is assumed that the masterplan will conform to the strategies laid out in the Local Plan.
- 2.9.4 In the delivery and implementation section of the SPD, it is stated that *"the Core Strategy sets a requirement for development to achieve water and energy efficiency BREEAM 'Good' Standard however the University will, in accordance with its University-wide policy, ensure that all developments within the Campus achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' Standard"* (para 4.8, p63).. The SPD encourages utilising appropriate renewable energy sources, such as solar and ground-source heat pumps as sustainable forms of energy.
- 2.9.5 The SPD envisions (para 3.6, p21). *"embracing the highest standards of sustainability through ensuring development is resource efficient and resilient to the effects of climate change through the application of SuDS principles integrated with an enhanced network of green infrastructure that enriches local biodiversity"*.
- 2.9.6 For flood risk mitigation, the SPD advocates that *"all drainage infrastructure/design shall take into account the impact of climate change on the installations"* (para 3.182, p54).
- 2.9.7 The SPD aims to support development proposals which seek protection and enhancement of the green infrastructure assets and ecological habitats. Enhanced green infrastructure provision can have multiple benefits including mitigation of extreme temperatures and flooding, which would be expected to contribute towards climate change adaptation.
- 2.9.8 The SPD aspires to reflect zero carbon planning, including the adoption of active travel and public transportation strategies as 'sustainable transport and movement principles' for the masterplan site, in line with National Design Guide¹² and Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy Policy CS.2 'Climate Change and Sustainable Construction' principles to mitigate climate change impacts.
- 2.9.9 The South Warwickshire Councils (Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils) have appointed ARUP to prepare a 'Climate Change Evidence Study' that evaluates and models the potential impacts of existing and new settlements on climate change. The findings from the study could potentially aid in setting out climate change adaptation strategies for development in the WIC area.

¹²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962113/National_design_guide.pdf

2.9.10 Proposals to embrace zero carbon principles are likely to have a positive impact on combatting climate change in the long run. As a result, the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Masterplan SPD would not be expected to lead to any likely significant effects on the climatic factors within and around the WIC area.

2.10 Cultural Heritage

2.10.1 *"The masterplan site area lies within a wider historic environment reflecting occupation and use from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and more recent periods"* (SPD, Chapter 2, para 2.31, p12). To understand the significance of the key heritage constraints for the site, a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment was carried out by Cotswold Archaeology (2022, unpublished).

2.10.2 The findings of the desk-based identified both designated and undesignated heritage assets that would be sensitive to the development within the site. These findings and recommendations (such as enclosures and buffers) are embedded in the development guidelines for the campus area. The objectives for heritage considerations in the SPD are presented as follows (SPD, Chapter 3, para 3.6, p21):

'Promote the highest standards of design quality that ensures development is locally distinctive and appropriate to its rural context, enhancing the role of the rural barns as the heart of the campus and reflecting its historical use as the Horticultural Research Institute whilst also learning from local, national and international exemplars of good design.

Protecting and enhancing the heritage assets of the Charlecote and Hampton Lucy Conservation Area through ensuring the campus responds appropriately to Charlecote village, maintaining a sense of openness at the south-west corner and enhancing public access to Charlecote through the Campus'.

2.10.3 The WIC area does not contain any listed buildings; however, the masterplan area adjoins the Charlecote and Hampton Lucy Conservation Area to the west which contains several listed buildings including the Grade I Listed 'Church of St Leonard' and listed buildings along Birmingham Road. Wellesbourne Conservation Area lies approximately 0.9km south east of the site area at its closest point and also includes several historic listed buildings.

2.10.4 Charlecote and Hampton Lucy Conservation Area is comprised of the historic house and parkland of Charlecote Park; the estate village of Charlecote; and the village of Hampton Lucy. The Grade II* Registered Park and Garden (RPG) of Charlecote Park occupies much of the Conservation Area but lies wholly outside of the masterplan site area.

2.10.5 Cotswold Archaeology has evaluated the impacts of the SPD upon these heritage features and concluded that: *'The Site is situated in an area of land which lies in close proximity to heritage assets of high importance, at Charlecote Park to the west, and Wellesbourne to the east. There is a capacity for change in the Site for development, although the presence of these heritage assets will require heritage influences to be a key part of future designs as part of the heritage objective of 'maximising heritage enhancement and minimising heritage harm'* (para 15, page 66, Cotswold Archaeology, 2022).

2.10.6 Overall, the SPD is not likely to lead to significant effects on the historic environment.

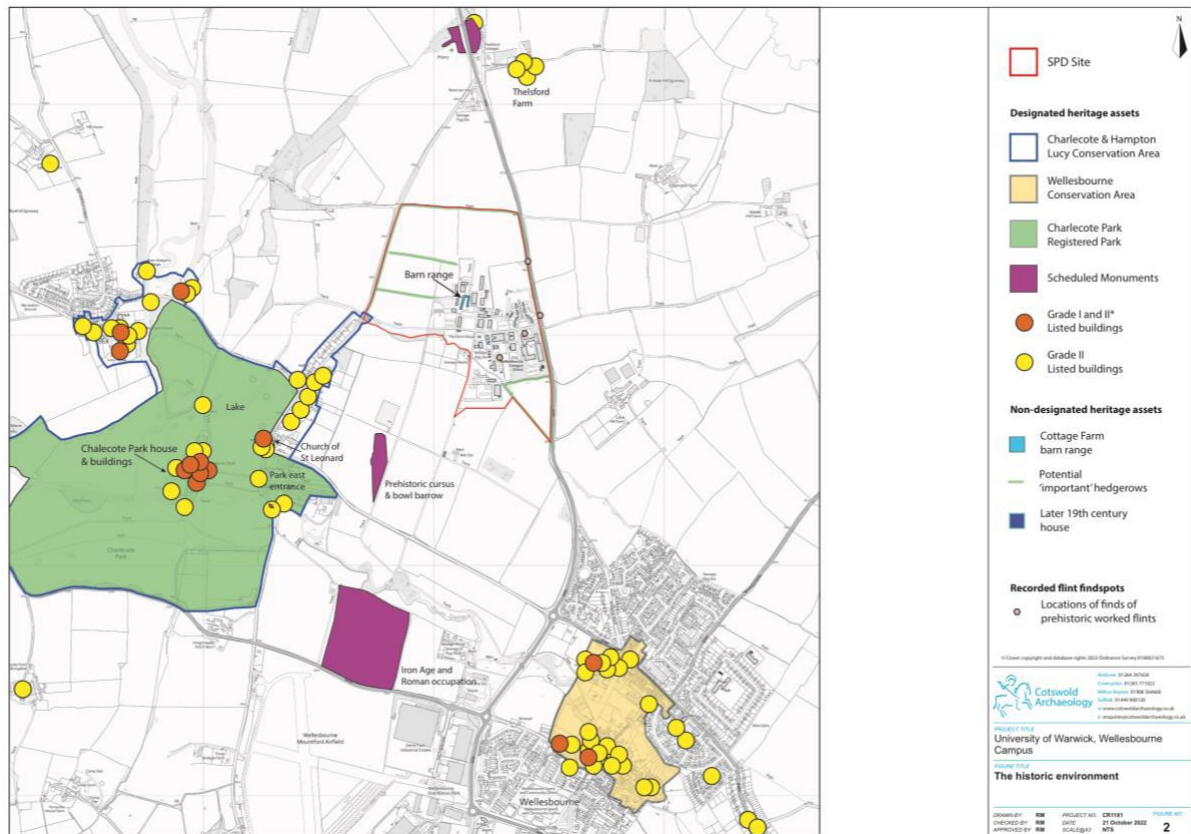


Figure 2.11 Historic Environment around WIC area (Source: Stratford-on-Avon Council)

2.11 Landscape

2.11.1 The WIC area is wholly located within the 'Severn and Avon Vales' National Character Area (NCA)¹³. The SPD (para 2.54, p. 16) recognises that the landscape setting is chiefly low-lying and existing built form is largely contained by existing vegetation cover. This has the effect of limiting views towards the site.

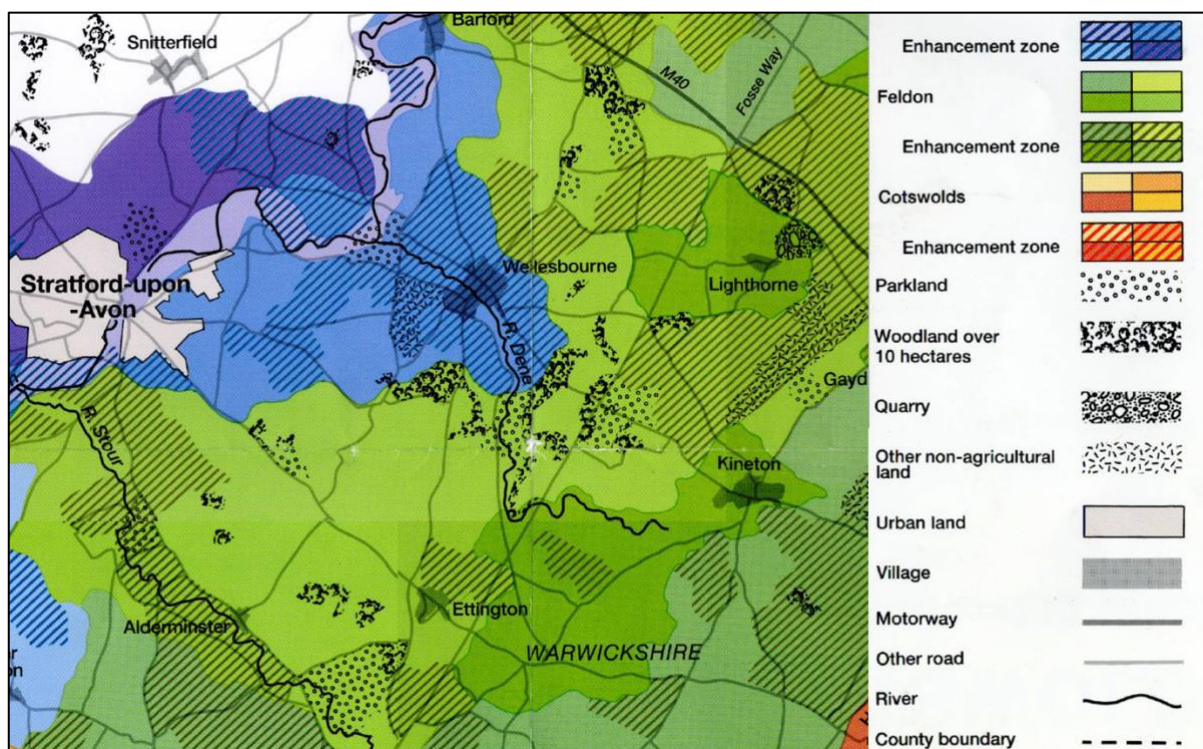


Figure 2.12 Extract from the Warwickshire Landscapes Project: Avon Valley – Feldon – Cotswolds (1993)
 Warwickshire County Council and the Countryside Commission

2.11.2 The SPD location lies within an area identified as being part of a landscape enhancement zone (see Figure 2.12). This implies that there is scope to enhance the landscape at this location because it is in some way not as intact or as of high quality as other areas identified on the map.

2.11.3 The Cotswolds AONB is located to the south of the site, approximately 12 km away at its closest point. At this distance, the proposed development is unlikely to have any adverse impact on the special qualities and the setting of the AONB.

2.11.4 The masterplan area does not lie within any designated landscape; the Arden Special Landscape Area (SLA, approximately 1.6 km away) and Feldon Parkland SLA (approximately 1.5 km away), are located to the north and the south of the site, respectively.

¹³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/1831421?map=true&category=587130>

- 2.11.5 According to the draft SPD (para 2.54, p. 16) *"the existing low-lying landform of the area combined with the pattern of intervening vegetation has a considerable limiting effect on views towards the site. Some visibility of existing buildings on the site is gained from public footpaths that cross higher ground to the east at distances of approximately 1km. More limited and distant visibility of existing buildings on the site is also gained from Shakespeare's Avon Way which follows higher ground immediately west of the River Avon."*
- 2.11.6 Another landscape consideration at this location includes the proximity of the Charlecote Parkland RPG (see section 2.10). The desk-based assessment indicates that the impact of development within the campus site would be low due to the presence of tree belts and woodland in the RPG.
- 2.11.7 The development parameters for the masterplan are structured around several interrelated themes and 'landscape' is one of them besides 'connectivity and sustainable transport' and 'green and blue infrastructure'. In terms of building heights and massing, the SPD identified that *'built form heights should range from 1 to 4 storeys across the site, assuming the existing buildings fronting the A429 as a precedent for this massing principle'* (para 3.217, p62). The SPD also includes an indicative built form heights drawing (p62) which shows how taller buildings will align with the A429, screened by vegetation.
- 2.11.8 The proposed development will aim to maintain the character of the area and ensure that long-distance views are maintained as much as practicable through use of low-lying structures and buffers. Green corridors, cycle routes and footpaths should be used to reduce traffic flow, noise, sound and air pollution that may affect the surrounding landscape quality and character.
- 2.11.9 The findings of the desk-based for the historic landscape indicate that the campus site comprises of regular enclosed agricultural field and hedgerows within and bordering the site. The assessment emphasises retention/ improvement that 'could be regarded as a small heritage benefit and provide useful visual and sound screening'.
- 2.11.10 A carefully planned and well-managed green and blue infrastructure network, woodland planting and massing and scale of development, as advocated by the SPD, would be expected to help retain and enhance the local landscape and the rural character of the masterplan area.
- 2.11.11 The SPD envisions *"maintaining the unique, tranquil nature of the campus through development that responds to its natural landscape setting, integrating the campus with the existing landscape assets and providing a form of development that compliments its rural setting"* (para 3.6, p21).
- 2.11.12 Overall, the SPD is not likely to lead to significant effects on landscape: either through the impact of increased built form massing in a rural location or potential impacts on local PRoW with implications for tranquillity and character.

3 Conclusion

3.1 SEA screening outcome

3.1.1 This SEA screening report has evaluated the likelihood of any significant effects arising against the criteria set out in the SEA Regulations.

3.1.2 It can be concluded that the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus Framework Masterplan SPD is not likely to have a significant environmental impact on the surrounding area and will therefore not require an SEA.

3.2 Next steps

3.2.1 This report has been subject to consultation with Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England. Their comments are presented in Appendix A.

3.2.2 Should the SPD be significantly refined in the future, a re-screening of any significant amendments should be undertaken for the purposes of the SEA screening processes.

3.3 Screening determination

3.3.1 Following receipt of any comments received from the statutory consultation bodies, the Council will make the screening determination. It will then make the findings available to the statutory bodies and the public, within 28 days of completing the determination.

Appendix A: Consultation Responses



[REDACTED]

Lepus Consulting Ltd

Eagle Tower

[REDACTED]

Our ref: PL00792119

Montpellier Drive

Cheltenham

GL50 1TA

30 January 2023

[REDACTED]

WELLESBOURNE INNOVATION CAMPUS SPD- SEA SCREENING

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

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

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

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



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888
HistoricEngland.org.uk





Historic England

[assessment-sustainability-appraisal-historic-environment/>](#)

I hope you find this advice helpful.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

Historic Places Advisor

[Redacted contact information]

cc:



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888
HistoricEngland.org.uk



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

Date: 24 January 2023
Our ref: 418444
Your ref: SEA Screening Report



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BY EMAIL ONLY



Planning consultation: SEA Screening report Consultation Request.
Location: Wellesbourne Innovation Campus SPD.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 12 January 2023 which was received by Natural England on 12 January 2023.

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

Not able to provide detailed advice

Natural England is not able to fully assess the potential impacts of this proposal, or provide detailed advice on the application. If you consider there are significant risks to statutory nature conservation sites or protected landscapes, please set out the specific areas on which you require advice.

The lack of detailed advice from Natural England does not imply that there are no impacts on the natural environment. It is for the local planning authority to determine whether or not the proposal is consistent with national and local environmental policies. Other bodies and individuals may provide information and advice on the environmental value of this site and the impacts of the proposal on the natural environment to assist the decision making process.

Generic advice is provided in Annex A below.

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

Please send any correspondence, marked for my attention, to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk quoting our reference 418444 .

Yours sincerely



Planning Team
Natural England.

Annex A: Generic Advice

Natural England offers the following additional advice:

Landscape

Paragraph 174 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. This application may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, including any local landscape designations. You may want to consider whether any local landscape features or characteristics (such as ponds, woodland, or dry-stone walls) could be incorporated into the development to respond to and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness, in line with any local landscape character assessments. Where the impacts of development are likely to be significant, a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment should be provided with the proposal to inform decision making. We refer you to the [Landscape Institute](#) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for further guidance.

Best and most versatile agricultural land and soils

Local planning authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient detailed agricultural land classification (ALC) information to apply NPPF policies (Paragraphs 174 and 175). This is the case regardless of whether the proposed development is sufficiently large to consult Natural England. Further information is contained in [GOV.UK guidance](#). Agricultural Land Classification information is available on the [Magic](#) website on the [Data.Gov.uk](#) website. If you consider the proposal has significant implications for further loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land, we would be pleased to discuss the matter further.

Guidance on soil protection is available in the Defra [Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites](#), and we recommend its use in the design and construction of development, including any planning conditions. Should the development proceed, we advise that the developer uses an appropriately experienced soil specialist to advise on, and supervise soil handling, including identifying when soils are dry enough to be handled and how to make the best use of soils on site.

Protected Species

Natural England has produced [standing advice](#)¹ to help planning authorities understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. We advise you to refer to this advice. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on protected species where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Local sites and priority habitats and species

You should consider the impacts of the proposed development on any local wildlife or geodiversity sites, in line with paragraphs 175 and 179 of the NPPF and any relevant development plan policy. There may also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity. Natural England does not hold locally specific information on local sites and recommends further information is obtained from appropriate bodies such as the local records centre, wildlife trust, geoconservation groups or recording societies.

Priority habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. List of priority habitats and species can be

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

found [here](#)². Natural England does not routinely hold species data, such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found [here](#).

Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees

You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced [standing advice](#) for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. It should be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Environmental gains

Development should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the NPPF paragraphs 174(d), 179 and 180. Development also provides opportunities to secure wider environmental gains, as outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 8, 73, 104, 120, 174, 175 and 180). We advise you to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 180 of the NPPF and firstly consider what existing environmental features on and around the site can be retained or enhanced or what new features could be incorporated into the development proposal. Where onsite measures are not possible, you should consider off site measures. Opportunities for enhancement might include:

- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Designing lighting to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

Natural England's [Biodiversity Metric 3.0](#) may be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial and intertidal habitats and can be used to inform any development project. For small development sites the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of [Biodiversity Metric 3.0](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met. It is available as a beta test version.

You could also consider how the proposed development can contribute to the wider environment and help implement elements of any Landscape, Green Infrastructure or Biodiversity Strategy in place in your area. For example:

- Links to existing greenspace and/or opportunities to enhance and improve access.
- Identifying opportunities for new greenspace and managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips)
- Planting additional street trees.

²<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network or using the opportunity of new development to extend the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition or clearing away an eyesore).

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside [Biodiversity Metric 3.0](#) and is available as a beta test version.

Access and Recreation

Natural England encourages any proposal to incorporate measures to help improve people's access to the natural environment. Measures such as reinstating existing footpaths together with the creation of new footpaths and bridleways should be considered. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure. Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be delivered where appropriate.

Rights of Way, Access land, Coastal access and National Trails

Paragraphs 100 and 174 of the NPPF highlight the important of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, rights of way and coastal access routes in the vicinity of the development. Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts on the any nearby National Trails. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides information including contact details for the National Trail Officer. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated for any adverse impacts.

Biodiversity duty

Your authority has a [duty](#) to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your decision making. Conserving biodiversity can also include restoration or enhancement to a population or habitat. Further information is available [here](#).

Habitats Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys



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