

# Screening Statement under regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004 on the determination of the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Edmond Neighbourhood Plan (ENP)

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Government has confirmed that sustainability appraisals are only required for development plan documents and do not apply in the case of neighbourhood plans (see **appendix A** attached) although the qualifying body must demonstrate how its neighbourhood plan will contribute to achieving sustainable development. However, neighbourhood plans must not breach and must be otherwise compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations. Neighbourhood plans therefore need to be considered against, for example, the Habitats and Strategic Assessment Directives and associated regulations. Whilst it is not the case that every neighbourhood plan will need an environmental assessment of the type normally associated with the process of preparing Local Plans, they may, subject to their scope and the issues they are seeking to address, be required to produce an environmental assessment if the plan is determined as likely to have significant environmental effects.

1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) are required by **EU Directive 2001/42/EC**, to assess the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. This Directive was implemented in the United Kingdom in July 2004 with the adoption of the **Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations)**. The requirement for SEA is assessed under **Regulation 9 (1)**. The SEA focuses on impacts on the natural environment with some limited consideration of human population needs and material assets. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) itself should, among other things, consider options, quantify potential impacts and offer advice on alternatives, or mitigating measures, where impacts are likely.

1.3 **Regulation 8** goes even further than the EU Directive, to explicitly prevent the adoption or submission of a plan for which an environmental assessment is required before the SEA is completed. This regulation also prohibits the adoption or submission of a plan before the responsible authority has determined whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

1.4 Whilst it is apparent that different parts of Telford & Wrekin's Local Plan will have varying degrees of environmental impact, it is not possible to categorically rule out the need for SEA, without first carrying out a screening process to establish whether or not, the ENP is likely to have **significant environmental effects** (Article 3(1)). Under Article 3(4) of the Directive, and Regulation 5 of the Regulations, the responsible authority must determine which plans, other than those for which an SEA is automatically required, are likely to have significant environmental effects. The "responsible authority" as defined by Regulation 2, is the authority on whose behalf a plan is prepared.

1.5 Both the Directive (in Annex II), and the Regulations (in Schedule 1), set out specific criteria for determining the likely significance of the environmental effects of a plan. The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called **screening**. These criteria include specific considerations regarding the characteristics of the plan, the effects of the plan, and the area likely to be effected by the plan.

1.6 A determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted; the **Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England**.

1.7 Within 28 days of making its determination, the Council must publish a statement, such as this one, setting out its decision. If it determines that an SEA is not required, the statement must include reasons for this.

## **2.0 Neighbourhood Plans**

2.1 Neighbourhood planning is a new community right introduced by the **Localism Act 2011**. Take up of the new right will be voluntary and at the discretion of neighbourhoods and communities.

2.2 On 27 March 2012, the Government published the final version of the **National Planning Policy Framework**, replacing almost all existing planning guidance. This is what it says on neighbourhood planning:

### **Neighbourhood plans**

*183. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes and neighbourhood forums can use neighbourhood planning to:*

- set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and*
- grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.*

*184. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods*

*should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.*

*185. Outside these strategic elements, neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in their area. Once a neighbourhood plan has demonstrated its general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and is brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict. Local planning authorities should avoid duplicating planning processes for non-strategic policies where a neighbourhood plan is in preparation.*

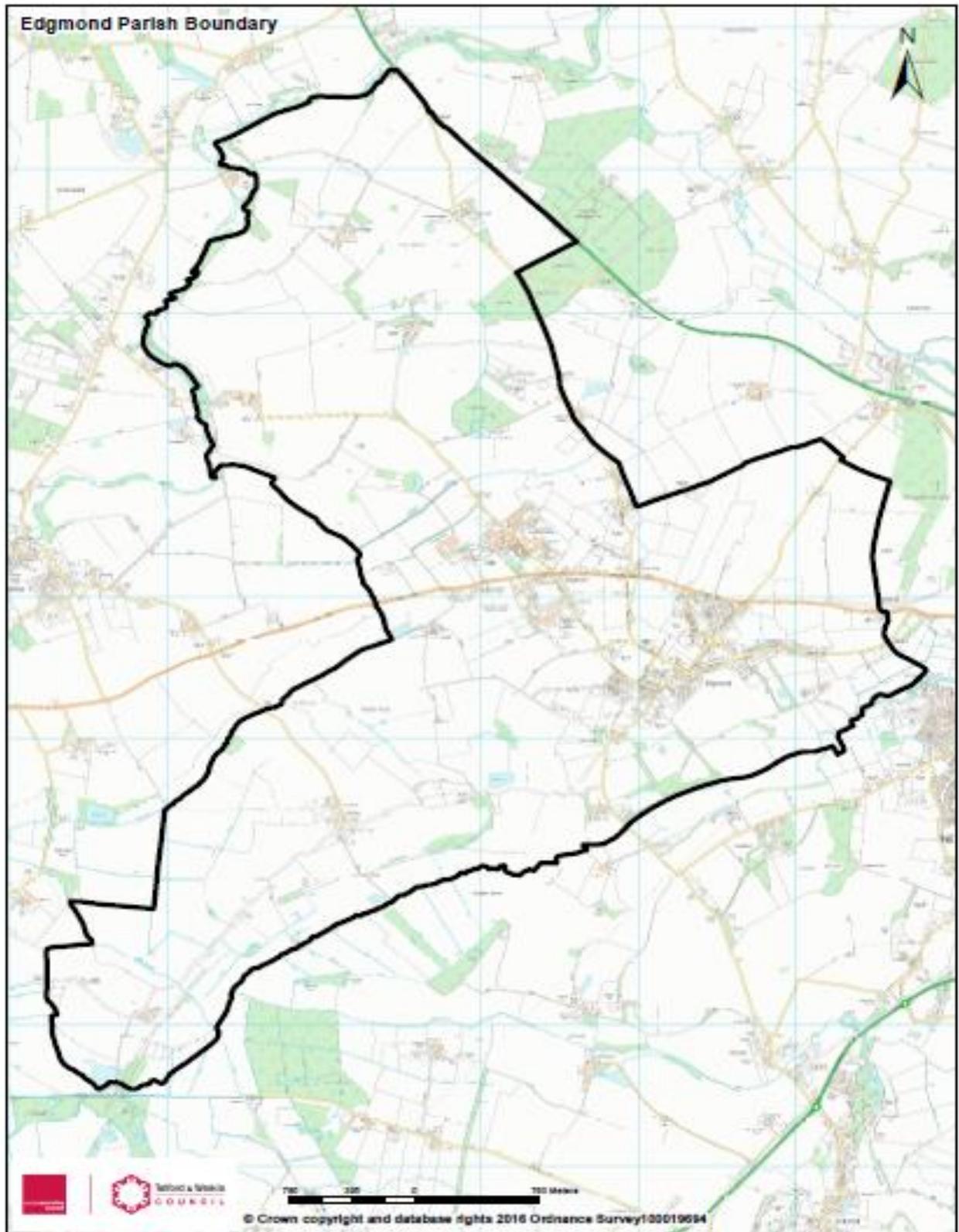
2.3 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (SI 637) came into force on 6 April 2012 and have since been amended most recently through the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 which became effective on 1st October 2016 (SI 934). This sets out the procedures for designating a Neighbourhood Plan area and getting the Plan adopted through the planning system.

### **3. Edgmond Neighbourhood Plan**

3.1. The ENP must conform to higher level policy. This means that it must conform to national and local policy including Telford & Wrekin's Core Strategy, which was adopted in December 2007 and emerging Local Plan. Whilst the Core Strategy sets out a growth scenario up to 2016, it did not make any specific allocations for Edgmond . The emerging Local Plan continues this approach suggesting in HO10 that Edgmond is one of 5 rural settlements suitable for a limited amount of infill housing development. Hence, there is no specific requirement to allocate any sites in the ENP.

3.2 Edgmond Parish Council submitted its application to Telford & Wrekin Council for designation of its Neighbourhood Area in June 2016. After a formal six week consultation which began on the 19<sup>th</sup> July and ran until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016, Telford & Wrekin Council Cabinet in October resolved to support the Neighbourhood Area application made by Edgmond Parish Council and that the area shown in the application should be designated as a Neighbourhood Area (see map below that shows the designated boundary). A formal notice was published on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016 that confirmed the designation.

## Edgmond Parish Boundary and designated Neighbourhood Plan Area



3.3. The Edgmond Neighbourhood Plan will be based around a number of key themes that were raised during the initial consultation and subsequent drop-in sessions. These have been adopted by the Edgmond NP steering group to help form the objectives and build on the aims identified in the Parish Plan

3.4 These issues have informed the preparation of a number of planning objectives that will in turn, inform the development of draft planning policies. It is likely that these objectives may be refined as the draft plan is considered at the formal consultation stage.

### **Key Themes**

- Housing
- Green Spaces
- Employment
- Community Safety
- Rights of Way
- Roads, Pavements & Street Lighting
- Traffic & Transport
- Community Amenities

3.4 These themes have informed the preparation of a number of planning objectives that have led in turn to the development of draft planning policies. It is likely that these objectives and policies may be refined as the draft plan is considered at the formal consultation stage.

<b>Edgmond Neighbourhood Plan Objectives</b>
<b>Theme: Housing</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To allow future infill development of a scale and type in keeping with the rural character and identity of the village.</li><li>2. To support the provision of a range of house types and tenures on appropriate sites within Edgmond village and the wider parish.</li><li>3. To prevent the merging of built up areas and to retain the rural character and identity of Edgmond village and the wider Parish.</li></ol>
<b>Theme: Green Spaces and Local Amenity:</b>

<p>4. To protect and enhance green areas, natural habitat, wildlife and biodiversity in and around the village and to encourage appropriate management.</p> <p>5. To respect the conservation area and support sympathetic design to protect and enhance the area for the benefit of the entire community.</p> <p>6. To conserve local amenity by protecting and enhancing existing open spaces and recreational areas of value to the community to ensure the village retains its rural character.</p>
<p><b>Theme: Employment</b></p> <p>7. To encourage suitable employment opportunities and work to improve public transport options and broadband connectivity.</p>
<p><b>Theme: Movement and Transport</b></p> <p>8. To encourage the provision of alternative, safe and convenient means of travel so as to minimise the use of cars in the Parish and the associated problems of noise, pollution and parking</p> <p>9. To provide a safe, accessible and well maintained network of roads, cycle routes, footpaths, rights of way and pavements whilst retaining a rural character to support a more sustainable environment, reduce reliance on the car and offer healthier lifestyle options</p> <p>10. To improve safety by reducing vehicle speed and limiting access by heavy goods vehicles,</p>
<p><b>Theme: Community Amenities</b></p> <p>11. To protect existing community facilities and services considered important for a vibrant community and support the development of new ones which benefit the community</p> <p>12. To increase opportunities to access community facilities and to enhance the range of activities and facilities available for all.</p>

**Other Important Issues in Edgmond:** Other important considerations will include the provision of Development Management policies for the Borough Council's planning service. They currently rely on a number of saved policies from the Wrekin Local Plan. These policies are very out of date but still useful when assessing a planning application. For example, policies might cover the preservation and enhancement of local character and distinctiveness including historic assets.

**Securing and Monitoring Delivery:** The ENP will have to consider how policies are to be delivered and include a monitoring framework against which progress on the ENP will be assessed.

#### 4.0 Assessment of requirement for SEA

4.1 The Government has set down planning guidance following publication of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The guidance advises that: *To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan's preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies.*

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.

4.2 In principle, neighbourhood plans should not be subject to the Sea Directive or require sustainability appraisal because they do not normally introduce new policies or proposals or modify planning documents which have already been subject to sustainability appraisal. However, they might occasionally be found likely to give rise to significant effects that have not been previously assessed.

In screening a plan, Article 3 (6) of the SEA Directive requires that the relevant bodies concerned with environmental matters, as defined by individual Member states, shall be consulted as part of the screening process. In the case of the UK, the statutory environmental consultees are: Natural England; the Environment Agency; and Historic England.

4.3 It is considered that the screening methodology should address the issues identified in the table below.

Screening Stage	Purpose
Assessing ENP against Annex II criteria	To establish whether or not the ENP is likely to have a significant effect on the Annex II criteria. This will take account of the role of the ENP in relation to existing policy context
Conclusion on whether the screening exercise identifies a need for SEA	To set out conclusions from the screening exercise
Recommendations for how the ENP should proceed in relation to SEA requirements	To set out the broad approach needed to carry out an SEA on the ENP or, where the screening report suggests no ENP is required, to determine the parameters within which the ENP will need to operate to avoid triggering a need for SEA.

## Assessing the ENP against Annex II Criteria

Annex II of the SEA Directive sets out the criteria for determining if there are likely to be significant effects resulting from the implementation of a plan.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likely to have significant environmental effects	Summary of significant effects
<p><b>1a) 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.</b></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Edmond Neighbourhood Development Plan (ENP) proposes a framework for development proposals focussed around infill housing, green spaces, employment, local character and infrastructure. It seeks to designate Local Green Spaces, deliver infill housing on appropriate sites and prevent coalescence with Newport.</p> <p>Promoting suitable infill sites for housing development will contribute towards the Telford and Wrekin Council’s strategic framework with regards to rural needs; providing more homes, increasing the supply of affordable type units, as well as a mixture of homes.</p> <p>Policy HO10 in the submission version of the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan and existing policy CS7 of the Core Strategy both identify Edmond as a location for sustainable development within the rural area. Local Plan Policy HO10 (which is saved) sets out additional criterion specifically to rural housing development. However, the ENP will be in conformity with the policies set out in the emerging Local Plan that has already undergone an SA.</p>
<p><b>1(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</b></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The ENP responds to other plans and programmes such as the Core Strategy, emerging Local Plan and the NPPF as it is a lower tier planning policy document. The ENP is likely to have a positive impact on these plans through its policies to deliver sustainable development and protect and enhance the local environment; it will help deliver the aims and policies of the emerging Local Plan.</p>

		Only limited attention has been given to a comparative examination of Edgmonds environmental characteristics and how these compare relative to the West Midlands and the rest of the country. This stance is taken since this activity is not particularly helpful to the plan delivery process. The focus taken therefore is upon the issues already identified within Telford & Wrekin.
<b>1(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</b>	No	The ENP has regard to the objective of achieving sustainable development in the local area. The ENP contains policies that seek to protect and retain local valuable green space, public rights of way, provide new homes and help to promote and support existing services and facilities. The plan looks to improve and promote public transport opportunities, and the re-use of existing buildings for business use. The a limited amount of infill housing site will help to address rural housing needs, and the policies within the ENP encourage provision of a more balanced range of housing (size, type and affordability) as supported by local residents. Proposals set out the ENP are designed to have a positive impact on local environmental assets and places valued by local people in the ENP area. They will primarily focus on the protection and enhancement of green spaces and historic buildings.
<b>1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan</b>	No	There are no major allocations identified for housing or employment. The ENP identifies limited public transport and parking as an environmental issue and seeks to minimise impacts of parking on roads and improve and promote alternative transport opportunities through new development policies. 'Getting around' Objective 1 seeks to improve public transport to relieve the need for excessive vehicle movements. Policies RES3, E1, G3 support the provision of and improvements to pedestrian and cycle way routes through new planning

		<p>applications. Whilst Policy RES3 supports measures to reduce on-street car parking.</p> <p>Any further environmental problems may be triggered through the development of suitable infill housing sites however the impact on traffic flow/highway safety, drainage, ecology etc is unclear at this stage. If an application for housing was made to the Local Planning Authority it would go through an assessment process where conditions/mitigation could be put in place to reduce environmental problems should the development be considered acceptable.</p> <p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas within the Edgmond Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>
<b>1(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)</b>	No	The ENP policies do not propose any changes that are likely to have a severe impact on the environment i.e. tree preservation orders or existing public rights of way. The Local Plan chapter on the Natural Environment contains positive enabling policies (NE1-NE7) and the ENP has adopted a similar approach that is likely to have a positive effect.
<b>2(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</b>	No	Due to the limited scale of the new development proposed, it is unlikely that the ENP would result in any irreversible damaging environmental impacts. Any new development should be sustainable and be in accordance with existing planning policy

<b>2(b) the cumulative nature of the effects</b>	No	It is not possible to fully assess the cumulative effects of future development until planning applications have been submitted and assessed for the allocated sites. However, it is anticipated that the forthcoming issues would be the impact on school capacity, highway safety and the loss and movement of jobs. It may be possible to address some or all of these cumulative issues through mitigation measures, financial contributions, and in detail as part of the planning application process. Further to this it is thought the policies within the ENP will generate positive effects.
<b>2(c) the transboundary nature of the effects</b>	No	The infill housing and small scale employment proposals of the ENP are unlikely to generate any significant cross-boundary effects. By designating and protecting Local Green Spaces the ENP may help to reduce pressure on open spaces elsewhere. Improvements to more sustainable transport modes and linkages, including cycling, walking should help to minimise any trans boundary effects. Effects will be mainly local but there may be some effects on surrounding areas. It is not clear at this stage what these effects will be.
<b>2(d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)</b>	No	It is unlikely that there will be any obvious risks to human health arising from the policies within the ENP. Health and Safety standards on developments arising within the plan area will be controlled/ governed by relevant statutory guidelines and codes. Any risks arising from the policies and proposals in the ENP will be managed in accordance with the relevant statutory frameworks; however no details have been submitted or are shown within the plan.
<b>2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)</b>	No	The Strine Brook runs through the south-west corner of the parish; however this should not pose any development constraints by reason of its location and distance from any likely infill development sites. The area is characterised by listed buildings and areas of green space. The policies contained in the ENP seek to protect and enhance open space, retain historical character, protect amenities and

		services whilst trying to provide a mix of new homes for existing needs. The plan will impact on the local population.
<b>2(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</b> <b>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</b> <b>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards</b> <b>(iii) intensive land-use</b>	No	<p>The ENP is unlikely to adversely affect the value and vulnerability of the area in relation to its natural or cultural heritage. If anything it will provide greater support to enhance the setting of heritage assets and of green spaces. Where possible, policies will encourage new opportunities for recreation, access and leisure. The forthcoming ENP policies will aim to preserve, enhance and improve all known sites of ecological or environmental importance, as well as designating new sites that are currently unprotected. The policies contained in the ENP aim to preserve, enhance and improve sites and corridors of ecological or environmental importance, as well as designating Local Green Space alongside policies which seek to protect local characteristic features (RES1, RES2, RES3, RES4, G1, G2, G3). These are in accordance with policies in the emerging Local Plan dealing with the Natural Environment (chapter 6), the Built Environment and Heritage (chapter 9) and Environmental Resources (chapter 10).</p>

<p><b>2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.</b></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>It is considered that the ENP is unlikely to adversely impact on its existing landscapes. Whilst there are areas of grade 2, 3 and 4 agricultural land within the parish the plan does not propose any new development on the best and most versatile land.</p> <p>Some of the eastern parts of the parish are within 10km of Aqualate Mere Midland Meres &amp; Mosses Ramsar Phase 2. There is a RIGS (Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites) within the parish at Rock Hole quarry. The plan does not propose any new development that would affect the site.</p> <p>A statement on Habitats Regulations assessment will be prepared identifying whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.</p> <p>The plan proposes to protect wildlife corridors and enhance green spaces through policies G1, G2 and G3 which are likely to have beneficial impacts.</p>
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