

**Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats  
Regulations Assessment Screening Opinion**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This screening report is to determine whether the content of the Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2040 (pre-submission draft October 2023) requires a strategic environmental assessment in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.2. This report also contains a habitats regulations assessment (HRA) screening to determine whether the plan would have a likely significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects as required by the Habitats Directive.
- 1.3. This draft has been prepared to inform consultation with the statutory consultees, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.
- 1.4. Freckenham is defined in the existing development plan (Core Strategy 2010 former Forest Heath District Council area) as a secondary village where such settlements would only "accommodate a very limited amount of minor development." It is in the administrative area of West Suffolk Council where it is defined as a Type A village having a "more limited range of services and facilities than local service centres but can still meet some of the day to day needs of their residents. Some villages have opportunities for sustainable access to higher order settlements." The Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Freckenham Parish Council (a qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act 2011).
- 1.5. The plan is in the pre-submission consultation stage and this screening is based on the information within the neighbourhood plan and accompanying documents that were on pre-submission consultation from 20 October to 4 December 2023. The information on the plan is in section two.
- 1.6. The legislative background, set out in section three, outlines the regulations that require this screening exercise. Section five provides a screening assessment of the significant environmental effects of the neighbourhood plan, section six is the habitats regulations assessment screening and section seven is the screening outcome.

## 2. Key information on the emerging neighbourhood plan

### Vision, aims and objectives of neighbourhood plan.

- 2.1. The vision for Freckenham is set out in 1.10 of the neighbourhood plan and is as follows:

In 2040 Freckenham will remain an attractive and friendly village where sustainable development both protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the parish, services and facilities will meet the day to day needs of the community.

- 2.2. To deliver the vision, the neighbourhood plan has the following objectives in six themes that have provided a benchmark for the preparation of its planning policies.

<b>Future development locations</b>	1. Ensure that new development is located to protect the character of Freckenham and minimise impact on the countryside
<b>Housing</b>	2. Ensure that Freckenham's housing growth is commensurate with the level of services and facilities in the village. 3. Deliver housing that is tailored to meet the needs of residents.
<b>Natural environment</b>	4. Protect and enhance the landscape character of Freckenham including green spaces, woodland, and watercourses. 5. Protect important views and links to the wider countryside. 6. Deliver net gains to the extent and quality of natural habitats and biodiversity.
<b>Built environment and design</b>	7. Conserve and enhance the village's heritage assets. 8. Ensure that new development is designed in a way that reflects local character. 9. Reduce the impact of new development through the incorporation of measures that reduce their environmental impact.

<b>Services and facilities</b>	<p>10. Minimise the impact of development on the capacity and essential infrastructure and services.</p> <p>11. Protect and improve the range of existing community services and facilities.</p>
<b>Highways and travel</b>	<p>12. Protect maintain and improve the public rights of way network.</p> <p>13. Ensure that new development minimises impact on the existing road network.</p> <p>14. Ensure that existing pedestrian routes are maintained and enhanced to improve connectivity in the village.</p> <p>15. Maintain and improve public transport.</p>

### **Neighbourhood area**

- 2.3. The Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan area was originally designated by West Suffolk Council on 2nd November 2018. This is the area that the neighbourhood plan covers. The plan area includes the whole of the parish of Freckenham defined by the parish boundary and is shown on the map in appendix three.

### **Approach to development**

- 2.4. The neighbourhood plan for Freckenham recognises that in the coming years new housing will be required across West Suffolk. The May 2022 Preferred Options Local Plan consultation identified that an indicative value of 96 new homes would be distributed across the 16 Type A villages – approximately 6 per village. It identified a site north of Fordham Road for a proposed 10 dwellings.
- 2.5. The Neighbourhood Plan area will accommodate development commensurate with the parish’s designation in the adopted Local Plan settlement hierarchy. New development will be focused within the defined Housing Settlement Boundaries. Where proposals for housing development on infill plots or for small groups on redeveloped plots do not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity, the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and highways, they will be supported. Outside of the Settlement Boundaries, priority will be given to protecting and enhancing the countryside from inappropriate development.

### **Policies**

- 2.6. The neighbourhood plan includes 16 draft policies as set out in table 1 below. All the policies address the types of development that would be supported, and the mitigation or enhancement measures required to protect the character and environment of the parish.

Table 1: summary of policies in the Freckenham Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan

Policy	Summary
<p><b>Policy FRE 1 Spatial strategy</b></p>	<p>Development will be supported within the settlement boundary.</p> <p>Infill will be supported where there is no detrimental impact on the surroundings (amenity, environment, and infrastructure).</p> <p>Outside the settlement boundary protection of the countryside will be paramount and development will only be supported for certain uses and must be accompanied by evidence showing how it's impact will be mitigated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture/forestry/horticulture/equine</li> <li>• Affordable housing where there is a proven need</li> <li>• Small scale sporting/recreational uses</li> <li>• Replacement of existing dwelling on one-for-one basis</li> <li>• Key worker dwelling where there is demonstrable essential need</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy FRE 2 Housing allocation</b></p>	<p>In addition to site specific requirements in the local plan, residential developments will be supported where the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• traffic and pedestrian safety measures are incorporated</li> <li>• a mix of sizes and types of dwelling are included</li> <li>• existing hedgerows are retained or enhanced</li> <li>• hedges are replanted if removal is unavoidable</li> <li>• new landscaped boundary is included where necessary</li> <li>• affordable housing to be tenure blind</li> <li>• an element of self-build is included</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy FRE 3 Housing design</b></p>	<p>New housing will adhere to latest nationally described space standards and should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide covered storage of wheelie bins and cycles</li> <li>• be fitted with suitable ducting to enable super-fast broadband</li> <li>• provide electric vehicle charging and parking spaces as per the current adopted parking standards</li> <li>• be adaptable to meet changing needs of the population both young and old</li> <li>• meet the increasing need for home working</li> </ul>

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Policy FRE 4 Low energy and energy efficient housing design</b>	<p>Proposals that incorporate current best practice in energy conservation will be supported where this is integral to the design of the building and should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximise passive solar gain through layout</li> <li>• aim for maximum achievable energy efficiency</li> <li>• avoid fossil fuel-based heating systems</li> <li>• incorporate sustainable solutions where possible in all aspects of the build</li> </ul>
<b>Policy FRE 5 Protecting Freckenham's landscape character</b>	<p>Proposals should take account of the Freckenham Landscape Character Assessment 2020 and demonstrate how they will conserve and enhance this character and avoid any unacceptable detriment to the landscape and important views identified within the neighbourhood plan.</p>
<b>Policy FRE 6 Biodiversity and habitats</b>	<p>Developments should avoid all harm to natural features and habitats wherever possible and if such harm is unavoidable should demonstrate how the benefits of the development outweigh the harm and provide mitigation through measurable biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>All proposals should deliver biodiversity net gain and will be supported where they can add improvements to biodiversity through habitat creation.</p> <p>Hedgerows should be protected but where lost, replacement native hedges should be planted and maintained to retain the hedgerow continuity throughout the village.</p> <p>Biodiversity and habitats should be integral parts of the design concept. Development design should be landscape led.</p>
<b>Policy FRE 7 Local green spaces</b>	<p>Nine local green spaces have been designated in the plan and identified on the policies map. All development within local green spaces will be consistent with national policy for green belts.</p>
<b>Policy FRE 8 Freckenham conservation area</b>	<p>Development within or affecting the conservation area should conserve or enhance features that contribute to the special character of the area, including views in and out, setting, identified open areas and buildings of local importance.</p>

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Policy FRE 9 Development design considerations</b>	<p>All new development proposals should create a high quality, safe and sustainable environment which reflects the local character and circumstances of the site.</p> <p>Proposals will be supported where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise and reflect special local characteristics and distinctiveness</li> <li>• Maintain the village's features and sense of place</li> <li>• Do not involve loss of any green spaces that contribute to character and amenity</li> <li>• Do not damage any features of architectural, historical, landscape, amenity or environmental significance</li> <li>• Do not cause any kind of nuisance to residents</li> <li>• Include tree planting, especially of street trees</li> <li>• Ensure highway safety and adequate parking provision</li> <li>• Allow connectivity through spaces joining communities together and to services</li> <li>• Street facing designs</li> <li>• Do not create flooding or run-off</li> <li>• Provide adequate bin and cycle storage</li> <li>• Allow future broadband connectivity</li> </ul>
<b>Policy FRE 10 Sustainable construction practices</b>	<p>All appropriate developments will be supported if they incorporate best practice in energy saving and green technologies where they are integral to the design of the building. They should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximise passive solar gain through layout</li> <li>• aim for maximum achievable energy efficiency</li> <li>• avoid fossil fuel-based heating systems</li> <li>• incorporate sustainable solutions where possible in all design and construction aspects of the build</li> <li>• Make best use of recycling and grey water solutions that minimise runoff and wastage</li> </ul>
<b>Policy FRE 11 Flooding and sustainable drainage</b>	<p>All development in flood zones two and three must be accompanied by a flood risk assessment and must satisfy the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance and any successor.</p> <p>All proposals must demonstrate how water will be managed to avoid flooding, surface water and runoff.</p> <p>As appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) should be installed.</p>



<b>Policy</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Policy FRE 12 Dark Skies</b>	Dark skies should be protected whilst ensuring that new developments are safe and secure and meet highway safety needs. All exterior lighting should be energy efficient and minimise light pollution and glare. Lighting should have minimal impact on the environment and wildlife.
<b>Policy FRE 13 Parking standards</b>	All developments should maintain and enhance highway safety. Vehicle and cycle parking should be an integral part of the design within the dwelling curtilage and be as unobtrusive as possible. Two electric charging points to be provided per dwelling. Non residential parking to adhere to Suffolk Parking Standards.
<b>Policy FRE 14 Community Facilities</b>	New or enhanced community facilities will be supported where they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are within or close to the settlement boundary and are accessible by foot</li> <li>• contribute to quality and sustainability of community life</li> <li>• there are no other more appropriate or convertible buildings for the proposed use</li> <li>• will not have significant adverse effects on environment, amenity and character of the village</li> <li>• benefits outweigh any loss of countryside</li> </ul> <p>Loss of facilities (village hall, recreation ground, Golden Boar public house and St Andrew's church) will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• current use is no longer viable</li> <li>• there is no demand for alternative appropriate uses</li> <li>• that there is a suitable alternative facility locally that is accessible on foot or via green transport</li> </ul>
<b>Policy FRE 15 Farm diversification</b>	Diversification will be supported where redundant traditional farm buildings are no longer viable or needed for farming.  Reuse for community or economic development is preferred.  Support will not be given if development would cause detriment to interests of acknowledged importance.
<b>Policy FRE 16 Public rights of way</b>	Additions and extensions to public rights of way will be supported where the biodiversity and wildlife corridor value is protected or enhanced, and the proposal is fit for purpose.

### **3. Legislative background**

- 3.1. The basis for strategic environmental assessment (SEA) legislation is European Union Directive 2001/42/EC4 which requires a strategic environmental assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have a significant environmental effect. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, commonly referred to as the SEA regulations.
- 3.2. To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation nine of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies.
- 3.3. Where it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination should be prepared. A copy of the statement must be submitted with the neighbourhood plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.
- 3.4. If likely significant environmental effects are identified, a strategic environmental assessment needs to be carried out and an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraphs two and three of Regulation 12 of those regulations.
- 3.5. In accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004, Freckenham Parish Council (the qualifying body) has requested West Suffolk District Council to consider whether a strategic environmental assessment of the emerging neighbourhood plan is required due to significant environmental effects.
- 3.6. Sustainability appraisal is not legally required for neighbourhood plans, but it must be demonstrated how the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development in the area. It is the responsibility of the qualifying body to demonstrate how its neighbourhood plan will contribute to achieving sustainable development.
- 3.7. Strategic environmental assessment is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a plan before it is made. A habitats regulations assessment identifies whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This assessment must determine whether significant effects on a European site can be ruled out based on objective information.
- 3.8. European sites are defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 and include special areas of conservation and special protection areas, potential special protection areas, and potential

special areas of conservation. The National Planning Policy Framework requires decision makers to apply the same protection and process to listed or proposed Ramsar sites. The sites collectively are referred to as habitats sites in this document.

- 3.9. If the conclusion of the habitats regulations assessment screening is that the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site then an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan for the site, in view of the conservation objectives of the site, must be undertaken. If a plan is one which has been determined to require an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive, then it will normally also require a strategic environmental assessment.

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#### **4. Screening process**

- 4.1. The environmental constraints of the site are set out in appendix one of this document.
- 4.2. The criteria from schedule one of the strategic environmental assessment regulations have been used in the consideration of environmental effects.

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## 5. Screening assessment

- 5.1. A neighbourhood plan may have a significant effect on the environment depending on the proposals within it and a case-by-case assessment is required. The criteria for undertaking this assessment are drawn from Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC (Annex 11) and Schedule 1 of the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 as set out in table two below:

Table two: consideration of likely significant effects, using the criteria from schedule one of the strategic environmental assessment regulations.

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<b>The characteristics of the plan having regard to:</b>	
<p>The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.</p>	<p>The Freckenham neighbourhood plan contains a spatial strategy for development to be assessed against. It supports the delivery of appropriately designed and scaled housing to meet identified local needs within the settlement boundary.</p> <p>It provides a framework for the consideration of proposals affecting the countryside, wider landscape setting and protected species; in addition to consideration of climate change, recreation, infrastructure, water, services, transport and maintaining a dark sky.</p> <p>Detailed sustainable construction practices are considered for all development. Development that would be supported is small in scale and as such would be unlikely to have any significant effect on the environment.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</p>	<p>The neighbourhood plan provides policies for the plan area, relevant to a local level only. The Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the strategic policies of the former Forest Heath area of West Suffolk. It does not influence other plans but will become a development plan document if made.</p>

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<b>The characteristics of the plan having regard to:</b>	
<p>The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>A neighbourhood plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The plan includes a strong emphasis on increasing biodiversity and protecting the existing natural environment and habitats as well as including a dark skies policy (FRE 12). These may help to buffer it from the possible future development of Sunnica solar farm which would cover part of the parish, and from coalescence with neighbouring settlements. The neighbourhood plan seeks to safeguard areas of the parish that are considered historic assets and to promote community facilities, sustainable construction, including renewable energy and energy efficiency as well as consideration of sustainable drainage and safeguarding against flood risk. Policy FRE 16 aims to protect, enhance and extend public rights of way in the parish, allowing greater opportunities for local leisure and recreation, and enhancing green corridors and biodiversity.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan.</p>	<p>The environmental impact of any development within the Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be minimal due to the location, size and scale of development and the location and form of any development will be restricted by the settlement boundary.</p> <p>Any potential environmental problems including those associated with loss of agricultural land and air pollution are likely to be of a local scale and could be tackled through the implementation of the plan and planning permission. The policy content of the adopted local plan will additionally apply to any proposals within the neighbourhood plan area. These policies have been or will be</p>

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<b>The characteristics of the plan having regard to:</b>	
	subject to sustainability appraisal and habitats regulations assessment screening.
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 neighbourhood plan is required to be in conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan. The local plan has had regard to European community legislation on the environment.
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>	
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	Development that could come forward through the plan would be of small enough scale that any effects are unlikely to be significant in terms of duration, frequency, and reversibility. No allocations for development have been made in the plan.
The cumulative nature of the effects	Other plans and projects in the vicinity of the plan area have been reviewed. Policy themes in the plan and policies in other local plan documents that would continue to be relevant protect local environmental assets. Cumulative effects are unlikely to be significant. The neighbourhood plan policies seek to safeguard the plan area from inappropriate development, individually and in combination.
The transboundary nature of the effects	The plan will not lead to transboundary effects. No allocations for development are proposed and any proposals that arise as windfall development or incidentally are unlikely to lead to transboundary effects on interests of acknowledged importance.
The risks to human health or the environment (for example due to accidents)	The plan does not propose additional development and is unlikely to lead to additional risks to human health or the environment.

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<b>The characteristics of the plan having regard to:</b>	
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The potential development that could occur as a result of the plan is limited in its geographical area within the settlement boundary. Any effects are likely to be local and are unlikely to be significant.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: special natural characteristics or cultural heritage exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values intensive land-use	The environmental sensitivities in the plan area and immediate vicinity are listed in appendix one. The plan proposes to include policies that protect heritage and environmental assets. Other local plan documents would also continue to be relevant. The environmental effects arising from the plan are unlikely to be significant.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	<p>Local, national and internationally designated nature conservation sites in the locality are listed in appendix one. None of these sites are within the plan area.</p> <p>The closest sensitive area is Chippenham Fen a SSSI, National nature reserve, a Ramsar site and Special area of Conservation which lies 1.4 kilometres from the closest point on the parish boundary. No footpaths or proposed new footpaths run to this area and it is unlikely that there will be an increase in footfall or dog walking in the area.</p> <p>Habitats regulations assessment screening below has screened out likely significant effects on any international sites.</p> <p>A review of local landscape designations has looked at <a href="#">locally valued landscapes</a> (West Suffolk Preferred Options Local Plan consultation 2022) and identified potential areas for inclusion in the Chalk Valley and Ridges, and Brecks Fen fringe which both overlap the plan</p>



Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<b>The characteristics of the plan having regard to:</b>	
	<p>area. The proposed Sunnica solar farm has the potential to significantly change the character of the landscape but does not form part of this examination as it is a nationally significant infrastructure project and examined at national level.</p>

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## **6. Habitats regulations assessment screening**

- 6.1. There are no Natura 2000 (European Sites) sites within the Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan area. Sites outside of the neighbourhood plan area but within 15 kilometres include Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA), Breckland Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Fenland (SAC), Rex Graham (SAC) and Chippenham Fen Ramsar.
- 6.2. Recent habitats regulations assessment (HRA) work in West Suffolk (West Suffolk Issues and Options Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment September 2020) has highlighted possible effects associated with the international sites as follows:
  - Direct loss or physical damage due to construction.
  - Disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings.
  - Disturbance from construction or operation of roads.
  - Recreational pressure.
  - Water quantity.
  - Water quality.
  - Air quality.
- 6.3. The plan area is 1.4 kilometres from the closest site – Chippenham Fen Ramsar, and 2.9 kilometres from the Breckland SPA – no development is proposed within the 1500 metres buffer of any of the sites.
- 6.4. In addition, the potential for effects to occur in combination with the development in the local plan and with other projects has been considered. However, it is judged that the scale of additional development likely to occur as a result of the plan is unlikely to lead to in-combination effects.
- 6.5. It is concluded that likely significant effect on any European site can be screened out.

## **7. Screening outcome**

- 7.1. This report contains the detail of the assessment of the need for the Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to strategic environmental assessment as required by Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) and appropriate assessment as required by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The assessment for both these requirements has been undertaken on the basis of the growth set out in the neighbourhood plan and summarised in section two of this report. Based on the environmental information, and the scope of the policies in the Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan, the preliminary outcome of the assessment is:
- In respect of strategic environmental assessment, significant environmental effects can be screened out (section five).
  - In respect to habitats regulations assessment, likely significant effects can be screened out (section six).
- 7.2. This report has been prepared to inform consultation with statutory consultees, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. The screening will be reviewed in light of any comments received through the consultation process.

## Appendix 1 – environmental constraints

### Biodiversity

There are no internationally important sites within the plan area. The closest habitats site to the plan boundary, including special areas of conservation (SAC), special protection area (SPA) and Ramsar sites are listed in the table below.

SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Fenland (2.4 kilometres (km)) Breckland (5.3 km) Rex Graham (5.3 km)	Breckland (2.9 km)	Chippenham Fen (1.4 km)

There are no nationally important sites within the plan area. Cavenham Heath national nature reserve is 5.3 km east of the parish boundary.

There are several nationally important SSSI sites in the vicinity including:

- Red Lodge Heath 0.7 km
- Chippenham Fen and Snailwell Poor's Fen 1.4 km
- Cherry Hill and The Gallops, Barton Mills 2.8 km

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) risk zones of Natural England give an indication of the types and scale of development that might have an effect on these SSSI. The criteria listed are in the following table.

Development category	Description	Comment
All planning applications	All planning applications outside or extending outside existing settlements or urban areas affecting greenspace, farmland, semi natural habitats or landscape features such as trees, hedges, streams, rural buildings and structures.	There are no such proposals or policies in the plan.
Infrastructure	Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.	There are no such proposals or policies in the plan
Air pollution	Livestock and poultry units with floorspace more than 500 square metres (m <sup>2</sup> ), slurry lagoons more than 750 m <sup>2</sup> and manure stores more than 3500 tonnes.	There are no such proposals or policies in the plan
Combustion	General combustion processes more than 50 megawatts energy input. Including energy	There are no such proposals or policies in the plan

	from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis or gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration or combustion.	
Discharge	Any discharge of water or liquid waste of more than 20 cubic metres per day to ground (for example to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream (please note: This does not include discharges to mains sewer which are unlikely to pose a risk at this location).	There are no such proposals or policies in the plan

There are no designated county wildlife sites within the plan boundary.

The closest are local nature reserves;  
 Isleham local nature reserve which is 1.3 km to the west of the parish boundary.  
 Barton Mills 3.6 km east  
 Aspal Close 3.6 km north

**Ancient woodland** – there are no ancient woodlands within the plan area or in the vicinity. The closest is approximately 7.7 km to the south in Dalham parish.  
 No protective buffer zones for ancient woodlands fall within the plan boundary.

### Soil

The land within the plan area is a mixture of grade 3 (central portion) and grade 4 (eastern portion) agricultural land and a much smaller quantity of grade 2 in the west.

### Water

The River Kennet, Lee Brook is an important watercourse that runs through the parish to join the River Lark which forms the northern boundary of the parish. There are associated flood zones two and three along the length of the river and functional flood plain.

A narrow strip of land on the western boundary lies within a source protection zone.

### Air quality

There are no air quality management areas within the plan area.

### Noise

The main source of noise pollution in the plan area is at the southeast of the parish where the A11 road comes within 0.25 km of the parish boundary.

### **Access and recreation**

There are several public rights of way within the plan area and Policy FRE 16 seeks to improve and extend the network and add biodiversity value. Policies FRE 1 and FRE 14 consider community facilities and recreation within the village.

### **Cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage**

One scheduled ancient monument is present within the plan area – Freckenham Castle.

There are seven further scheduled ancient monuments within two kilometres (km) of the plan area boundary:

- Bowl Barrow in Isleham Plantation 0.3 km
- Lumbar Hill bowl Barrow, Chippenham Stud 0.7 km
- Lime Kilns Isleham 1.6 km
- Isleham Priory 1.8 km
- Mildenhall Roman Site 1.5 km
- Bowl Barrow, Chalk Hill 1.7 km

There are 11 listed buildings within the plan area mostly listed Grade II. The Manor House on Church Lane and the Church of St Andrew are listed Grade II\*.

The central part of the village is designated as a conservation area and the area is rich in archaeological finds.

Chippenham Hall is a registered park and garden lying 1.6 km from the parish boundary to the south.

### **Landscape**

The plan area is comprised of three different landscape character types (Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment) – “Estate sandlands” in the east, “Rolling estate chalklands” to the west and fingers of “Settled fenlands” coming in from the north. These landscapes have the following characteristics:

- Estate sandlands  
A landscape of large geometric fields, plantation woodlands and remnant heather. Gently rolling free draining sandy soils, chalky in some areas but sandy and acidic in the south-east. Few watercourses. Areas of heath and acid grassland. Geometric fields and large blocks of commercial forestry. Pinelines a characteristic of the area as well as many tree belts and rectilinear plantations. Few ancient woodlands. High incidence of relatively late, estate type, brick buildings.
- Rolling estate chalklands  
A landscape of chalky soils, large regular fields with paddocks and shelterbelts.

Gently rolling chalky free draining loams, dominated by large scale arable production, and studded with small paddocks and shelterbelts. Fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges. A well-kept and tidy landscape with open views. Clustered villages of flint and thatch buildings, but many large new “prestige” homes.

- Settled fenlands

Flat landscapes of peaty soils, land is at sea level but sandy islands and ridges up to four metres may occur. Piecemeal enclosure of open common fen and small narrow fields divided by straight water-filled drains. Small poplar plantations and occasional pinelines of Scots Pine. Small scale farming and settled with farmsteads often in clusters.

A review of local landscape designations has looked at locally valued landscapes and identified that small parts of Freckenham may be included in the “Chalk Valley Ridges” and “Brecks Fen Fringe” landscape designations. This report forms part of the evidence base for the emerging West Suffolk Local Plan [Landscape Valuation report and annexes April 2022.pdf \(inconsult.uk\)](#) and the designation is expected to be included the pre-submission consultation draft of the West Suffolk Local Plan ([pre-submission Regulation 19 consultation planned January 2024](#)).

## Appendix 2 – Internationally designated sites

Freckenham is 1.4 kilometres (km) from the nearest Internationally designated site. The closest sites are Fenland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA). Chippenham Fen Ramsar site is part of the Fenland SAC and is 1.4 km away from the parish boundary.

Site	Conservation objectives of the international site
Breckland Special Protection Area	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features.</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features.</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely.</li> <li>• The population of each of the qualifying features.</li> <li>• The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifying features:</b></p> <p>A133 <i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>; Stone curlew (breeding).  A224 <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>; European nightjar (breeding).  A246 <i>Lullula arborea</i>; Woodlark (breeding).</p>
Fenland Special Area of Conservation	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the favourable conservation status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species.</li> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species.</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely.</li> <li>• The populations of qualifying species.</li> <li>• The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifying Features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H6410. <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>); Purple moor-grass meadows.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H7210. Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>; Calcium-rich fen dominated by great fen sedge (saw sedge) (Important orchid sites.)</li> <li>• S1149. <i>Cobitis taenia</i>; Spined loach.</li> <li>• S1166. <i>Triturus cristatus</i>; Great crested newt.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifying Features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criterion 1 One of the most outstanding remnants of the East Anglian peat fens. The area is one of the few which has not been drained. Traditional management has created a mosaic of habitats from open water to sedge and litter fields.</li> <li>• Criterion 2 The site supports one species of British Red Data Book plant, fen violet <i>Viola persicifolia</i>, which survives at only two other sites in Britain. It also contains eight nationally scarce plants and 121 British Red Data Book invertebrates.</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental Vulnerabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water pollution.</li> <li>• Hydrological changes.</li> <li>• Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition.</li> </ul>
Breckland Special Area of Conservation	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the favourable conservation status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species.</li> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species.</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely.</li> <li>• The populations of qualifying species.</li> <li>• The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifying Features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H2330. Inland dunes with open <i>Corynephorus</i> and <i>Agrostis</i> grasslands; Open grassland with grey-hair grass and common bent grass of inland dunes.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H3150. Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation; Naturally nutrient-rich lakes or lochs which are often dominated by pondweed.</li> <li>• H4030. European dry heaths.</li> <li>• H6210. Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia); Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone.</li> <li>• H91E0. Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae); Alder woodland on floodplains. (Important orchid site.)</li> <li>• S1166. <i>Triturus cristatus</i>; Great crested newt.</li> </ul>
<p>Rex Graham Special Area of Conservation</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the favourable conservation status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats.</li> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifying Features:</b></p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H6210 Semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (important orchid site.)</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental Vulnerabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in species distribution.</li> <li>• Air pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition.</li> <li>• Habitat fragmentation.</li> <li>• Deer</li> <li>• Invasive species.</li> <li>• Public access and disturbance.</li> </ul>
<p>Chippenham Fen Ramsar site (Part of Fenland SAC)</p>	<p>Based on its designation as a part of the Fenland Special Area of Conservation the conservation objectives are as follows:</p> <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the favourable conservation status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:</p>

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species.
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species.
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely.
- The populations of qualifying species.
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

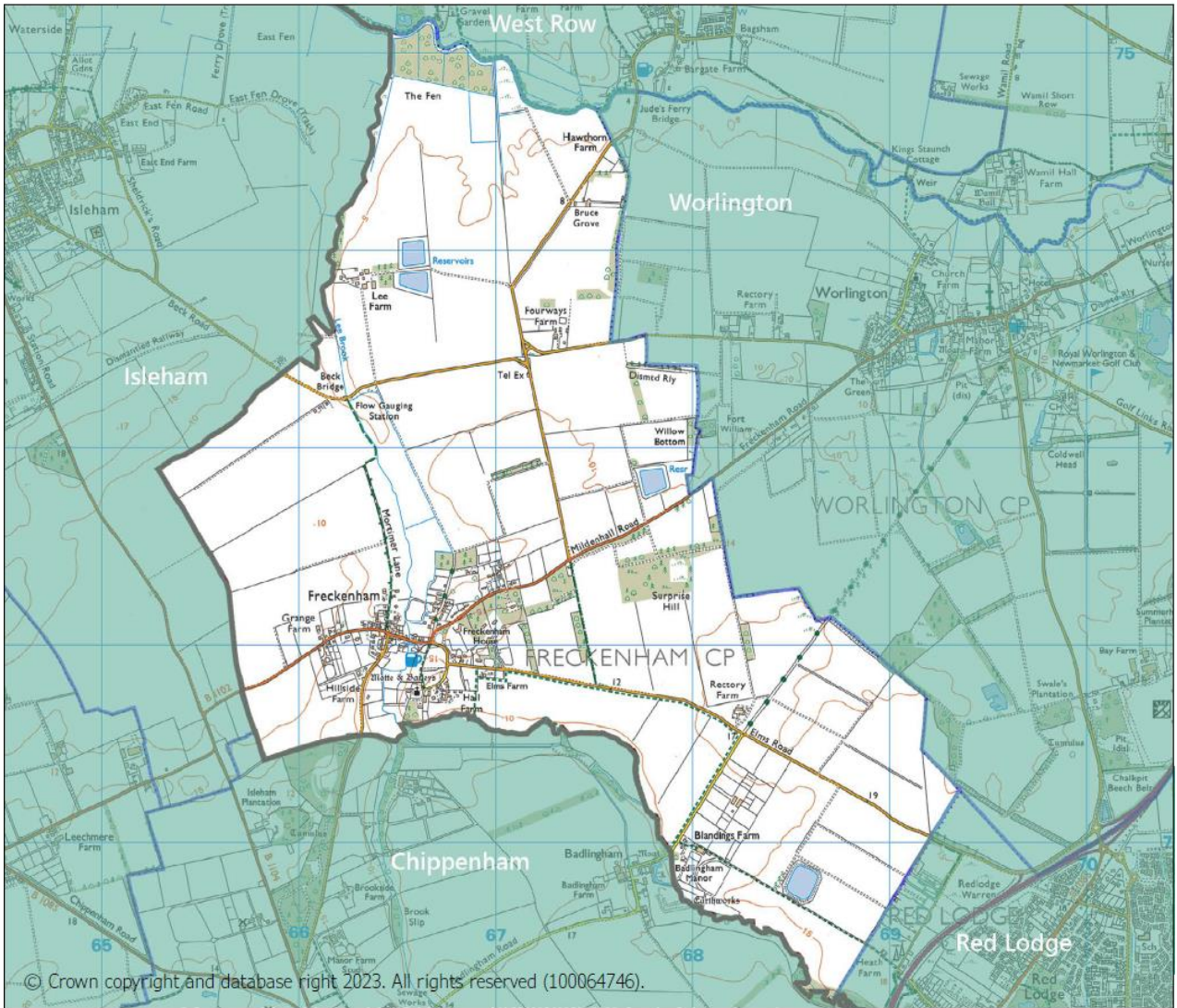
**Qualifying features:**

- H6410. Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae); Purple moor-grass meadows.
- H7210. Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae; Calcium-rich fen dominated by great fen sedge (saw sedge).
- S1149. Cobitis taenia; Spined loach.
- S1166. Triturus cristatus; Great crested newt.

With regards to the qualification of the site as a Ramsar it is designated under the following criterion:

- Criterion 1 – A spring-fed calcareous basin mire with a long history of management, which is partly reflected in the diversity of present-day vegetation.
- Criterion 2 – The invertebrate fauna is very rich, partly due to its transitional position between Fenland and Breckland. The species list is very long, including many rare and scarce invertebrates, characteristic of ancient Fenland sites in Britain.
- Criterion 3 – The site supports diverse vegetation types, rare and scarce plants. The site is a strong hold of Cambridge milk parsley *Selinum carvifolia*.

# Appendix 3 – plan area



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