



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Wells-next-the-Sea Neighbourhood Plan

Scoping Report

February 2023

Quality information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V1	February 2023	Draft for internal review	CK	Graduate Environmental Consultant
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V3	February 2023	Final for consultation	CB	Principal Environmental Planner

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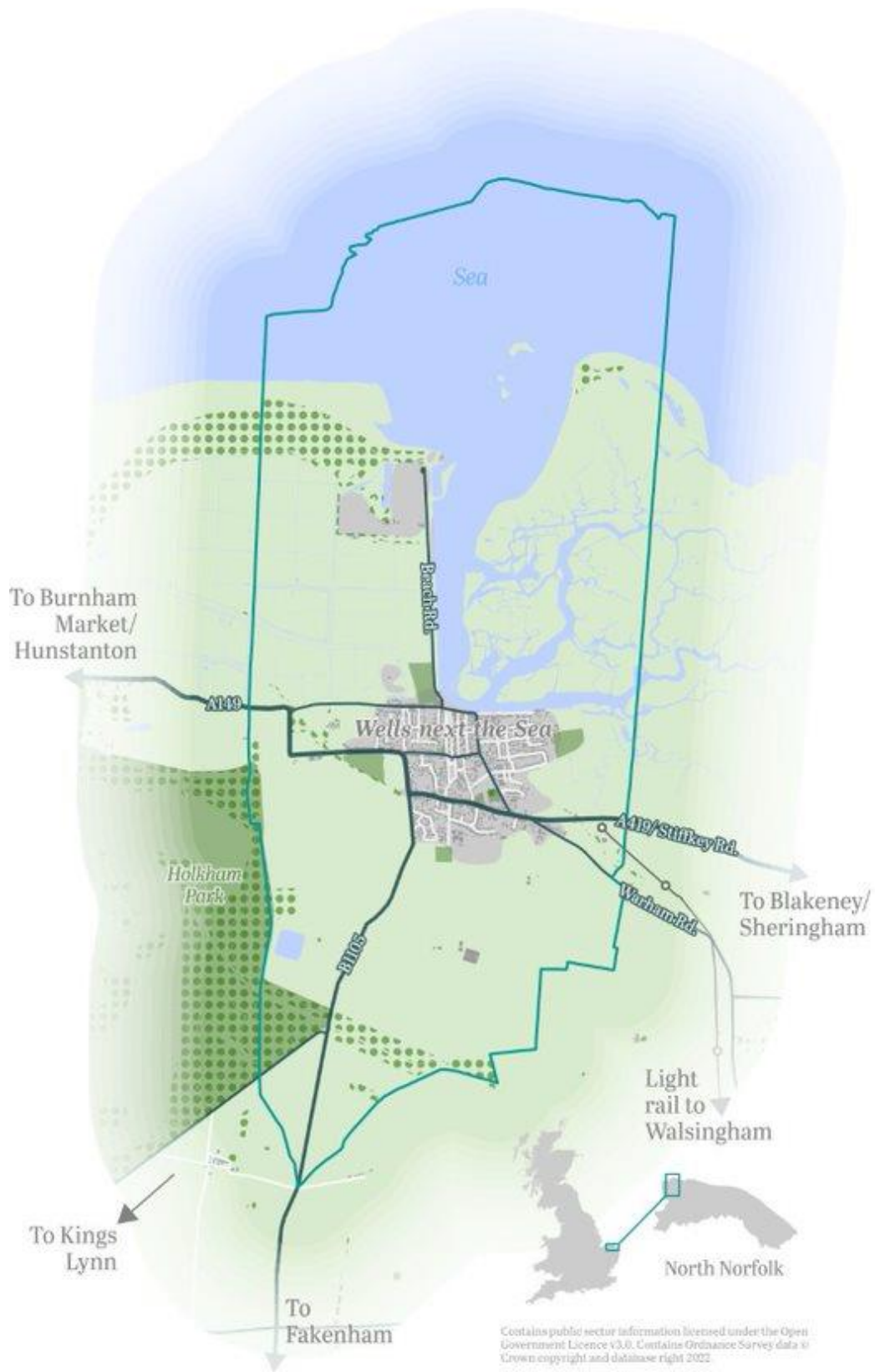


Figure 1-1: Wells-next-the-Sea neighbourhood area

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Wells-next-the-Sea Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).
- 1.2 The WNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of North Norfolk District Council.
- 1.3 The neighbourhood area (see Figure 1-1), designated in 2019, is situated on the North Norfolk Coast between the coastal resorts of Hunstanton (15 miles to the west) and Cromer (20 miles to the east). The town of Wells is located within North Norfolk District and within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

SEA explained

- 1.4 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, SEA seeks to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.5 SEA is undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).
- 1.6 The WNP has been screened in as requiring SEA.¹ This is predominantly because of the scope of the plan, which proposes to shape development coming forward in key parts of the neighbourhood area with the potential to lead to a range of effects. SEA is therefore required to assess the potential for significant environmental effects.
- 1.7 The next stage of SEA (this report) seeks to establish a suggested scope for the assessment. A key procedural requirement of the SEA Regulations is to present this scope for the SEA, so that the designated authorities (Historic England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency) can provide timely comment.

¹ SEA screening was undertaken by North Norfolk District Council in 2023.

SEA scoping explained

1.8 The scope is explored and presented under a series of key environmental themes as follows:

- Air quality
- Biodiversity
- Climate change and flood risk
- Community wellbeing
- Historic environment
- Land, soil, and water resources
- Landscape
- Transportation and movement

1.9 The selected environmental themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive.² These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects.

1.10 Developing the draft scope for the SEA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:

1. Exploring the policy context for the neighbourhood plan and SEA to summarise the key messages arising. Overarching plans and the strategic policy context are presented in the first chapter (as part of the context for the plan), whilst localised plans and strategies are explored under each environmental theme.
2. Establishing the baseline for the SEA (i.e., the current and future situation in the area) to help identify key sensitive receptors. Following a series of maps, key statistics, and cited evidence sources, a narrative summarises the baseline for each environmental theme. The future baseline (in the absence of the plan) is explored in the first chapter (as part of the context for the plan).
3. Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA. Key issues are explored for each environmental theme; and
4. Considering this information, developing a SEA framework comprising SEA objectives and assessment questions, which can then be used as a guiding framework for the subsequent assessment. Objectives are explored for each environmental theme scoped in as part of the assessment, and then brought together as a whole (the SEA framework) in the final chapter.

1.11 Options and proposals within the emerging neighbourhood plan will be assessed consistently using this framework.

² The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on 'the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'

2. Context

- 2.1 This section presents the strategic planning policy context provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the local development framework of North Norfolk. It also identifies plans and strategies of distinct relevance to the interests of statutory consultees, and other broad national strategies of relevance. Finally, a narrative is provided which considers the future baseline.

Strategic policy context

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Planning practice guidance	2021
North Norfolk Local Plan	2008
North Norfolk Draft Local Plan (2036)	Emerging Local Plan

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides an overarching framework for development in England. It sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is supported by planning practice guidance, which is a suite of policy papers covering a broad range of topics, including SEA. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the NPPF.
- 2.3 The strategic policy context is also set by North Norfolk's local development framework, which consists predominantly of the North Norfolk Core Strategy, adopted in 2008. This plan recognises Wells-next-the-Sea as a secondary settlement town in which a limited amount of additional development will be accommodated.
- 2.4 North Norfolk District Council are in the process of developing a new Local Plan, the Draft Local Plan 2036, which will replace the Core Strategy upon its completion. The new Local Plan most recently consulted on a Regulation 19 submission version of the plan, which is expected to be submitted for examination soon. The submission version identifies Wells-next-the-Sea as a small growth town where a lesser quality of development will be located (Policy SS1).

Historic England

Document title	Year of publication
Historic England: Heritage and Climate Change	2022
Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal Designation and Management	2019
Historic England Advice Note 12: Statement of Heritage Significance	2019
The National Design Guide	2019
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: The Setting of Heritage Assets	2017
Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	2016
Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance	2008

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

- The historic environment is a shared resource
- Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment
- Understanding the significance of places is vital
- Significant places should be managed to sustain their values
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent
- Documenting and learning from decisions are essential.³

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

³ Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance

Natural England and the Environment Agency

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

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

Other national strategies

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

Future baseline

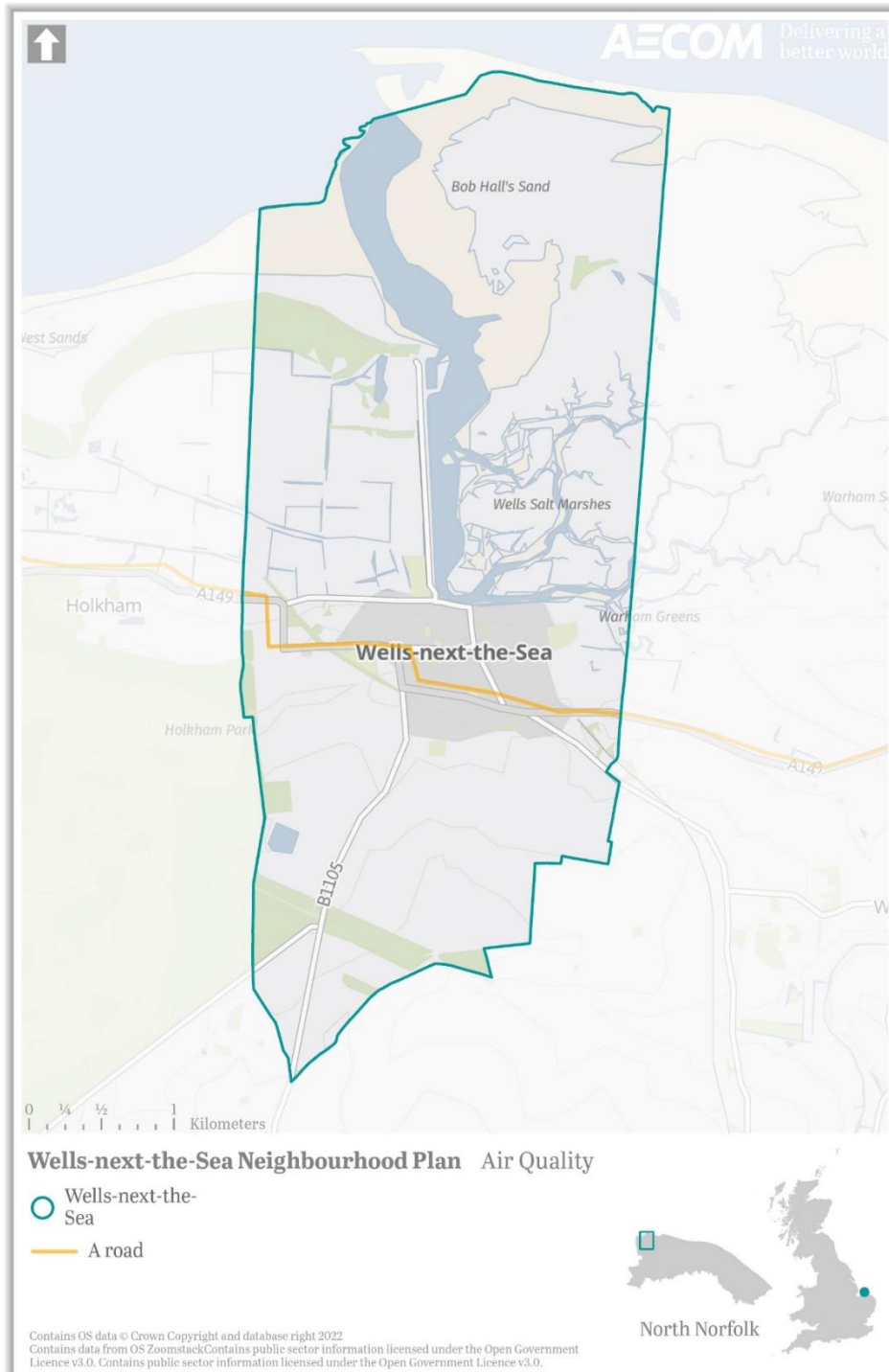
- 2.8 In the context of SEA, there is a need to consider the future baseline. The future baseline is the expected continuation and/ or evolution of aspects of the baseline, based on what we know today. The future baseline is inevitably uncertain and predicted.
- 2.9 In the future, development (housing,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

3. Air quality

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

Maps

Figure 3-1: Strategic roads



Key statistics

Figure 3-2: Consultation event findings, 2021



- Buttlands, Mill Road, and Warham Road were identified as hotspots for congestion.
- The biggest traffic concerns raised by residents relate to tourist traffic and parking, particularly in the summer months which often leads to gridlock in the town centre.

Key evidence sources

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

- [North Norfolk County Council – Air Quality](#)
 - [2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report](#)
 - [Wells-next-the-Sea Neighbourhood Plan Report for the consultation event on draft ideas](#)

Policy context

Table 3-1: Additional plans and policies relating to air quality

Document title	Year of publication
North Norfolk Local Plan	2008
North Norfolk Draft Local Plan (2036)	Emerging Local Plan
Air quality action plan City of Norwich	2016
North Norwich Net Zero 2030 Strategy and Climate Action Plan	2021

Commentary

3.3 Air quality in North Norfolk is generally good and monitoring shows that pollutants are within target values and there are no Air Quality Management Areas where air quality objectives cannot be met. One nitrogen dioxide hotspot was identified **outside the neighbourhood area in** Hoveton due to the high levels of traffic and congestion in the village centre; further monitoring is keeping this under review.

Key issues

- 3.4 The closest AQMA to the neighbourhood area is Norwich City Centre AQMA, which is designated for Nitrogen dioxide NO₂ (annual mean) exceedances. However, this AQMA is circa 43km southeast of Wells and no development is being planned for through the WNP that is likely to impact upon air quality objectives within surrounding AQMAs. With no exceedances recorded within the neighbourhood area, this theme is **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA for the WNP.

4. Biodiversity

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

Maps

Figure 4-1: Internationally designated biodiversity sites

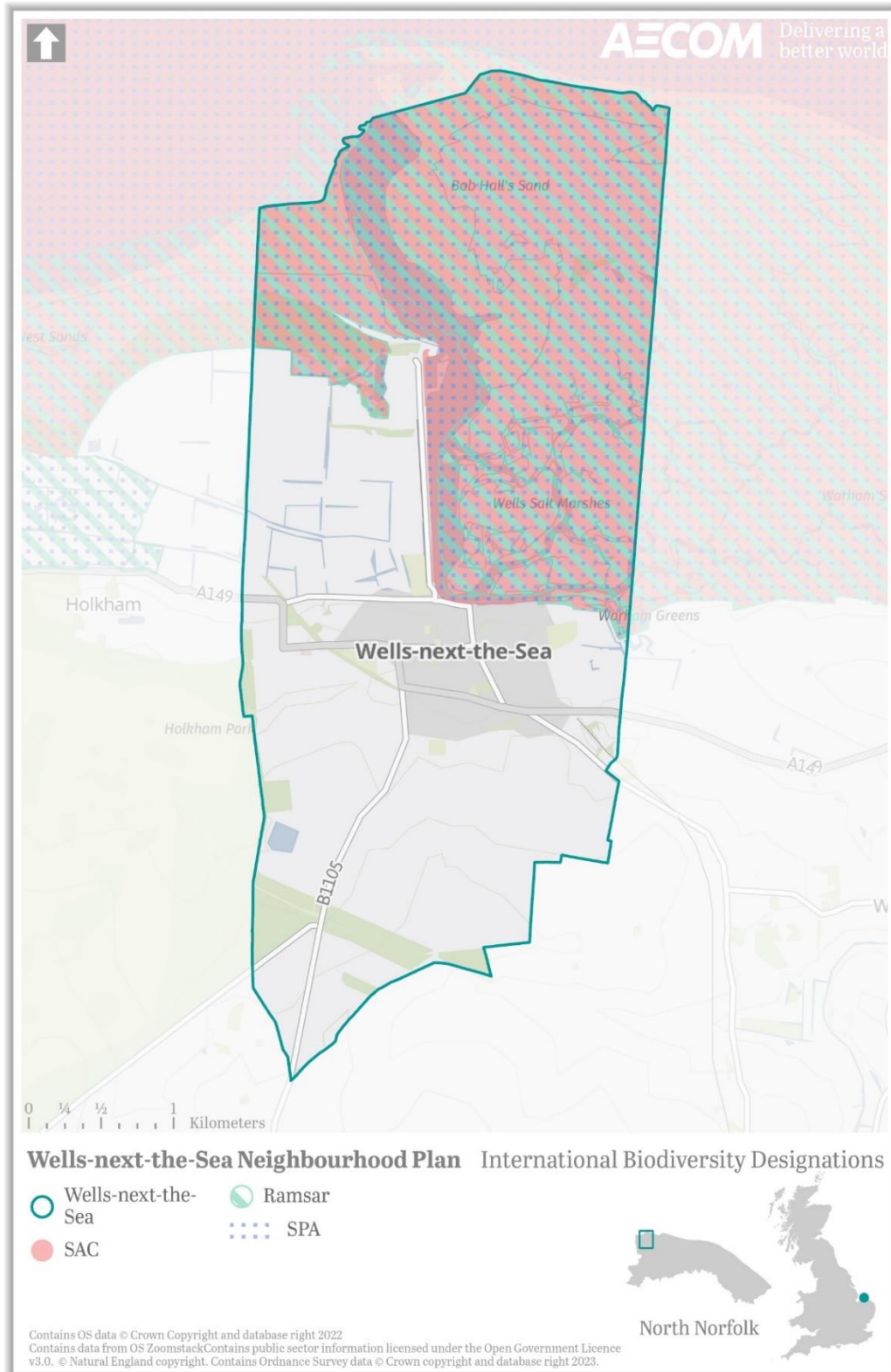


Figure 4-2: National Biodiversity Designations

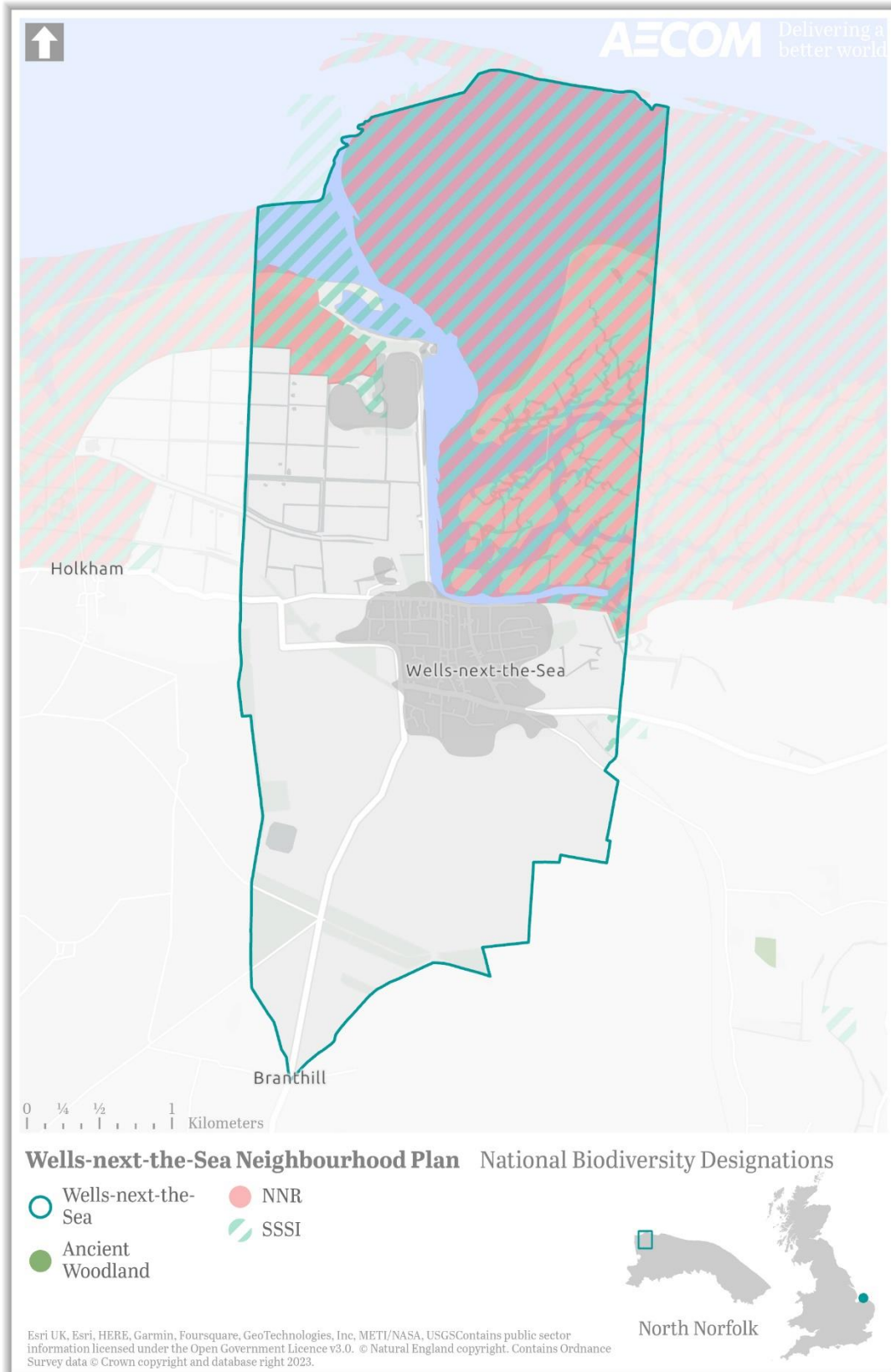


Figure 4-3: Priority habitats

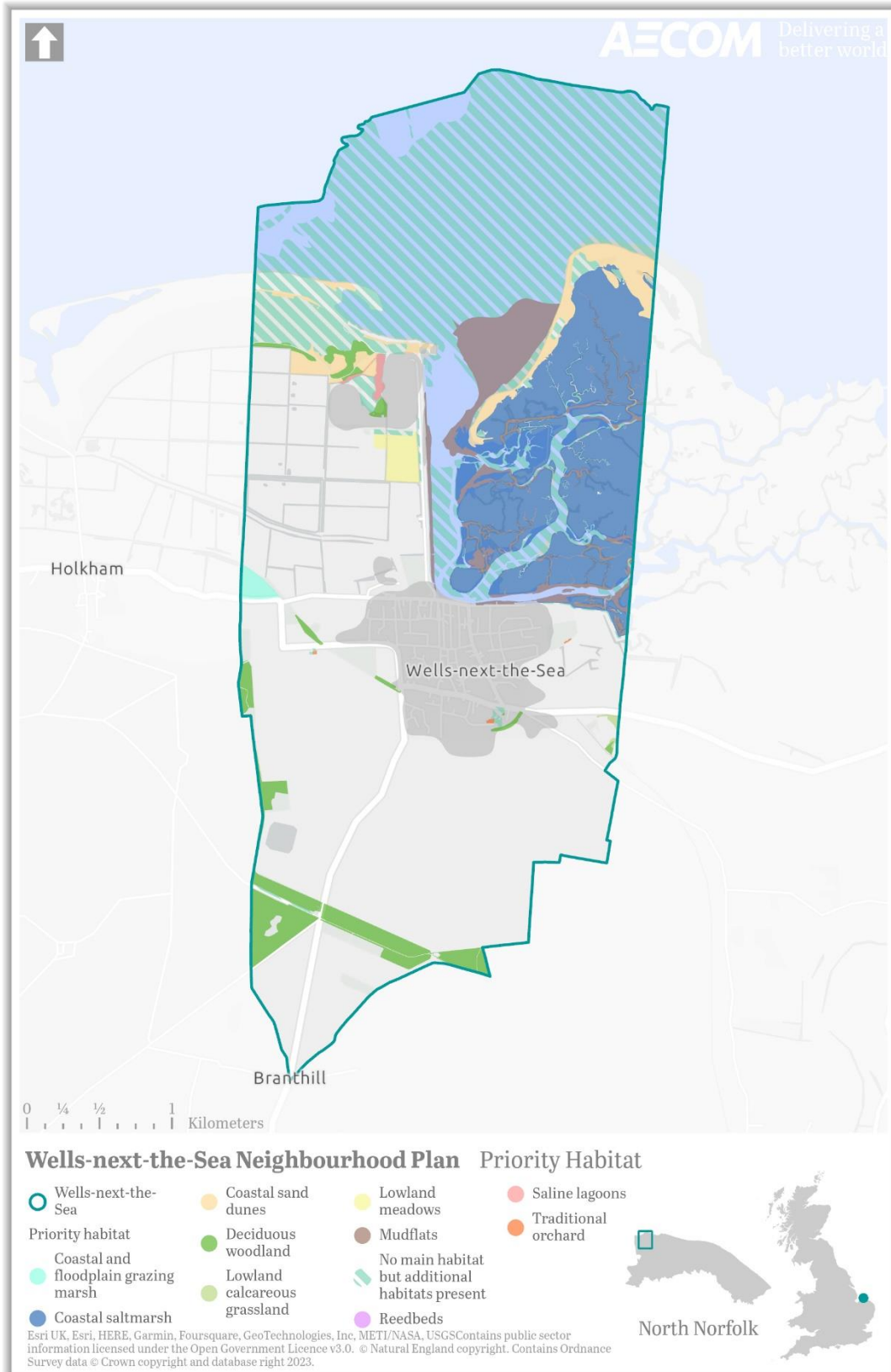
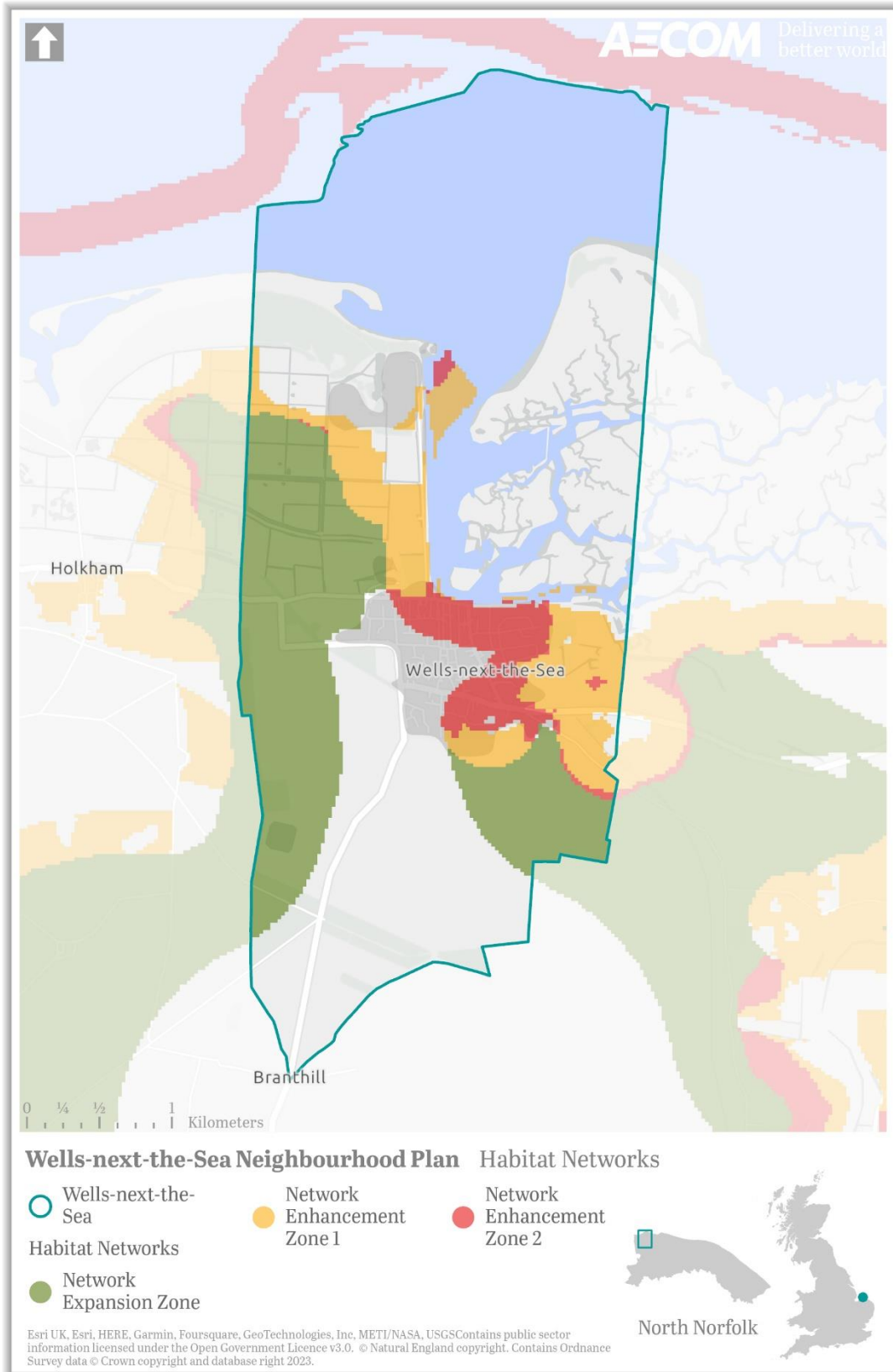


Figure 4-4: National Habitat Network



Key statistics

Figure 4-5: North Norfolk Designations



- North Norfolk Coast is situated to the north of the neighbourhood area and is designated as a Ramsar, SAC, SPA and SSSI, which is in a 97.82% favourable and 2.18% unfavourable recovering condition.
- The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC, SPA and European Marine Site, and Holkham National Nature Reserve similarly cover a large area to the north of the neighbourhood area.
- Wells Chalk Pitt SSSI is partially situated on southeast boundary of Wells, which is in a 100% unfavourable recovering condition.

Key evidence sources

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

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Natural England - Protected sites and species](#)
- [Natural England - Wildlife and habitat conservation](#)
- [North Norfolk District Council – Landscape and Biodiversity](#)
- [North Norfolk Habitat Regulations Assessment – Draft Scoping Report](#)

Policy context

Table 4-1: Additional plans and policies relating to air quality

Document title	Year of publication
Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership – Habitat and Species Action Plans	Various
North Norfolk Local Plan	2008
North Norfolk Draft Local Plan (2036)	Emerging Local Plan

Commentary

- 4.3 The North Norfolk Coast (Ramsar, SAC, SPA and SSSI) extends for some 40kms between Hunstanton and Weybourne. The area consists primarily of intertidal sands and muds, saltmarshes, shingle banks, and sand dunes. There are extensive areas of brackish lagoons, reedbeds, and grazing marshes. The coast is of great physiographic interest and the shingle spit at Blakeney Point and the offshore shingle bank at Scolt Head Island are of special importance. The whole coast has been intensively studied and is well documented.
- 4.4 The geographical position of the North Norfolk Coast and its range of habitats make it especially valuable for migratory birds and wintering waterfowl, particularly brent and pink-footed geese. The area, much of which remains in its natural state, now constitutes one of the largest expanses of undeveloped coastal habitat of its type in Europe.
- 4.5 There are also a number of other internationally and nationally designated habitats within the neighbourhood area including The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC and European Marine Site, The Greater Wash SPA, Wells Chalk Pitt SSSI, and Holkham National Nature Reserve. Given the high number of internationally designated sites in the neighbourhood area potential impact pathways will be informed by a separate Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) process.

Key issues

- 4.6 Existing ecological connections of international and national significance are predominantly found in the north of the neighbourhood area towards the coast. There are also connections which take up a large proportion of the east of the neighbourhood area. There will be a need to consider avoidance and mitigation for development in this part of the neighbourhood area. However, there is also the potential to focus biodiversity gains in this area too, as a recognised enhancement zone. Consideration will be given to the findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) at a later stage of plan making.

SEA objective

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

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

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

- Protect and enhance internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites including Ramsar, European Marine Sites, SPAs, SACs, National Nature Reserves, and SSSI's?
- Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species, including ancient woodland?
- Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
- Support access to, interpretation, and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?

5. Climate change

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

Maps

Figure 5-1: Fluvial flood risk

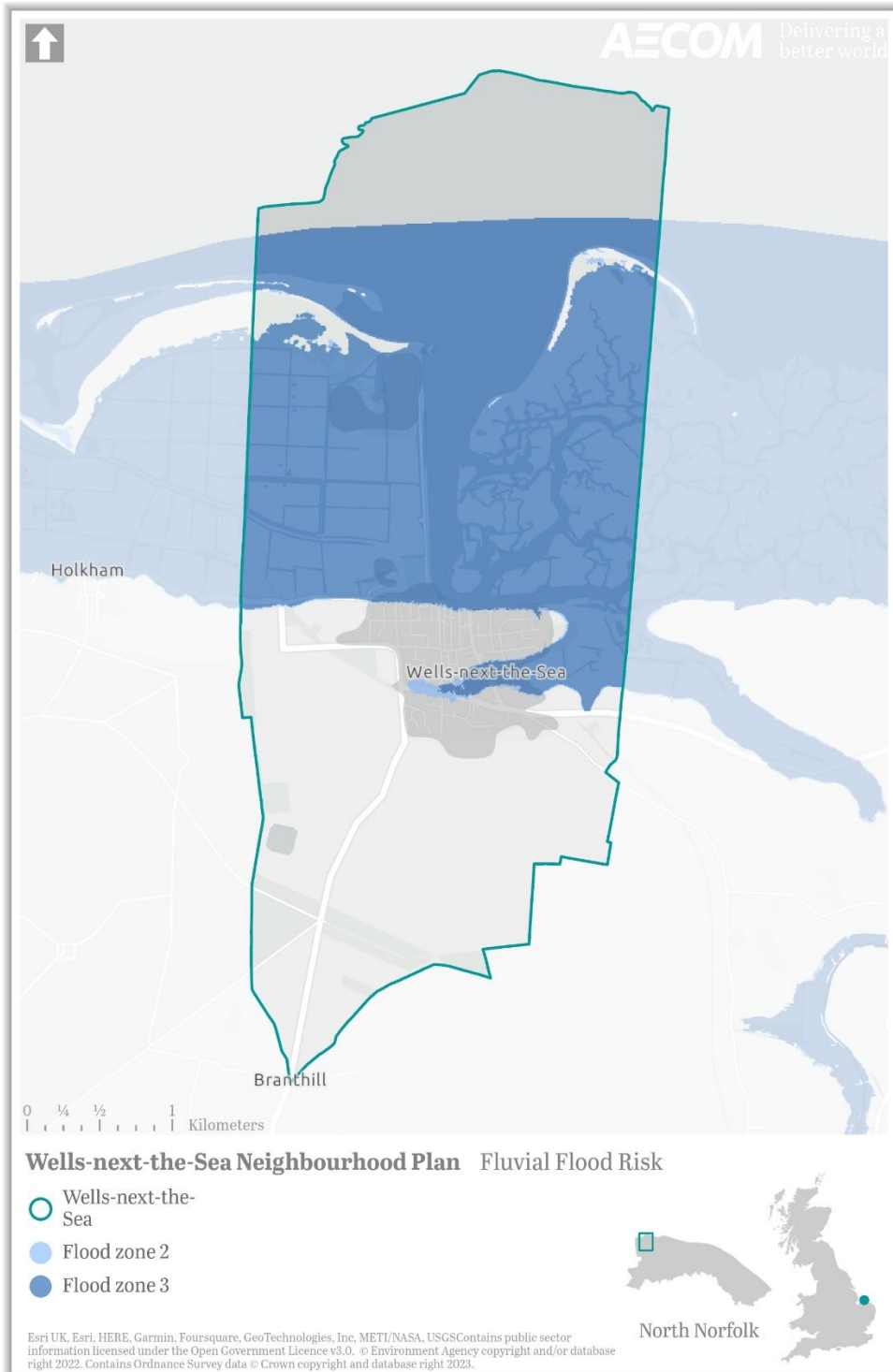


Figure 5-2: Surface water flood risk

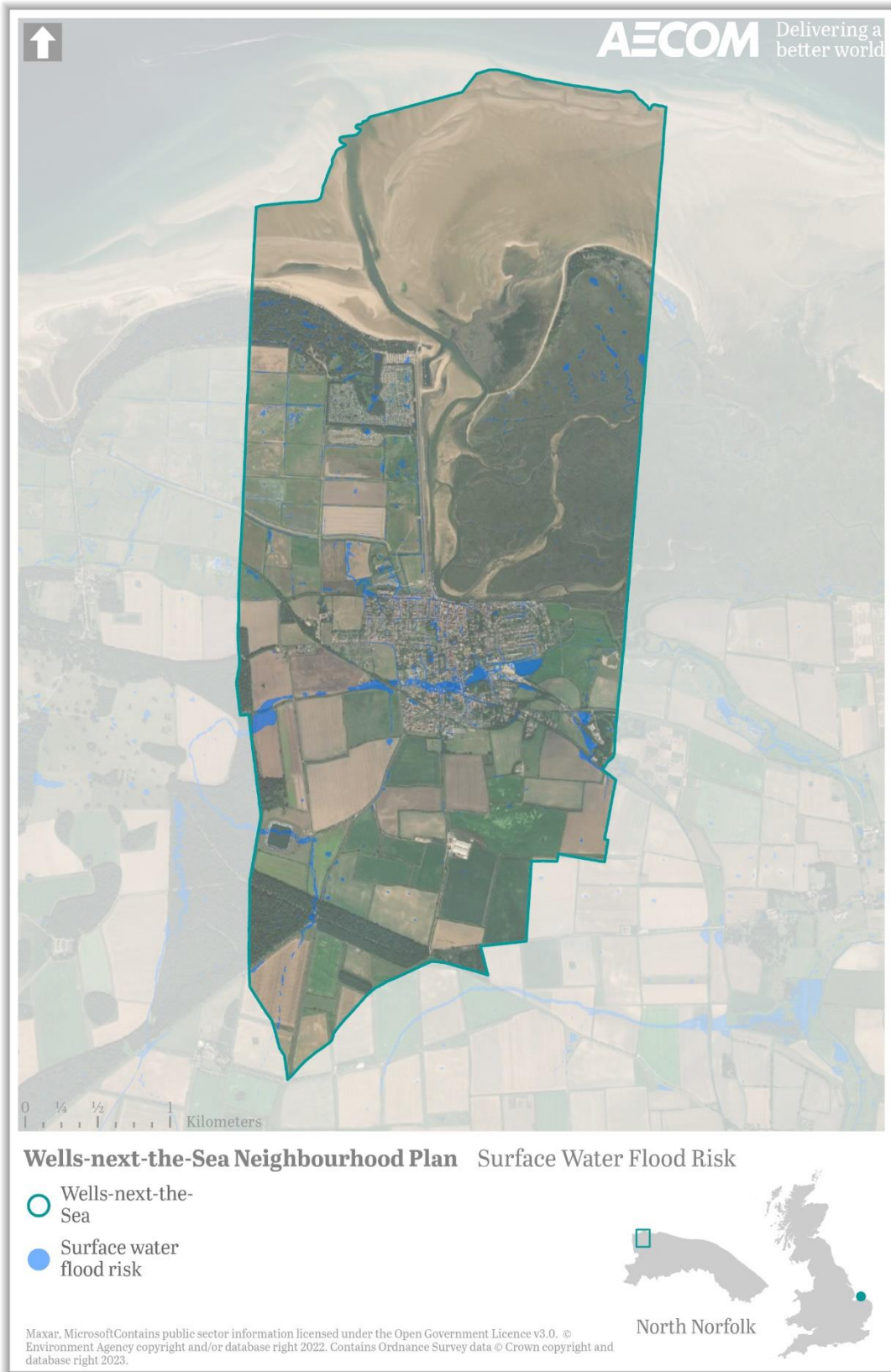


Figure 5-3: Domestic electricity consumption (2020)

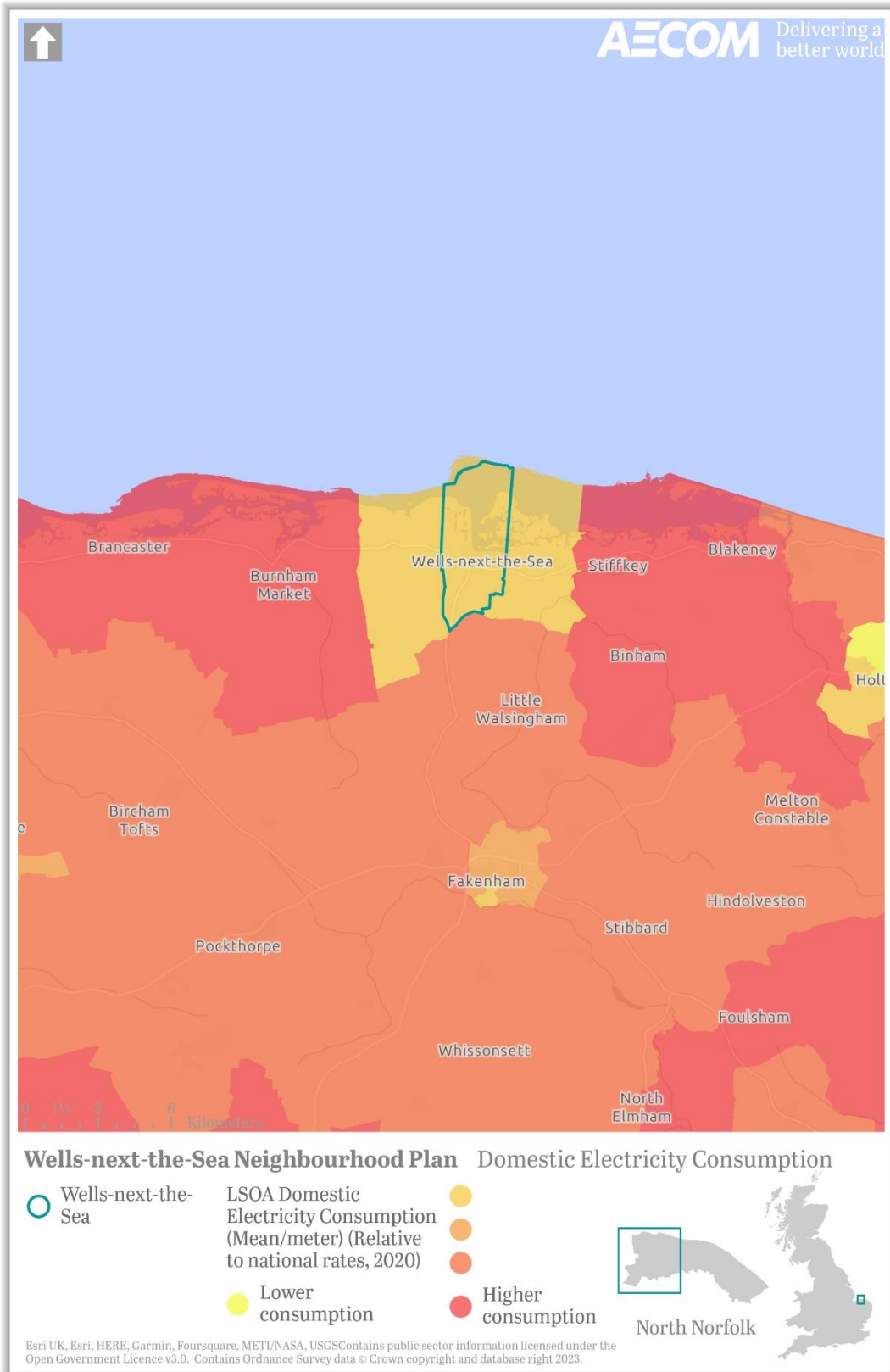
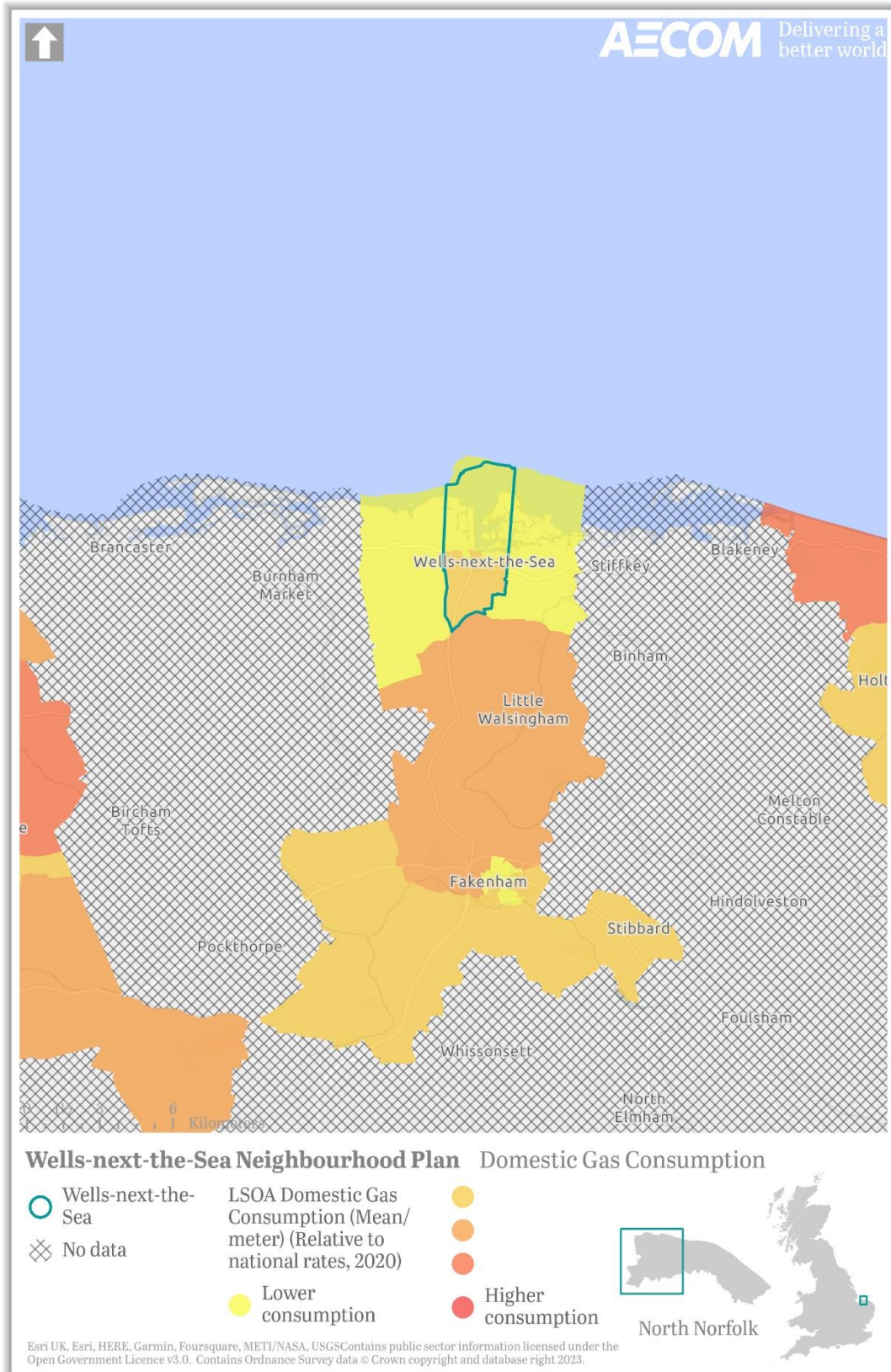


Figure 5-4: Domestic Gas Consumption (2020)



Key statistics



- North Norfolk emits more CO₂ emissions per capita when compared to the East region, and England as a whole.
- Within North Norfolk total emissions fell from around 891 kt CO₂ in 2005 to around 609 kt CO₂ in 2019.
- Approximately 36% of emissions in 2019 came from transport sources and around 29% from domestic sources.

Figure 5-5: CO₂ emissions in kilotons per year for each sector in North Norfolk (2005-2019)

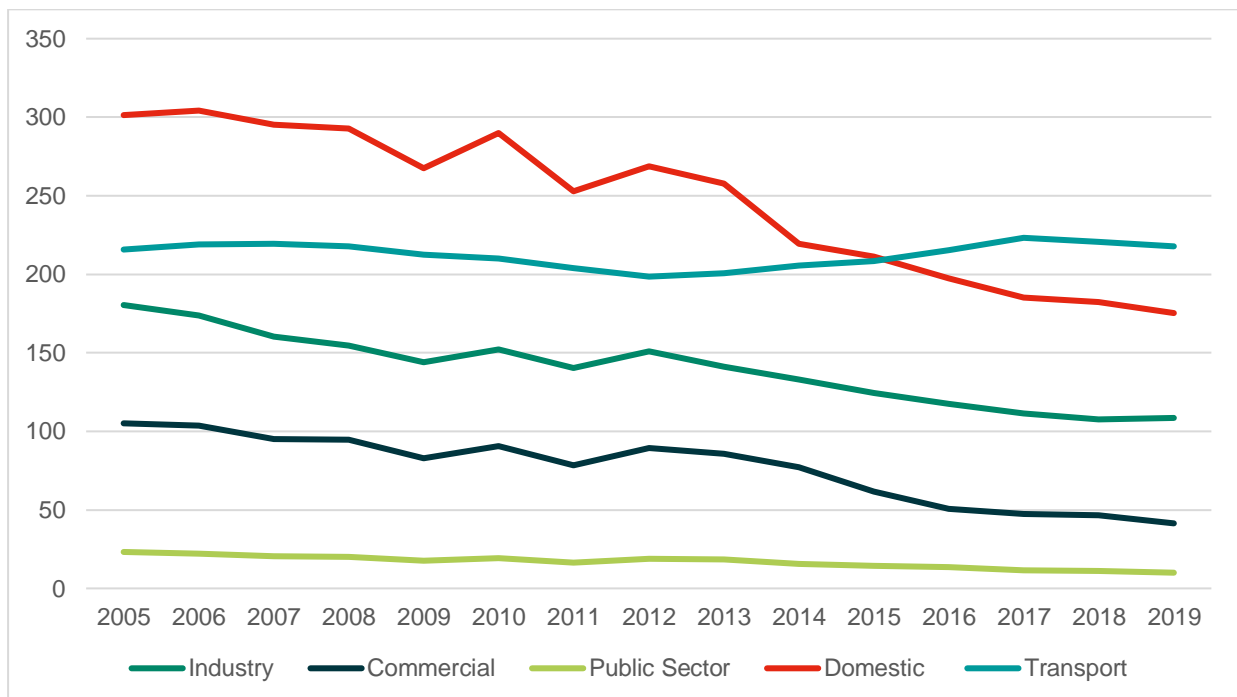


Figure 5-6: CO₂ emissions per capita (in tons) for North Norfolk, Norfolk, East of England, and England (2005-2019)

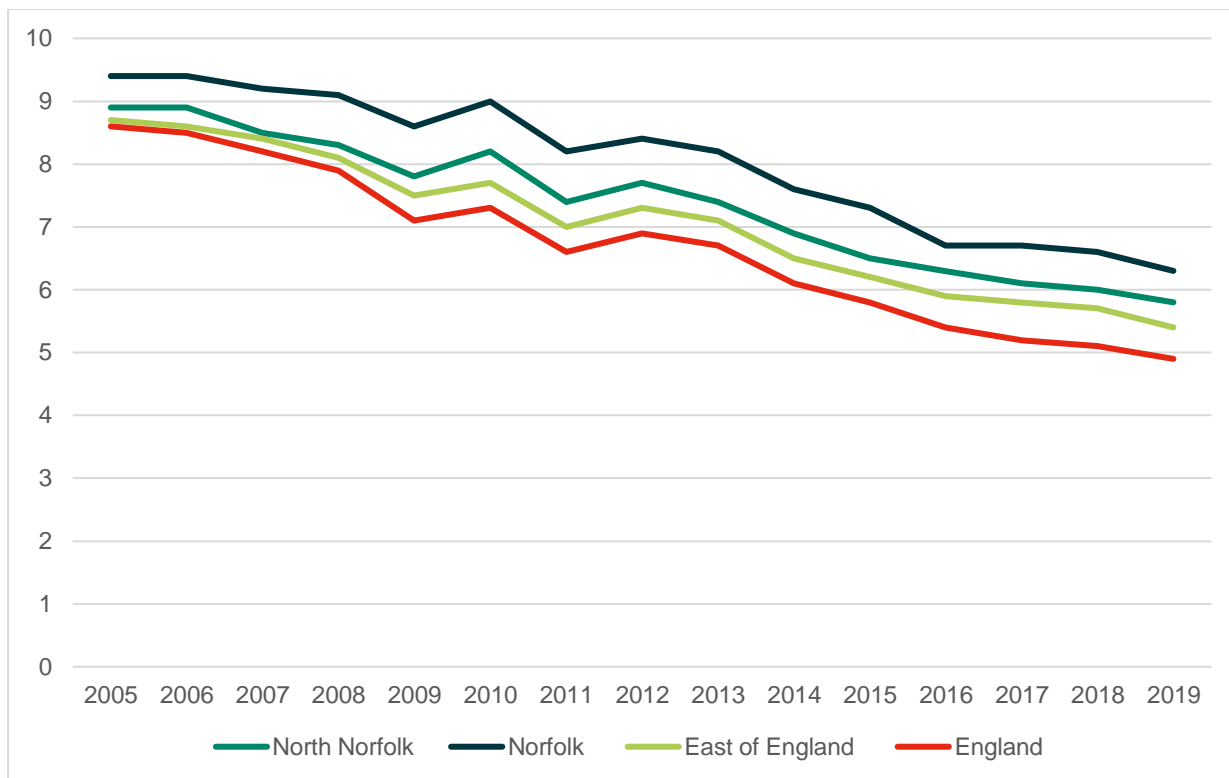


Table 5-1: Average changes in climate variables during winter and summer periods for the East of England region under the ‘business as usual’ climate model

	Mean Average Air Temperature (°C)		Mean Precipitation Rate (mm/day)		Mean Relative Humidity (%)	
	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer
1981-2000	4.23	15.80	2.47	1.95	87.40	73.87
2021-2040	5.52	18.06	2.55	1.76	87.02	69.88
2061-2080	7.34	20.88	2.89	1.43	86.54	66.08

5.2 The above table indicates that in a ‘business as usual’ (i.e., ‘do nothing’) scenario:

- There could be a 1.82°C increase in mean average winter air temperatures between 2040 and 2080 and an increase of 2.82°C in summer air temperatures over the same period.
- In the 2061-2080 period there could be a 0.47mm increase in winter precipitation compared to the 1981-2000 figures and a 0.52 mm decreased in summer precipitation.
- Winter mean relative humidity could decrease by 0.98% and summer humidity by 10.55%.

Figure 5-7: The change in mean air temperature (°C) for winter and summer seasons in the East of England region (1980s-2070s)

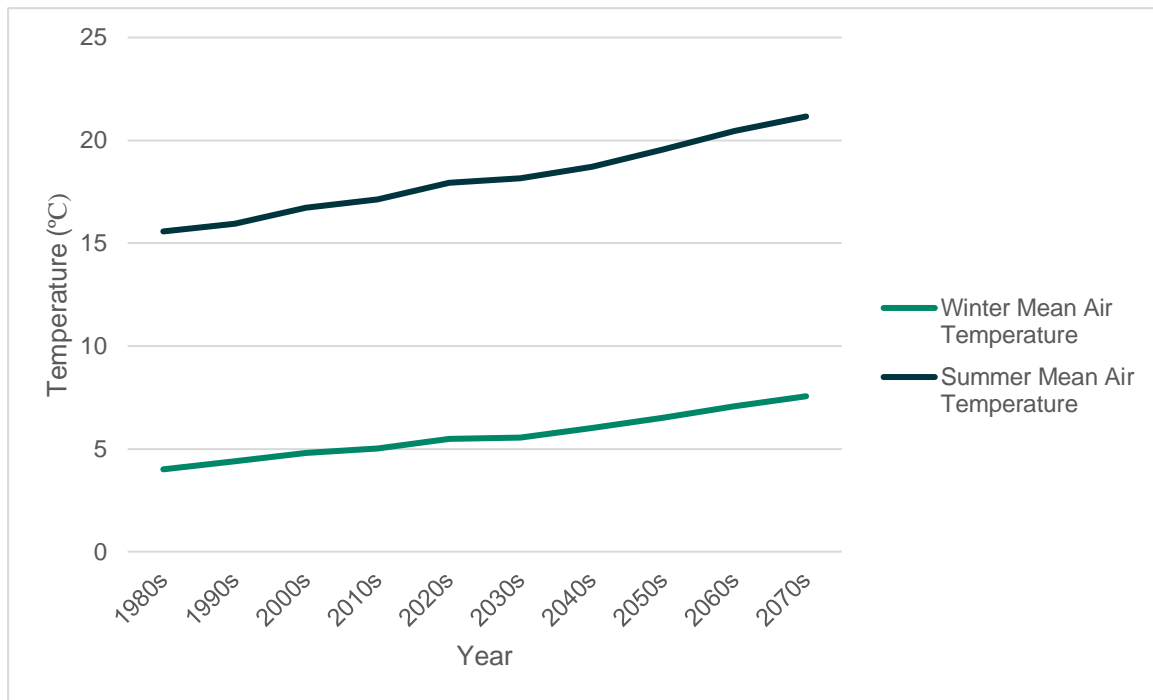
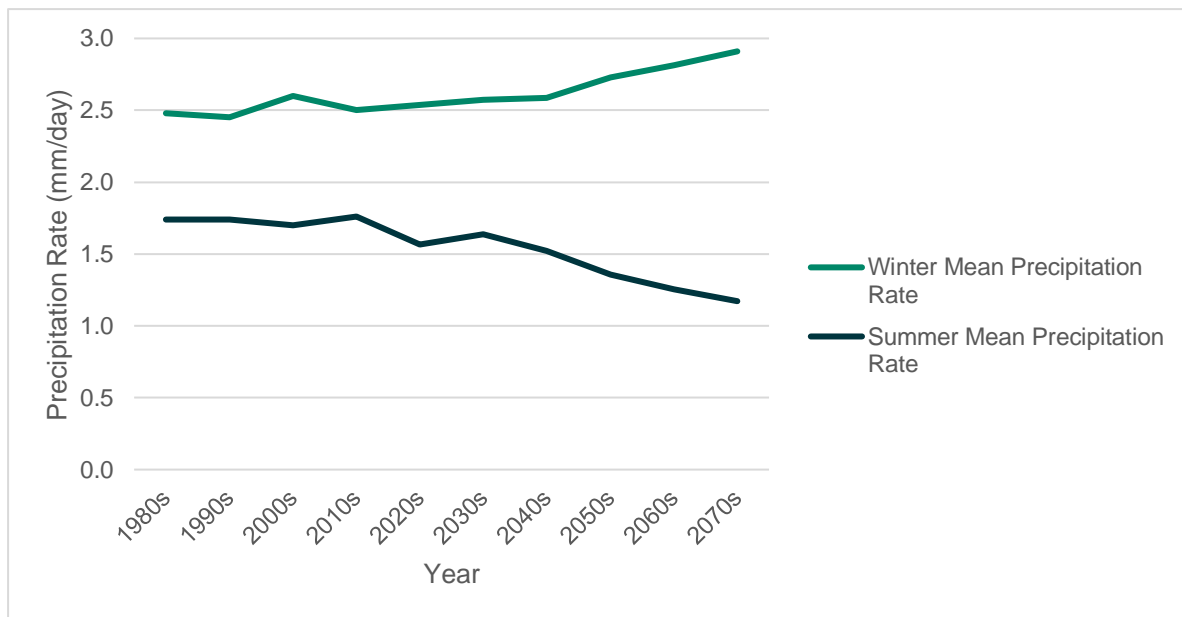


Figure 5-8: The change in mean precipitation rate (mm/day) for winter and summer months in the East of England (1980s-2070s)



Key evidence sources

- [Environment Agency's Flood risk information for planning in England](#)
- [Check the long-term flood risk for an area in England](#)
- [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP\)](#)
- [UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2018](#)
- [North Norfolk District Council Carbon Footprint Report 2021/22](#)
- [North Norfolk Climate Emergency and Environment](#)
- [Summary of Climate Change Risks for the East of England Report](#)
- [North Norfolk Flood and Water Management](#)

Policy context

Table 5-2: Additional plans and policies relating to climate change and flood risk

Document title	Year of publication
Norfolk Net Zero 2030 Strategy & Climate Action Plan	2021
North Norfolk Core Strategy	2008
North Norfolk Draft Local Plan (2036)	Emerging Local Plan
North Norfolk Environmental Charter	2021
North Norfolk Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	2021
Norfolk Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	2018
North Norfolk Green Infrastructure Approach	2016

Commentary

- 5.3 North Norfolk District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, pledging to become carbon neutral by 2030. In North Norfolk, according to climate data domestic use was the biggest CO₂ contributor in the region from 2009-2015. From 2015 onwards transport has overtaken domestic use as the biggest CO₂ contributor. By far the lowest contributor in North Norfolk are the inputs from the public sector.
- 5.4 North Norfolk's CO₂ emissions per capita have consistently been lower than Norfolk's, however, the East of England and England as a whole still remain lower than North Norfolk.
- 5.5 Flood risk at Wells-next-the-Sea is primarily driven by tidal/ coastal influences with a number of properties along the seafront and on either side of Freeman Street/The Quay, shown to be within Flood Zones 2 and 3. In addition, there are a significant number of properties in the vicinity of Burnt Street, Marsh Lane and Maryland also shown to be within the Flood Zones. There is a moveable tidal barrier that protects Freeman Street. There are no coastal defences present to the north-east of Wells-next-the-Sea. Surface water flood risk throughout the neighbourhood area is much more limited, generally restricted to roadways and gardens.

Key issues

- 5.6 CO₂ emissions associated with transport remain high in North Norfolk, highlighting the importance of the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure. While the WNP is limited in the extent to which it can deliver transport improvements; it can utilise opportunities to strengthen active travel routes, support active travel uptake and increase self-containment.
- 5.7 As with much of the country, extreme heat events are likely to occur more frequently in the future. In addition to this, drought is likely to become an increasing issue in summer, whilst surface water/ groundwater flooding is likely to increase during winter months. In this respect, climate change resilience should form an integral part of the WNP policy framework.
- 5.8 The neighbourhood area is a complex location, whereby the north is at high risk from tidal and coastal flooding. As such, there is a need to consider flood risk, avoiding vulnerable development in areas of high fluvial flood risk, and managing, and where possible, improving drainage rates. Wells Harbour Commissioners are currently working with marine advisors Royal Haskoning and will be developing a Flood Risk Management Plan, which should be used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan if possible.

SEA objective

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

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

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

- Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?
- Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and EV infrastructure?
- Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?
- Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
- Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change?
- Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area?
- Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing it where possible?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

6. Community wellbeing

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

Maps

Figure 6-1: Green space

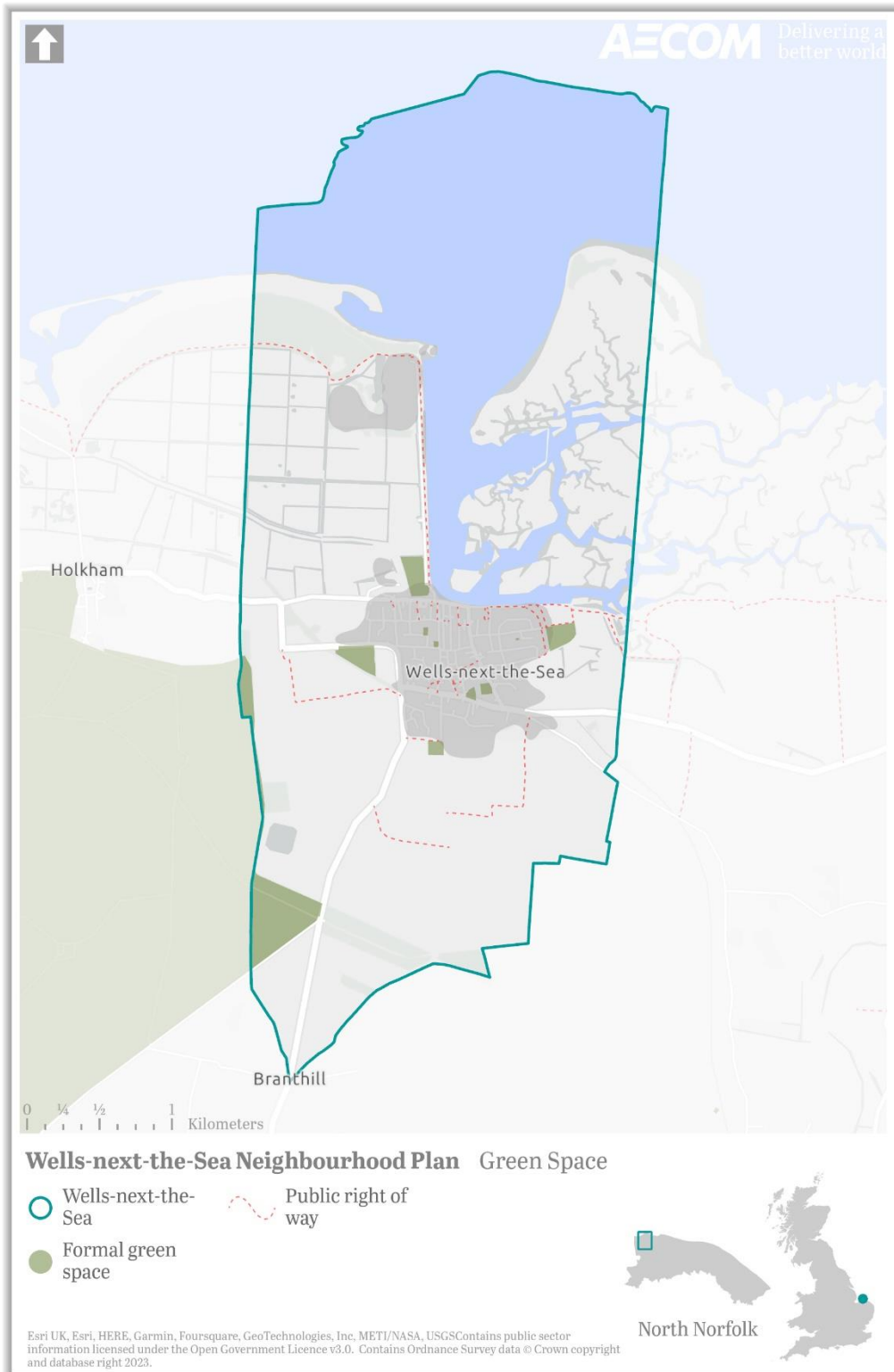


Figure 6-2: Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), 2019

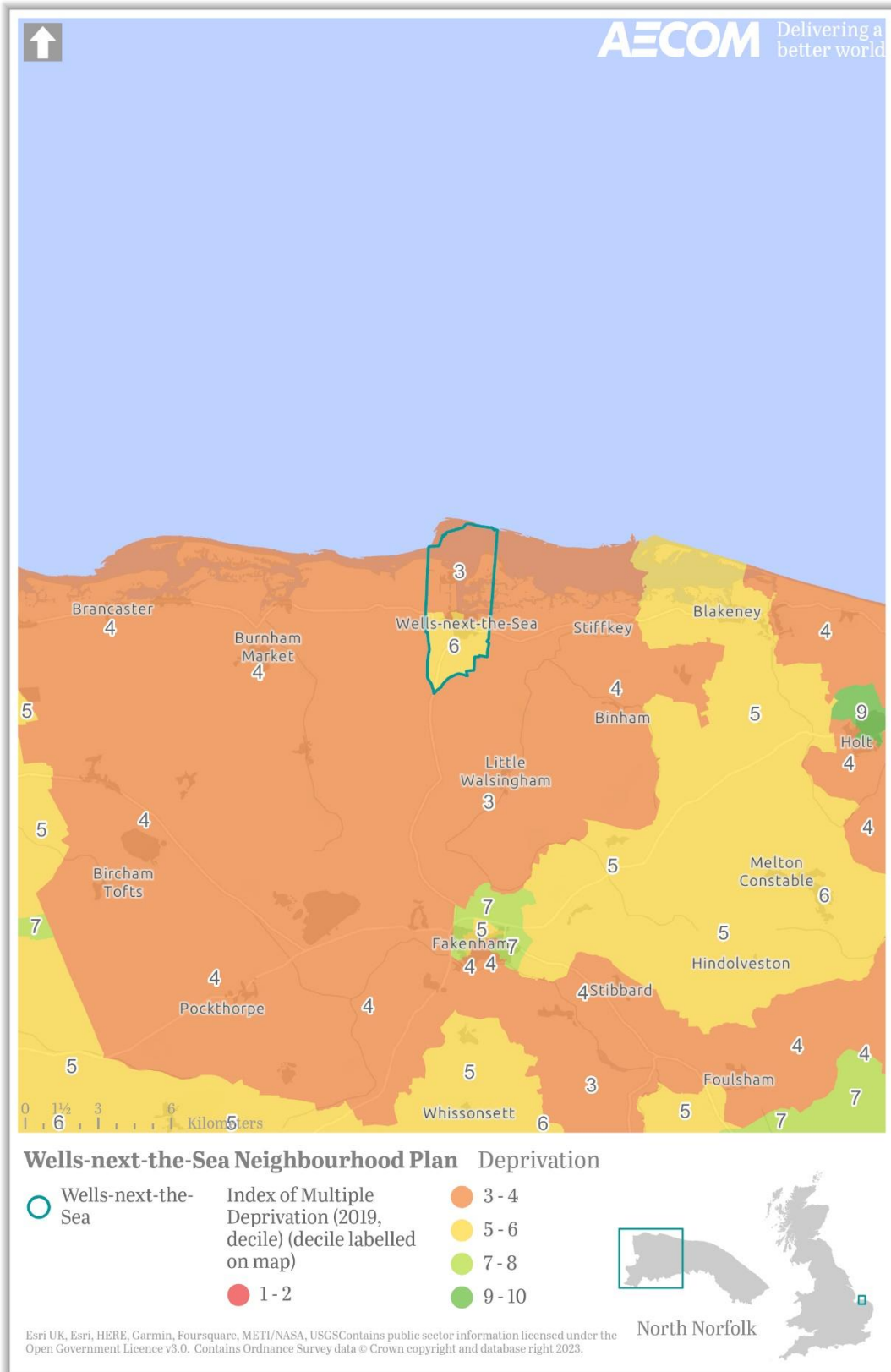


Figure 6-3: IMD, 2019, access to housing and services domain

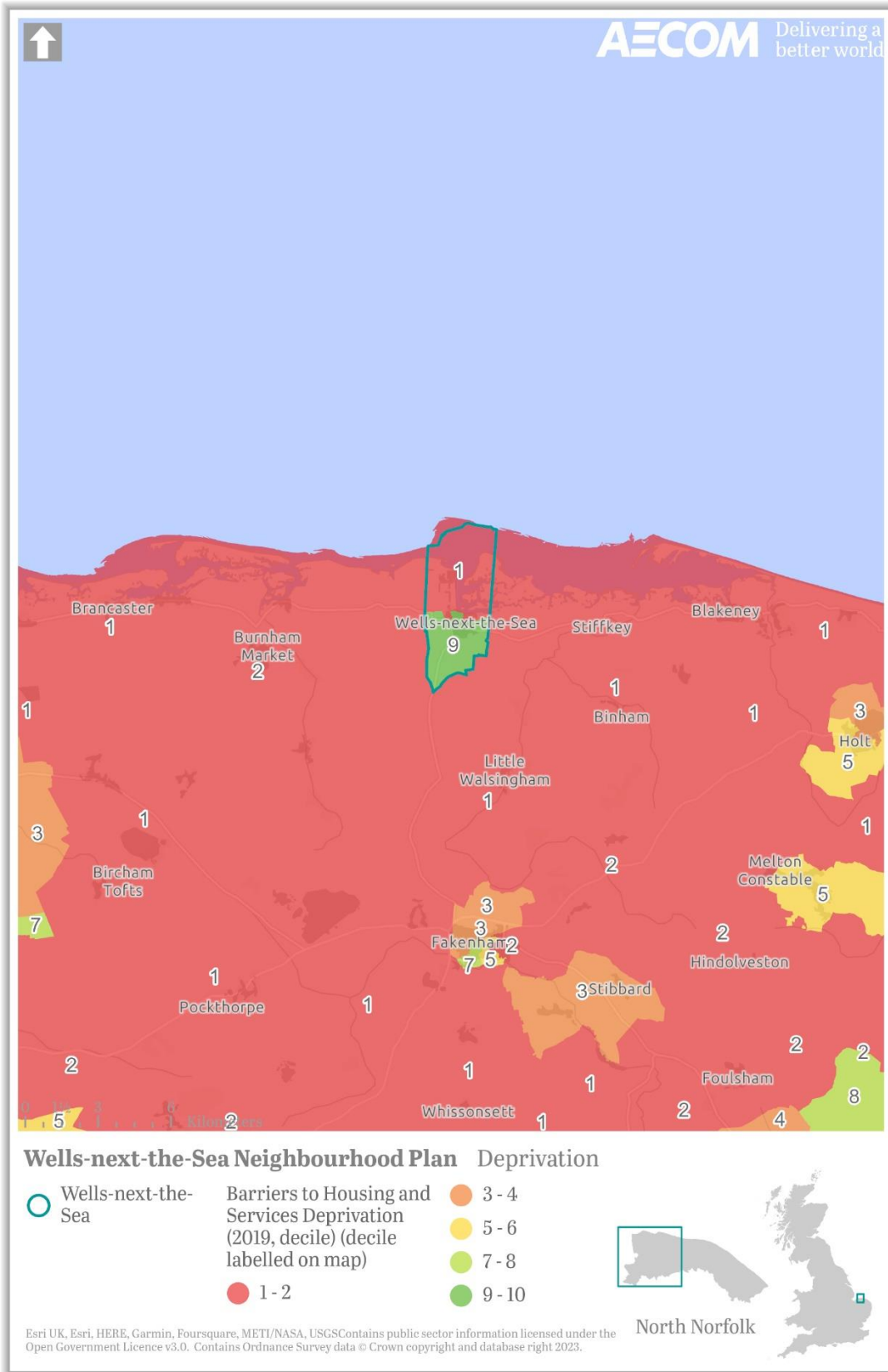
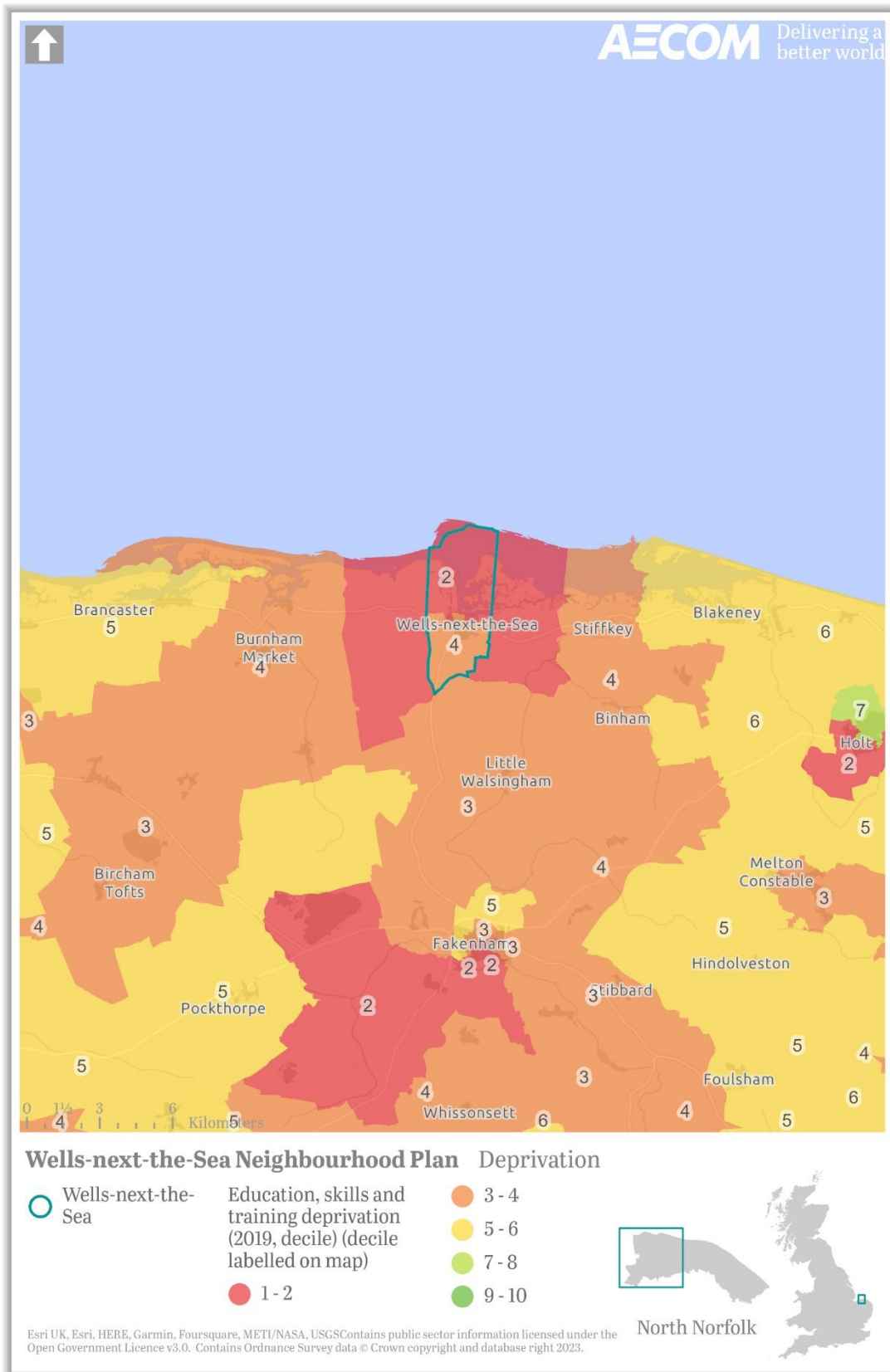


Figure 6-4: IMD, 2019, access to education, skills, and training



Key statistics



- The key issue locally is the lack of affordable housing, as Wells-next-the-Sea is a desirable location with great demand for second homes and holiday lets. House prices are the highest of any area in Norfolk.
- There are some significant issues with local deprivation in the town.
- The write up of the Policy Ideas Exhibition identifies a strong preference to focus redevelopment on brownfield land as opposed to greenfield sites.
- ONS 2021 data indicates a population of 2,568 usual residents⁴

Key evidence sources

- [City Population](#)
- [Indices of Deprivation: 2019 and 2015](#)
- [Nomis - Official census and labour market statistics](#)
- [North Norfolk – Housing](#)
 - [North Norfolk – Affordable Housing](#)
 - [North Norfolk – Guide to Affordable Housing](#)
- [North Norfolk – Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Norfolk Insight – Adult Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Wells-next-the-Sea Neighbourhood Plan Report for the consultation event on draft ideas](#)

Policy context

Table 6-1: Additional plans and policies relating to community wellbeing

Document title	Year of publication
North Norfolk Core Strategy	2008
North Norfolk Draft Local Plan (2036)	Emerging Local Plan
Wells-next-the-Sea Design Guidance and Codes	2022

⁴ Statistics are the two Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) covering (and extending) the neighbourhood area combined.

Commentary

- 6.2 The town council has an area of 16.31 km² (6.30 sq. mi) and is covered by two LSOAs: 002B, which covers the northern more built-up part of the town and 002C, which covers the more rural south. In 2021 the usual population between the two LSOAs was 2,568 as illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.**
- 6.3 There is lack of affordable housing in Wells illustrated by Figure 6-3 which shows the northern half of the neighbourhood area falling within the most deprived category (1-2nd decile) in terms of barriers to housing and services. The less built-up south of the town is a stark comparison to this in the least deprived category (9-10th decile).
- 6.4 The comparison between the north and south of the neighbourhood area is also clear in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019. LSOA 002C was ranked 19,309 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. LSOA 002B was ranked 9,601 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England. This is amongst the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and implies that the physical and financial accessibility of housing services is poor, particularly in the north of the neighbourhood area.
- 6.5 The age structure of Wells-next-the-Sea parish from the 2021 Census data indicates that 58.9% of the population are aged 50 and over, with 21% in the aged 50-64 bracket. Given the age profile of the resident Wells population, it is unsurprising that health statistics from the 2021 census indicated that the health of the population was slightly worse than that of North Norfolk and Norfolk as a whole.
- 6.6 There are green spaces in the town with the largest being located towards the southwest of the neighbourhood area and a few smaller ones surrounding the border of the town centre. The lack of green space is potentially one of the reasons why residents who attended the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation event in October 2021 showed such a strong preference for brownfield sites to be developed as a priority.

Key issues

- 6.7 Wells is extremely popular with holiday makers and second homeowners. As part of work to support early iterations of the Local Plan, North Norfolk District Council produced a number of Settlement Profiles in 2018, which identified the total number of dwellings in Wells-next-the-Sea as 1,557 and the number of second homes as 383. This equates to 21.2% of total dwellings being used as second homes. This compares to the proportion of second homes in North Norfolk district as a whole for the same period as 7.8 per cent.
- 6.8 The high proportion of second home ownership makes a lack of affordable housing one of the key issues in the neighbourhood area, particularly in the north. For example, the northern half of the neighbourhood area falls within the most deprived category (1-2nd decile) in terms of barriers to housing and

services, while the more rural south of the town is a stark comparison to this in the least deprived category (9-10th decile).

- 6.9 Deprivation, access to education, skills and training and living environment domain also follow the same pattern of having lower ratings in the north as compared with the south. For example, in the IMD the north is ranked in the 3-4th decile whereas the south is in the 5-6th decile. Similarly, for both access to education, skills and training and the living environment domain the north is ranked in the most deprived category (1-2nd decile) whereas the south fairs slightly better in the next category up (3-4th decile).

SEA objective

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

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

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

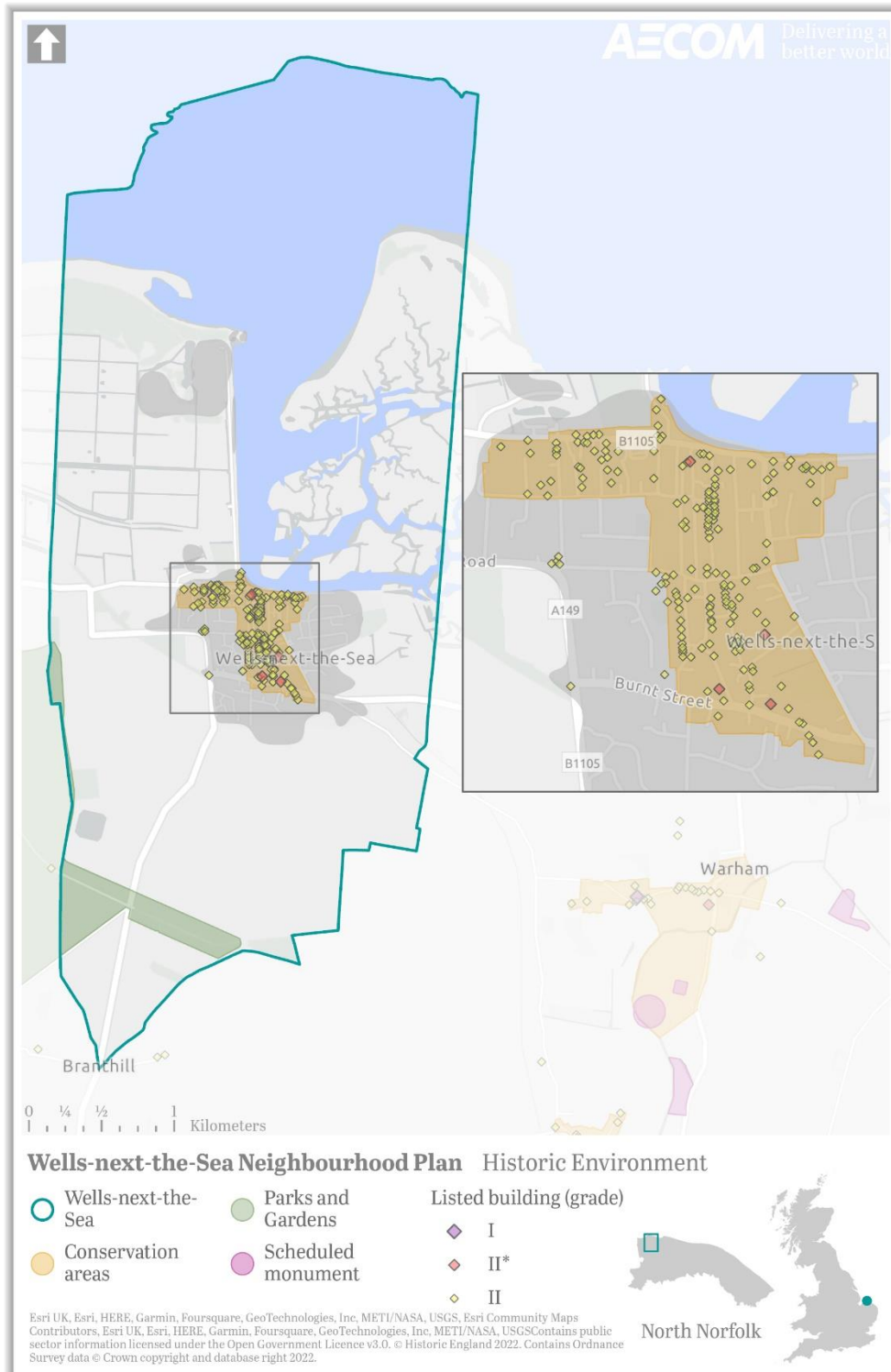
- Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing?
- Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?
- Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?
- Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population?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

7. Historic environment

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

Maps

Figure 7-1: Designated heritage assets



Key statistics



- Wells-next-the-Sea has the largest urban Conservation Area in the District, with the designation covering over 34 hectares from south of the A149 extending north to the harbour front and stretching west along Freeman Street.
- The whole of Wells is located in the North Norfolk Heritage Coast.
- There is a total of 185 Listed Buildings in Wells, four of which are Grade II* and the rest are Grade II.
- An area of registered park and garden intersects the neighbourhood area in the south.

Key evidence sources

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Heritage Gateway](#)
- [Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register for the East of England](#)
- [Norfolk County Council- Archaeological and Historic Environment](#)
 - [Norfolk's Historic Environment Record \(HER\)](#)
 - [Planning and the Historic Environment](#)
 - [Recording an Archaeological Find](#)

Policy context

Table 7-1: Additional plans and policies relating to the historic environment

Document title	Year of publication
Standards for Development-Led Archaeological Projects in Norfolk	2018
Conservation Area Appraisal Review Programme	2023

Commentary

- 7.2 Wells-next-the-Sea possesses a high quality and varied historic environment with a heritage coast and wealth of historic buildings and structures concentrated within the historic core of the Town Centre which is reflected in its designation as a Conservation Area. There is a total of 185 Listed Buildings in Wells-next-the-Sea, four of which are Grade II*. Currently no buildings have been locally listed.
- 7.3 There is no formally adopted Conservation Area Appraisal for the Wells-next-the-Sea Conservation Area although there is a long-standing draft which is due to be reviewed.
- 7.4 The Church of St Nicholas, on Church Street is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. It is designated as Priority B – Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented. A National Lottery Heritage Fund stage one grant of £286,100 was awarded in September 2021 for restoration work and new community engagement activities. Works are due to start in July 2023. In addition, Historic England details Wells Maltings as a case study as the Grade II listed former maltings building and sackhouse in the centre of Wells-next-the-Sea in Norfolk was transformed into a multi-use community facility.

Key issues

- 7.5 The dense concentration of listed buildings in Wells-next-the-Sea presents a constraint to future development within the neighbourhood area. The WNP can help overcome this by ensuring that any development that comes forward during the plan period is sensitive to the historic setting of the village in terms of design and layout, particularly in relation to the Wells Conservation Area.
- 7.6 In addition to the Draft Wells Conservation Area Appraisal, the WNP presents an ideal opportunity to provide policy that protects the key characteristics of this area, and identifies the significance associated with different settings and non-designated assets.

SEA objective

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

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

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

- Protect the integrity of the historic setting of the conservation area?
- Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings?
- Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the HER?
- Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?
- Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?

8. Land, soil, and water resources

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

Maps

Figure 8-1: Provisional ALC (national dataset)

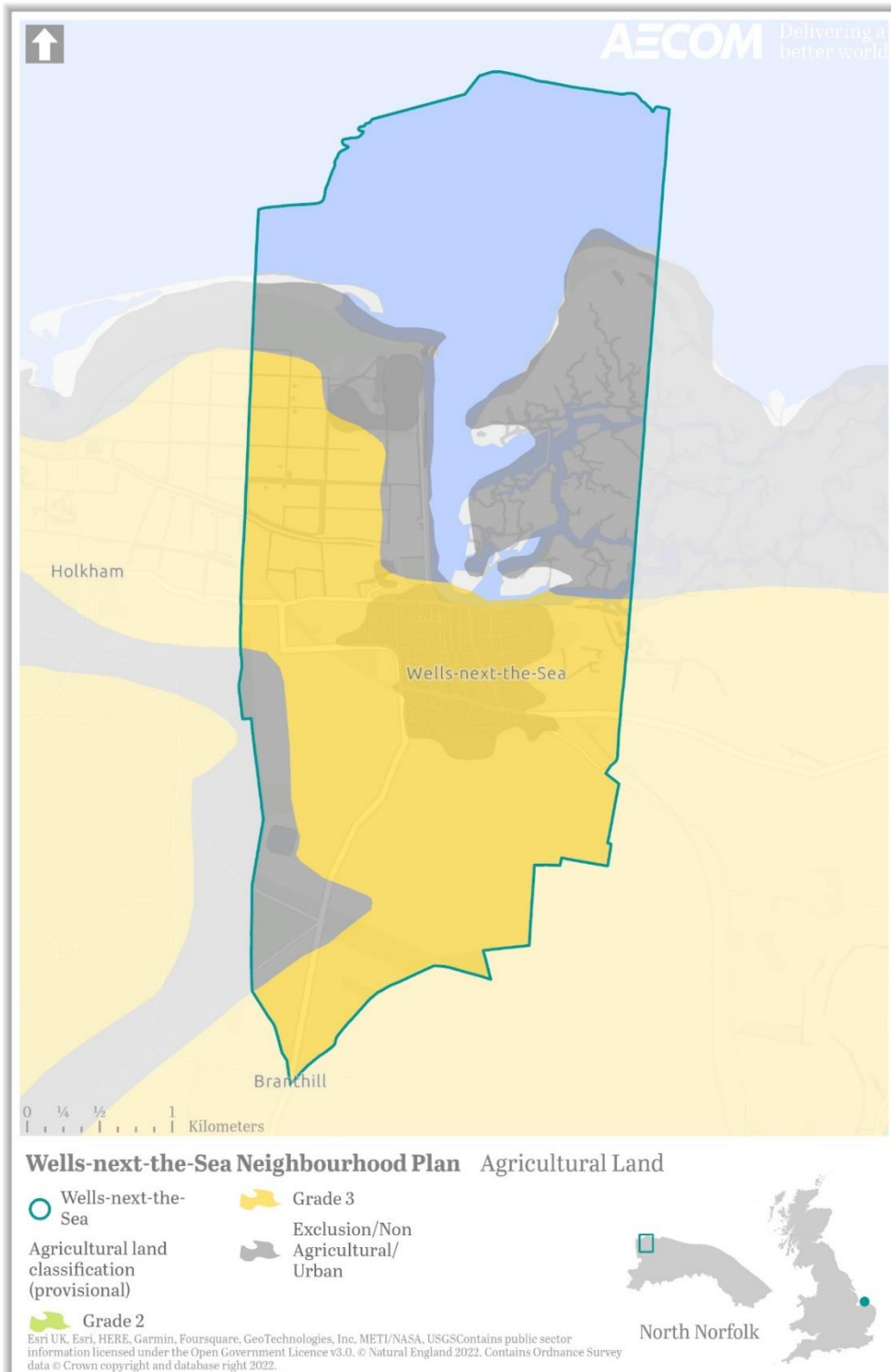
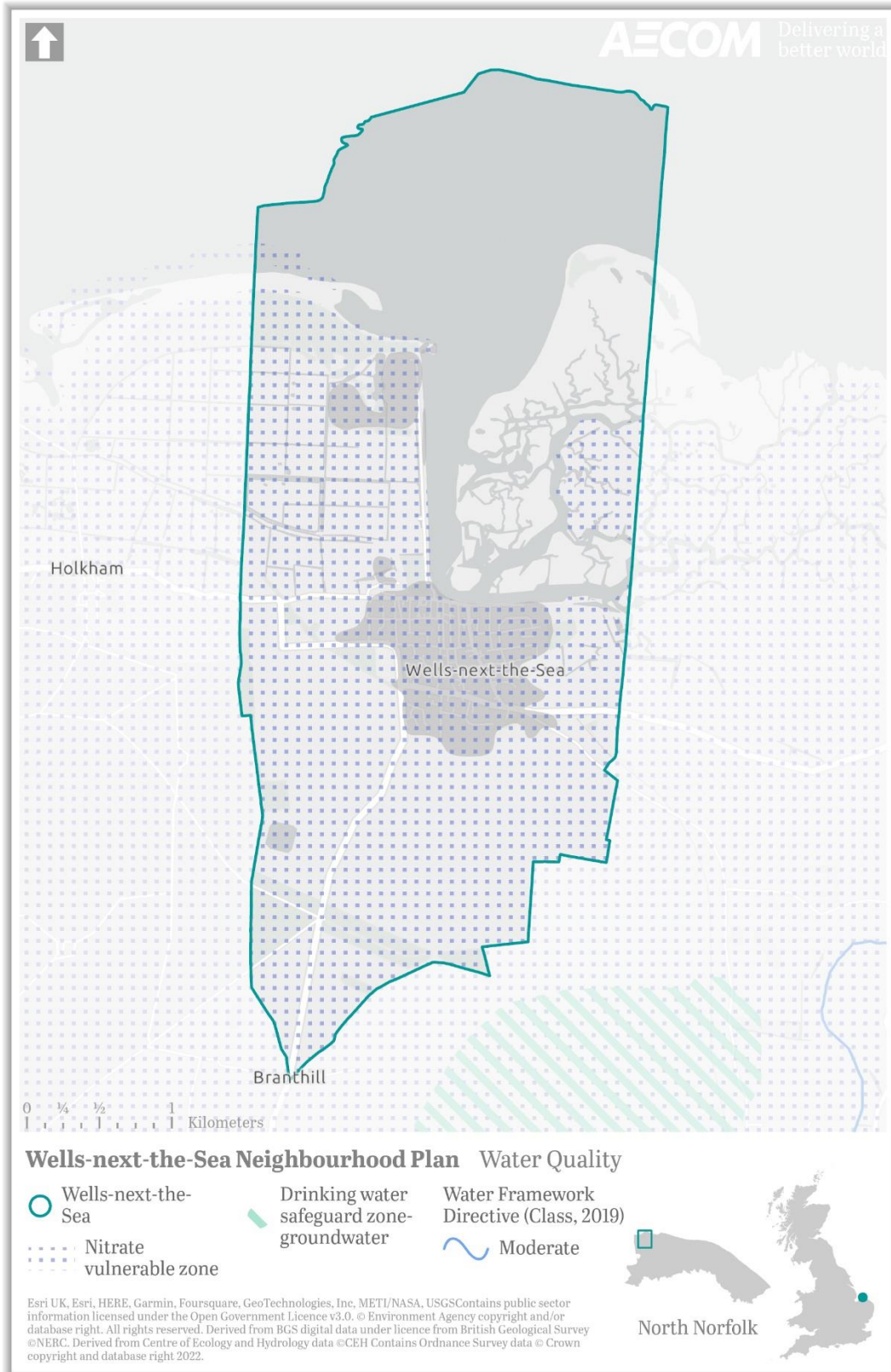


Figure 8-2: Water Quality



Key statistics



- The neighbourhood area falls into the North Norfolk Rivers Management Catchment and the North Norfolk Chalk Operational Catchment.
- Almost the entire neighbourhood area is in a nitrate vulnerable zone.
- The write up of the Policy Ideas Exhibition identifies a strong preference to focus redevelopment on brownfield land as opposed to greenfield sites.

Table 8-1: Ecological status classification of transitional waters overlapping the neighbourhood area

Name of Water Body	2013	2014	2015	2016	2019
Stiffkey & Glaven Water Body	Bad	Bad	Bad	Bad	Bad
Norfolk North Water Body	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Table 8-2: Chemical status classification of waterbodies overlapping the neighbourhood area

Name of Water Body	2013	2014	2015	2016	2019
Stiffkey & Glaven Water Body	Good	Good	Good	Good	Fail
Norfolk North Water Body	Good	Good	Good	Good	Fail

Table 8-3: Overall water body status for groundwater bodies underlying the neighbourhood area

Name of Water Body	2013	2014	2015	2016	2019
North Norfolk Chalk	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor

Key evidence sources

- [DEFRA's Magic Map](#)
- [Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer](#)
 - [Stiffkey & Glaven Water Body](#)
 - [Norfolk North Water Body](#)
 - [North Norfolk Chalk](#)
- [Natural England - ALC map East Region](#)
- [Key water-related challenges in the county of Norfolk final report](#)
- [Investing in Nature for Norfolk Water Security](#)
- [North Norfolk Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#)

Policy context

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

Document title	Year of publication
Norfolk Coast AoNB Management Plan Strategy	2014
North Norfolk Shoreline Management Plan	2009
North Norfolk Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	2021
North Norfolk: Catchment flood management plan	2009
Anglian river basin district river basin management plan	2016
The Emerging Water Resources Regional Plan for Eastern England	2022
Anglian river basin district flood risk management plan	2022

Commentary

- 8.2 The north of the neighbourhood area is underlain by 'Other land primarily in non-agricultural use' whereas much of the south is underlain with Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' quality agricultural land. It is not possible to determine whether this is Grade 3a or Grade 3b.
- 8.3 The closest water body to Wells-next-the-Sea town is the Stiffkey & Glaven Transitional waters that is situated immediately north of the town itself. The North Sea is located a mile away from the town. No rivers run through the neighbourhood area.
- 8.4 The majority of the neighbourhood area, with the exception of the northerly coasts that line the town boundary, is designated as a nitrate vulnerable zone. There are no drinking water safeguard zones or source protection zones within the neighbourhood area.

Key issues

- 8.5 Stiffkey & Glaven Estuary has been in bad ecological status since 2013. Norfolk North Sea fairs slightly better over the same time period, consistently achieving moderate status. Both waterbodies failed their most recent chemical assessment in 2019. However, the Environment Agency highlights that all water bodies failed for chemical status in this timeframe and that the 2019 assessments are not comparable to previous years.
- 8.6 It will be important that future development within the neighbourhood area does not lead to deterioration of the Stiffkey & Glaven Estuary, which is directly linked to the North Sea (Norfolk North Water Body). The water quality of both these waterbodies is an important indicator of the overall health of the surrounding marine environment ecosystems. Keeping the water free of pollutants, contaminants, and litter all act to increase water quality.
- 8.7 Development in Wells has the potential to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land, although it is anticipated that much of the development will take place around the more urbanised town centre and surrounding non-agricultural land.

SEA objective

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

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

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

- Avoid the loss of high-quality agricultural land resources?
- Support the continued operation of waste infrastructure within and surrounding the Plan area?
- Promote any opportunities for the use of previously developed land, or vacant/ underutilised land?
- Avoid impacts on water quality?
- Support improvements to water quality?
- Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside development?
- Protect waterbodies from pollution?
- Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/ or water recycling?
- Improve the resilience of water supplies?

9. Landscape

9.1 This section seeks to summarise designated and protected landscapes within or near the neighbourhood area, as well as landscape character, landscape quality, and visual amenity.

Maps

Figure 9-1: National landscape designations

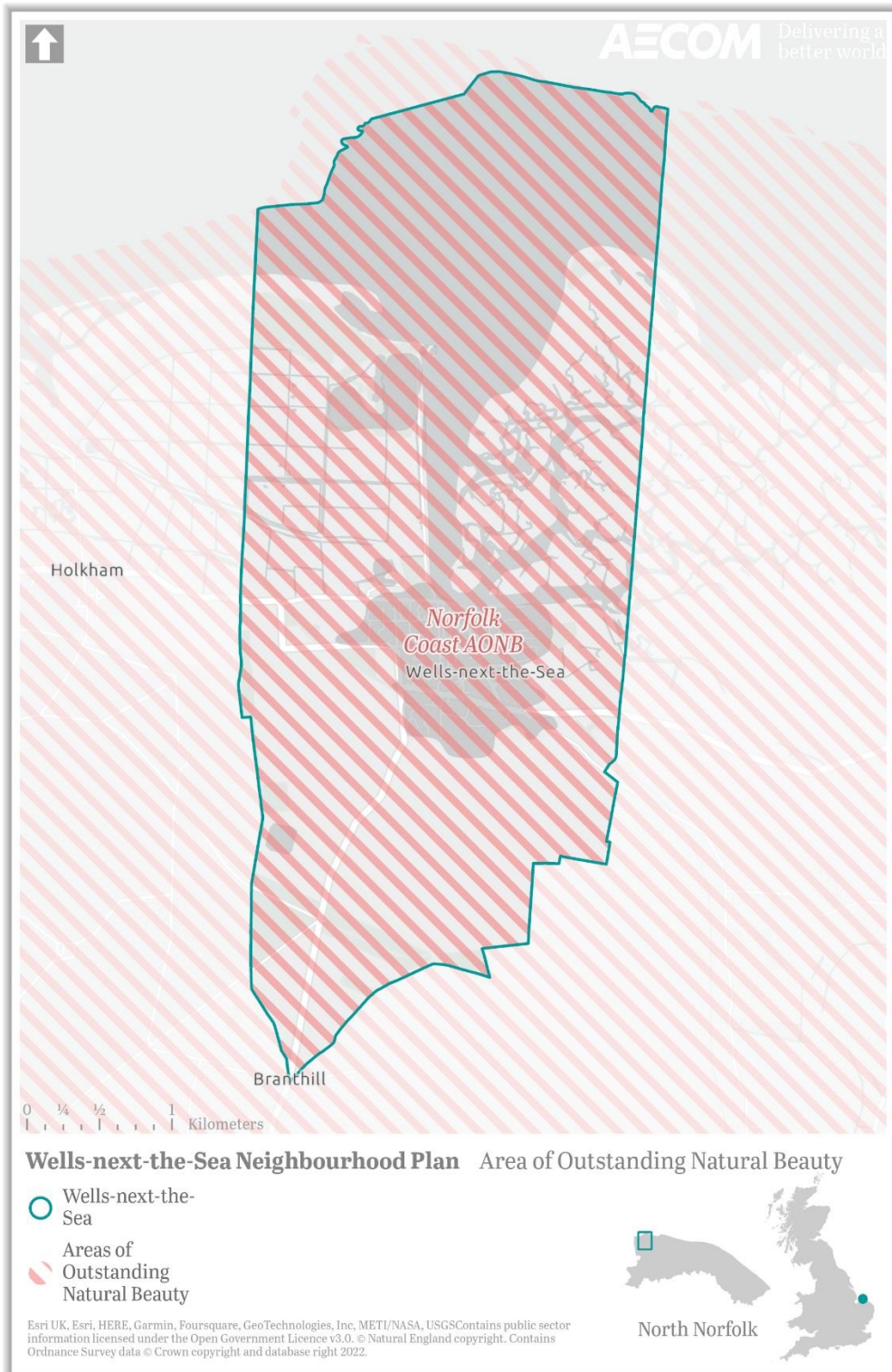
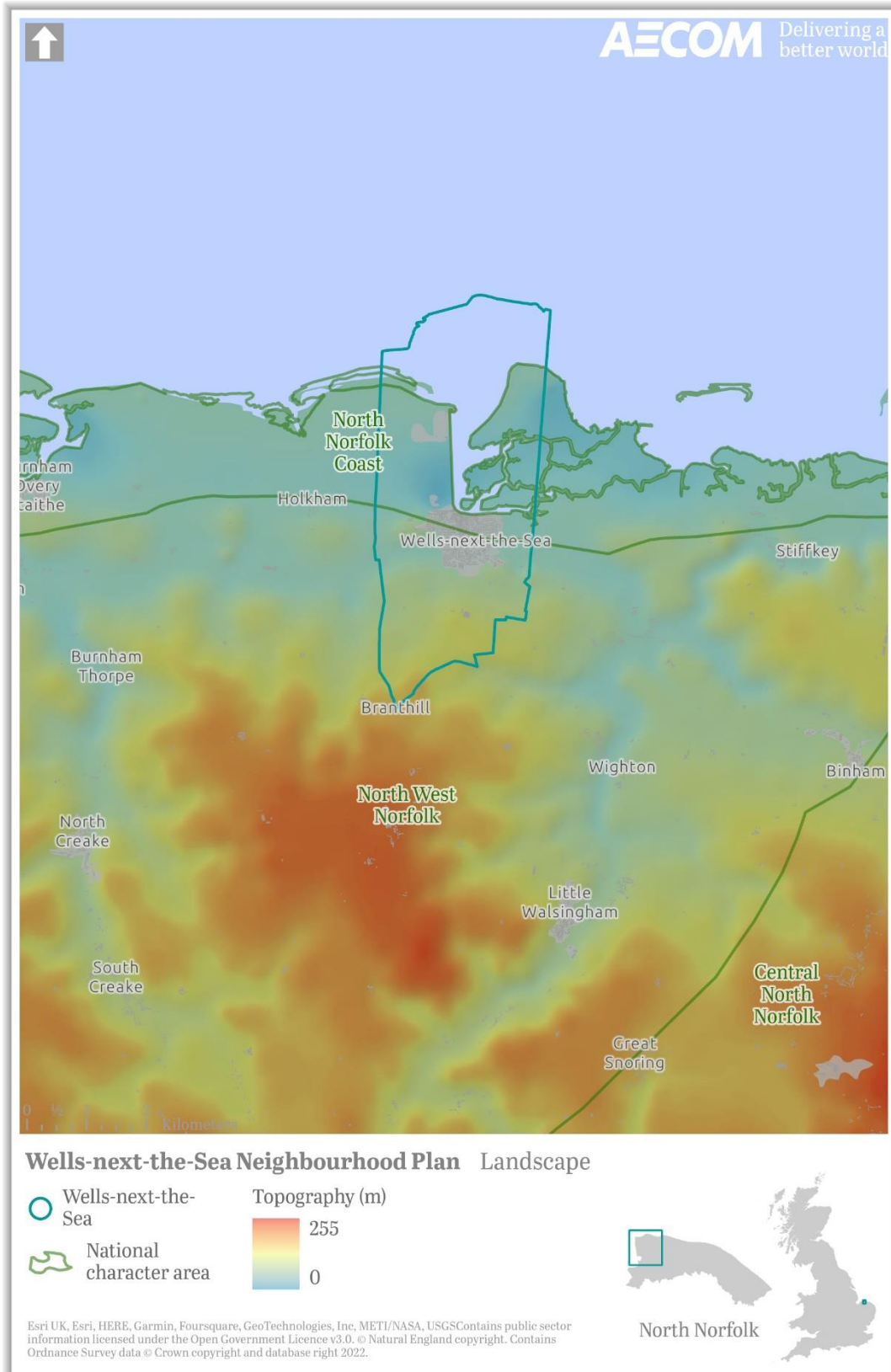


Figure 9-2: Topography and National Character Areas



Key statistics



- The entire Wells-next-the-Sea town is located in the Norfolk Coast AONB and the North Norfolk Heritage Coast.
- The neighbourhood area forms part of the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which identifies four distinct landscape character types within the town. These are:
 - Drained coastal marshes
 - Open coastal marshes
 - Rolling open farmland
 - River valleys

Key evidence sources

- [Natural England - Landscape character assessments: identify and describe landscape types](#)
- [North Norfolk Brownfield Land Register](#)
- [Natural England - Landscape sensitivity assessment](#)
- [State of the North Norfolk Coast Report](#)
- [The Wash and Norfolk Coast European Marine Site](#)
- [North Norfolk – Landscape and Green Infrastructure](#)

Policy context

Table 9-1: Additional plans and policies relating to landscape

Document title	Year of publication
North Norfolk AONB Management Plan	2014
North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment	2021
North Norfolk Landscape Sensitivity Assessment	2021
Norfolk Coast AONB Integrated Landscape Guidance	N.D.
Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy	2021
North Norfolk Core Strategy	2008
North Norfolk Draft Local Plan (2036)	Emerging Local Plan
North Norfolk Open Space and Recreation Study	2006

Commentary

- 9.2 The entire Wells-next-the-Sea neighbourhood area is located in the Norfolk Coast AONB and the North Norfolk Heritage Coast. The AONB was designated in 1968 in recognition of its scenic beauty, remarkable landscape and cultural diversity, and unique and special wildlife. Key areas of focus for the AONB as outlined in the 2014-2019 AONB management plan were: landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity; built and historic environment; farming, forestry and fishing; sustainable communities; and access and recreation. The North Norfolk Heritage Coast was defined in 1975 and was established primarily to conserve, protect and enhance the coastline.
- 9.3 The North Norfolk LCA splits the town up into four distinct landscape character types: drained coastal marshes, open coastal marshes, rolling open farmland and river valleys. The north of the neighbourhood area is predominantly made up of open coastal marshes which are defined as a naturally dynamic landscape comprising a mosaic of saltmarsh, mud and sandflats, shingle, and dunes, which is shaped by the tides where natural forces predominate. The south of the neighbourhood area is largely covered by rolling open farmland, defined as a sustainably managed and actively farmed rural landscape that makes the most of field margins for biodiversity to provide a network of semi-natural features, and where increasing visitor numbers are managed in a sensitive and co-ordinated manner.
- 9.4 There are some existing brownfield or previously developed sites within the town that would benefit from redevelopment or regeneration. The majority of these either have been in employment uses and are now vacant or underused or only part used.

Key issues

- 9.5 It will be important that the WNP seeks to protect the local landscape, particularly the AONB and Heritage Coast in future development, including their coherence and characteristics, through an appropriate spatial strategy and suitable design and layout. It will be important that the WNP strategy is in line with the aims of the AONB Management Plan.
- 9.6 There was a strong preference in the consultation event report that residents would prefer the development of brownfield sites to maintain the rural character of the surrounding Wells 'rolling open farmland' classification.

SEA objective

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

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

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

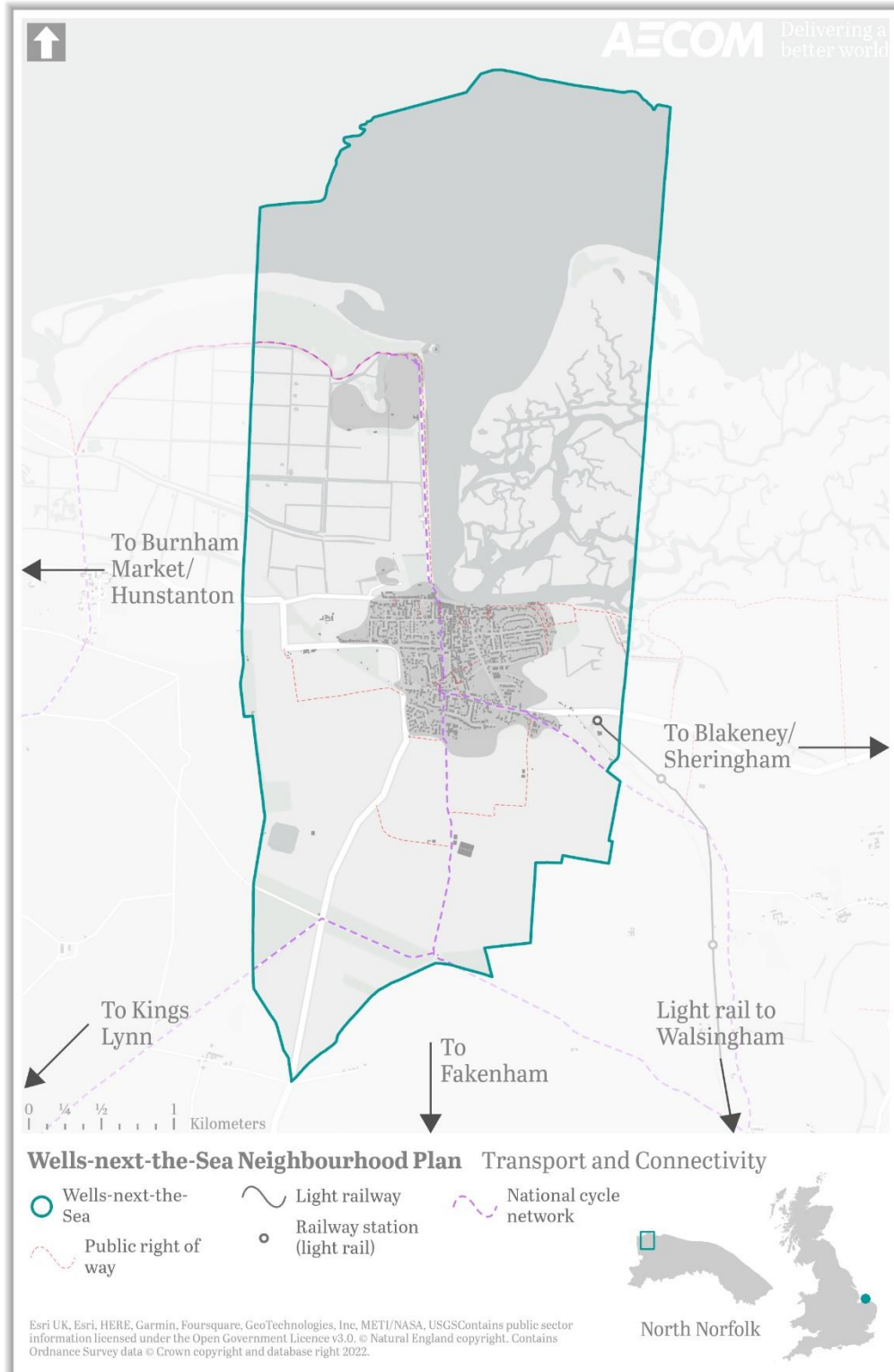
- Align with and complement the AONB Management Plan?
- Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place?
- Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?
- Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place?
- Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the water setting, or rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?

10. Transportation and movement

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

Maps

Figure 10-1: Key transport assets



Key statistics



- Congestion during the holiday season and lack of visitor parking is a particular problem within the neighbourhood area.
- There is no mainline train station at Wells-next-the-Sea. The nearest connecting stations are located at King's Lynn (45 km) and Sheringham (27km).

Key evidence sources

- [GOV.UK - National statistics - National Travel Survey: 2021](#)
- [Google Maps](#)
- [Norfolk County Council Local Transport Plan 3 SEA Monitoring](#)
- [Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way in Norfolk](#)

Policy context

Table 10-1: Additional plans and policies relating to transportation and movement

Document title	Year of publication
Norfolk County Council Local Transport Plan 2021-2036	2021
Norfolk County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan	2021
Norfolk County Council Safe, Sustainable Development Strategy	2022
North Norfolk Core Strategy	2008
North Norfolk Draft Local Plan (2036)	Emerging Local Plan

Commentary

- 10.2 The main road is the A149, which cuts through the town in the east-west direction, and the southern approach (B1105). Both connect the town to the surrounding strategic road network and towns and villages. There are five car parks in Wells providing car parking for several hundred cars with additional spaces for visiting coaches. There is also occasional overflow parking on Beach Road.
- 10.3 There are a range of bus services in Wells-next-the-Sea. These include services to Kings Lynn and Fakenham, Holt, Blakeney, Burnham Market, Sheringham, and Cromer. Bus services to Norwich do not connect well with each other, which can prevent local people from working there. However, there is a rail service from Norwich to Sheringham and a bus connection to Wells. There is no Sunday service. Buses to and from Kings Lynn do not connect well with train services.
- 10.4 The nearest connecting station to Wells-next-the-Sea is Sheringham which connects to Norwich via the Bittern Line. From Norwich there are onward connections to the National Rail network. King's Lynn has a direct connection to London at King's Cross St Pancras, Liverpool Street (via Ely and Cambridge) and to the National Rail network (via Ely).
- 10.5 The National Trail combines two long distance walking trails: Peddars Way and the Norfolk Coast Path. Peddars Way starts in Suffolk at Knettishall Heath Country Park (or Thetford Station for cyclists) and follows the route of a Roman road for 49 miles (79 Km) to Holme-next-the-Sea on the north Norfolk coast meeting the Norfolk Coast Path at Holme-next-the-Sea. The Norfolk Coast Path provides 84 miles (135 km) of walking from Hunstanton to Hopton-on-Sea. The majority of the Trail runs through the Norfolk Coast AONB.

Key issues

- 10.6 Congestion in the summer holidays is a particular problem in the neighbourhood area with only a small level of road infrastructure to support a large demand in the summer months from tourists. Associated with this is the insufficient amount of car parks to support the tourism industry in the summer. Problems caused by the sheer number of visitors at peak occasions include on street parking within the town often in residents' spaces, parking on double yellow lines, narrow roads being blocked which in turn causes congestion and pollution problems and problems of overflow parking at existing car parks.
- 10.7 The neighbourhood area presents good opportunities for the WNP to build upon existing walking and cycling networks.

SEA objective

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

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

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

- Encourage a modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable active travel enhancements?
- Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?
- Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?
- Improve road safety, particularly through measures to reduce speeding and facilitate safer crossings on key roads?

11. Proposed SEA framework

11.1 The SEA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position and policy context that has been explored for a range of SEA topics (as set out in **Chapters 2 to 10**).

11.2 The framework consists of a set of headline themes and objectives, which will be used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft WNP (and reasonable alternatives).

11.3 **Table 11-1** below outlines the proposed SEA framework, bringing together the themes and objectives that have been set out at the end of each SEA topic.

Table 11-1: Proposed SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, protect, and enhance water quality, and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

12. Next steps

Subsequent stages for the SEA process

- 12.1 The next stage will involve appraising reasonable alternatives for the WNP. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be fed back to the Parish Council so that they might be considered when preparing the draft plan.
- 12.2 Once the draft ('pre-submission version') plan has been prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan group, it will be subjected to SEA and the Environmental Report prepared for consultation alongside it.
- 12.3 Following consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and the Environmental Report and consideration of comments made, the Neighbourhood Plan will be updated. It will then be submitted to North Norfolk District Council for publication and subsequent Independent Examination.

Responding to this scoping consultation

- 12.4 At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies. The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report; in particular, the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues, and the proposed SEA Framework.
- 12.5 The consultation period runs from **Tuesday 28th February** to **Tuesday 4th April**. Comments on the Scoping Report should be sent to:
- Cheryl Beattie**, AECOM
- Email address:** cheryl.beattie@aecom.com
- 12.6 All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

