

GREAT HORWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
2026 - 2043

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROPOSED ASSESSMENT SCOPE

DECEMBER 2025

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Background

- 1.1 ONH has been commissioned to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan 2026 – 2043. This document is the draft Scoping Report as the local planning authority (LPA), Buckinghamshire Council, has carried out a screening of the Plan's intent and has concluded an SEA is necessary (see Appendix A).
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan will fully replace the made Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan of 2015. It is being prepared by Great Horwood Parish Council as the qualifying body under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). These regulations require any neighbourhood plan to be accompanied by either an environmental report or a statement that the provisions of a neighbourhood plan do not require an environmental assessment in accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended).
- 1.3 There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal, as set out in section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Instead, an SEA is being prepared because the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. The basic conditions statement, to be submitted in due course, will demonstrate how the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development, meeting the relevant statutory requirements (Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraphs: 026 & 027 Reference ID: 11-026-20140306; 11-027-20190722). The purpose of the environmental report is to assess the extent to which the Neighbourhood Plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help achieve relevant environmental objectives.
- 1.4 The main stages of the SEA process are as follows:
- **Stage A – Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on scope**
  - Stage B – Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects
  - Stage C – Preparing the SEA
  - Stage D – Consultation on the draft plan and the SEA
  - Stage E – Monitoring implementation of the plan
- 1.5 This Scoping Report therefore follows the screening stage to conclude Stage A.
- 1.6 The LPA has also carried out an early screening for the likelihood of the Neighbourhood Plan having any adverse effects on the integrity of European sites, per the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). As part of the SEA screening, it has reviewed the proximity of the designated area to any qualifying European habitats sites and the potential of the Neighbourhood Plan to have any adverse effects on such sites. It has concluded that there is no such potential, and no Appropriate Assessment is necessary.

## 2. CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND BASELINE

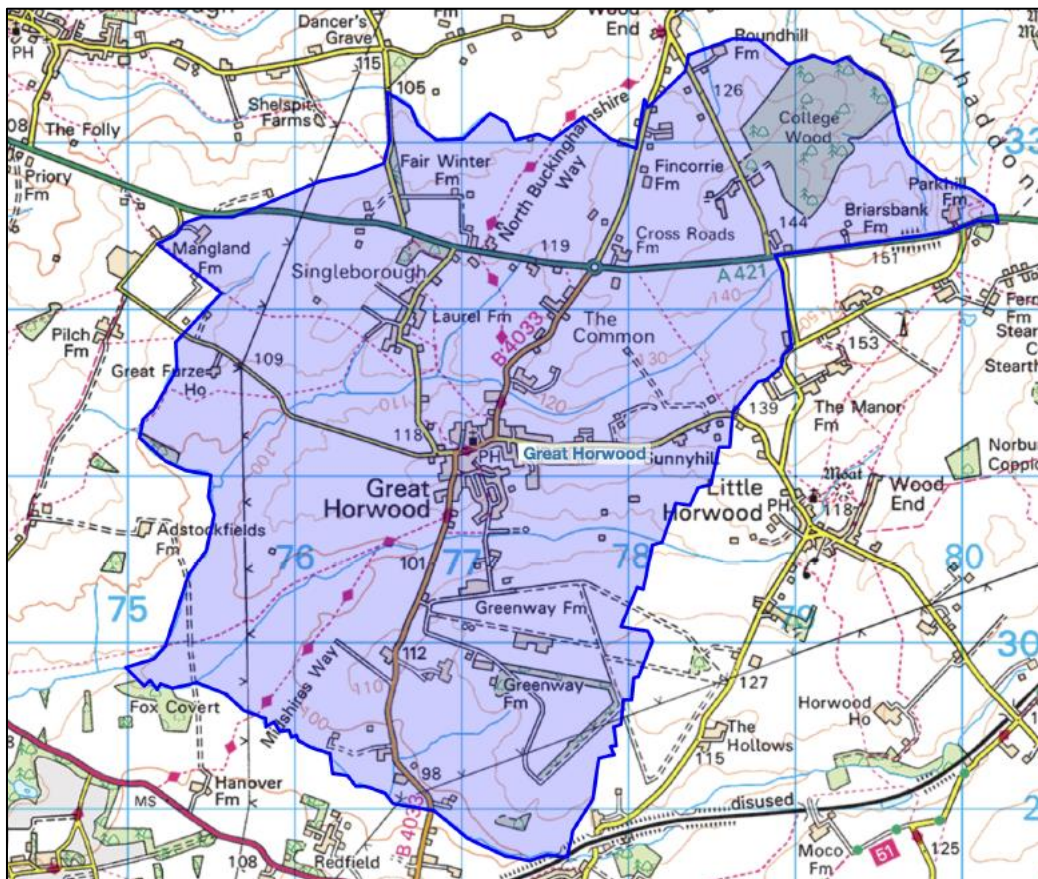
### Context

2.1 Great Horwood is a medium village located roughly 13 miles north of Aylesbury and 6 miles east of Buckingham (see Plan A). The village is close to the historic market town of Winslow which sits less than 2 miles to the south of the village. It occupies a ridge and hillside dropping down towards the south-west. The ridge sits between two stream valleys to the north and south – both tributaries of Claydon Brook, and is overlooked to the north east by Shucklow Hill and Wood End. To the north, south, and west the village overlooks the surrounding undulating, predominantly agricultural, land and the river valleys.



*Plan A: Great Horwood Location*

2.2 The Parish, and designated Neighbourhood Area, is centred on the village but extends approx. one to two miles beyond (see Plan B). It therefore includes the hamlet of Singleborough to its north and much of the former RAF Little Horwood airfield (now partly Greenway Business Park) between the village and Winslow. The boundary also extends north of the A421 road towards the small village of Nash.



*Plan B: Designated Great Horwood Neighbourhood Area*

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan will need to have regard to national policies and guidance. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), latest version published in December 2024, and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is an important guide in the preparation of neighbourhood plans.

2.4 The Plan will also need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan which currently comprise policies of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VALP) adopted in 2021 and the Buckinghamshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan adopted in 2019. Both are in the process of replacement and the LPA recently consulted on a draft Spatial Strategy and draft Development Management policies for the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (LP4B). It is assumed the Neighbourhood Plan will be examined and made before LP4B is adopted.

2.5 The VALP identifies Great Horwood as a Medium Village. Its Policy D3 sets out criteria for future development in such locations:

- be located within or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the settlement, except where there is a made neighbourhood plan which defines a settlement or development boundary, where the site should be located entirely within that settlement boundary
- not lead to coalescence with any neighbouring settlement
- be of a scale and in a location that is in keeping with the existing form of the settlement, and not adversely affect its character and appearance



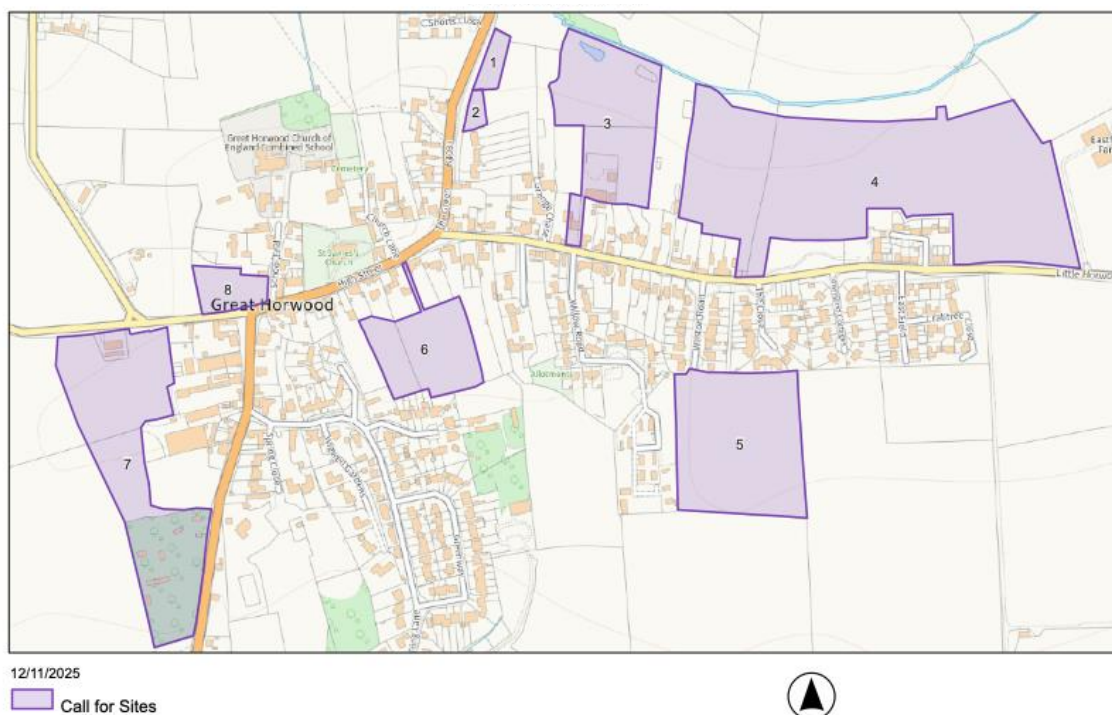
- respect and retain natural boundaries and features such as trees, hedgerows, embankments and drainage ditches
- not have any adverse impact on environmental assets such as landscape, historic environment, biodiversity, waterways, open space and green infrastructure, and
- provide appropriate infrastructure provision such as waste water drainage and highways.

2.6 The spatial strategy for growth (Policy S2) includes “housing growth of 1,423 at a scale in keeping with the local character and setting. This growth will be encouraged to help meet local housing and employment needs and to support the provision of services to the wider area”. All of the 81 homes at Great Horwood that contributed to this number have now been delivered via the made Neighbourhood Plan site allocation policies and through an approved scheme for 7 homes at Horwood Mill.

2.7 The LP4B spatial strategy options include one (Approach 6) that is based on the limited expansion of villages. This will support the vitality and services within these villages as more residents will be able to use the local pub, school and shops. The scale of growth in these locations is more limited than in other approaches to retain the village character and not overload services.

2.8 Through a combination of the HELAA (2023) and the Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites a number of land interests have put forward their land for allocation (see Plan C). The main focus of the Plan, as with the made Plan, will be allocating land for housing development in one or more suitable locations on the edge of the village. This triggered the SEA requirement and therefore the scope of its assessment will be on environmental issues on the land that surrounds the village and not elsewhere in the Parish.

2.9 However, to the south of the village is the small town of Winslow. Given its new station on the East West Rail route and the scale of the land put forward in the HELAA, including between the town and the village, the Approaches 2 and 4 of the spatial strategy could result in a major expansion of the town. It will therefore be necessary for the SEA of the Plan to take into account the effects of this potential scale of development in relatively close proximity to the village.



### *Plan C: Neighbourhood Plan Review: Sites to be Assessed*

## Objectives

2.10 The emerging objectives for the Plan are to:

- allocate land for housing development of a scale that is consistent with a medium sized village to contribute to meeting local housing needs
- conserve and enhance the significance of the village's heritage assets
- prevent the visual coalescence of the village with Winslow
- contribute to delivering local nature recovery

2.11 These objectives are the starting point for the project and may be refined as the Plan makes progress.

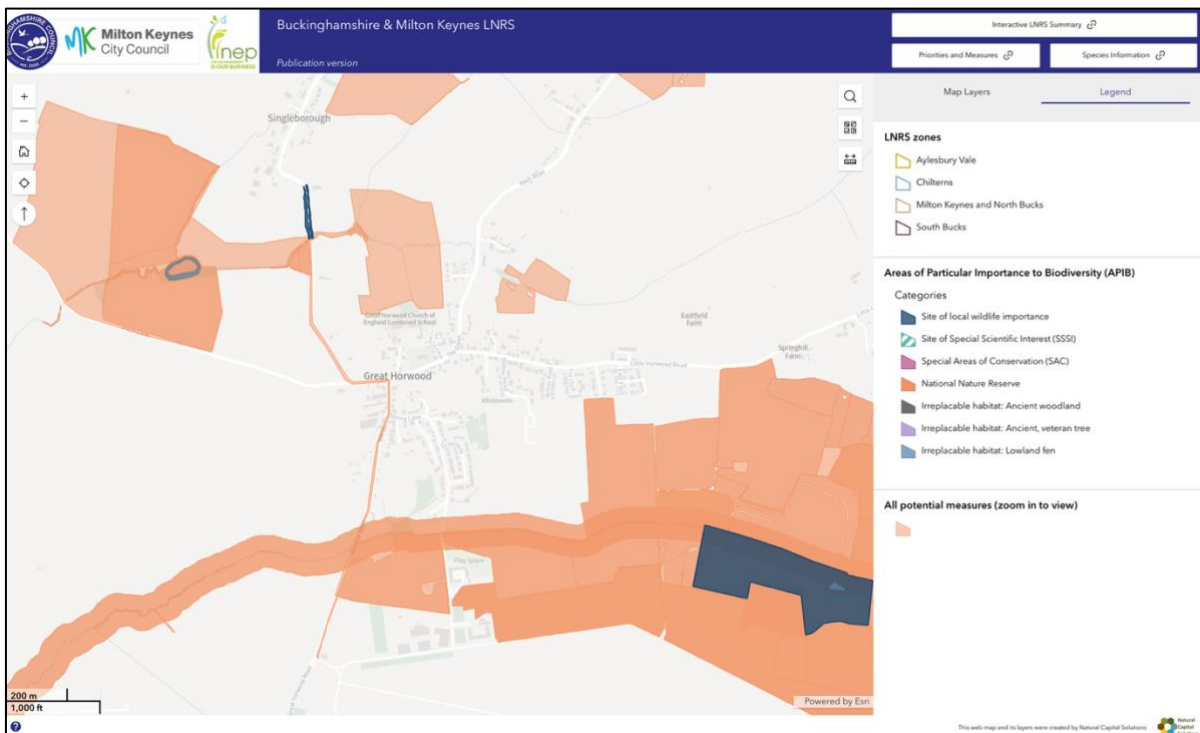
## Baseline

### Biodiversity

2.12 Although there are no national biodiversity designations in the Great Horwood neighbourhood area, there are some locally important biodiversity assets (see Plan D). They include:

- Biological Notification Sites – 'Three Field' to the south of the village
- Local wildlife sites – north and west outside of Great Horwood village
- Important wildlife, including Great Crested Newts, bats, toads, kestrel, barn owls and starlings

2.13 The most recent Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the area identifies some land within the area of search as having potential for one or more potential biodiversity improvement measures.



*Plan D: Local Nature Recovery Strategy Mapping (Great Horwood extract)*

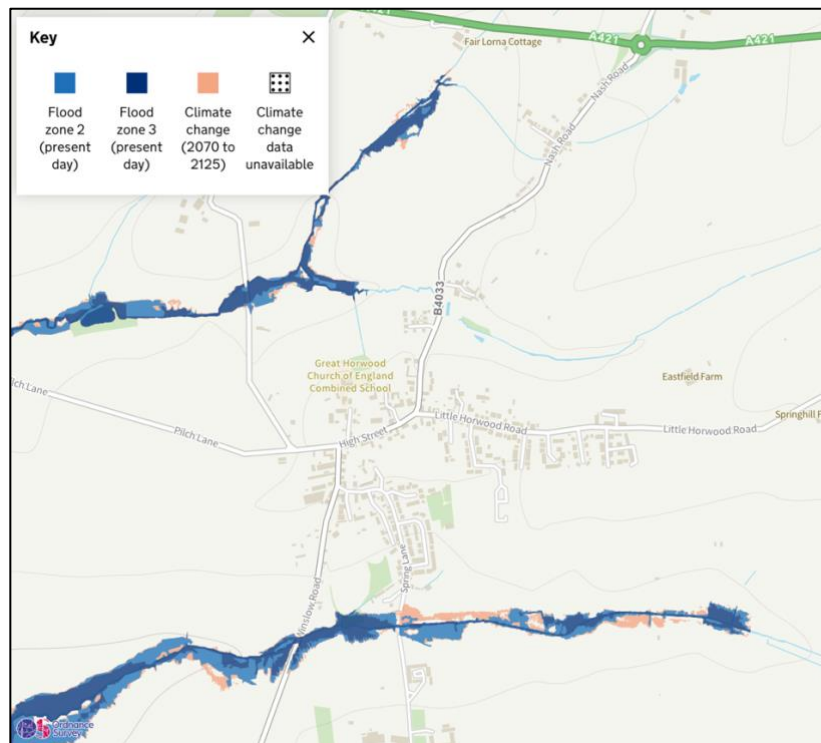
## Soil and Geology

2.14 The soil quality is Grade 3 good to moderate with no likely discernible difference between land parcels around the village edge. There are no geological issues or areas of likely ground contamination of scale that would prevent development.

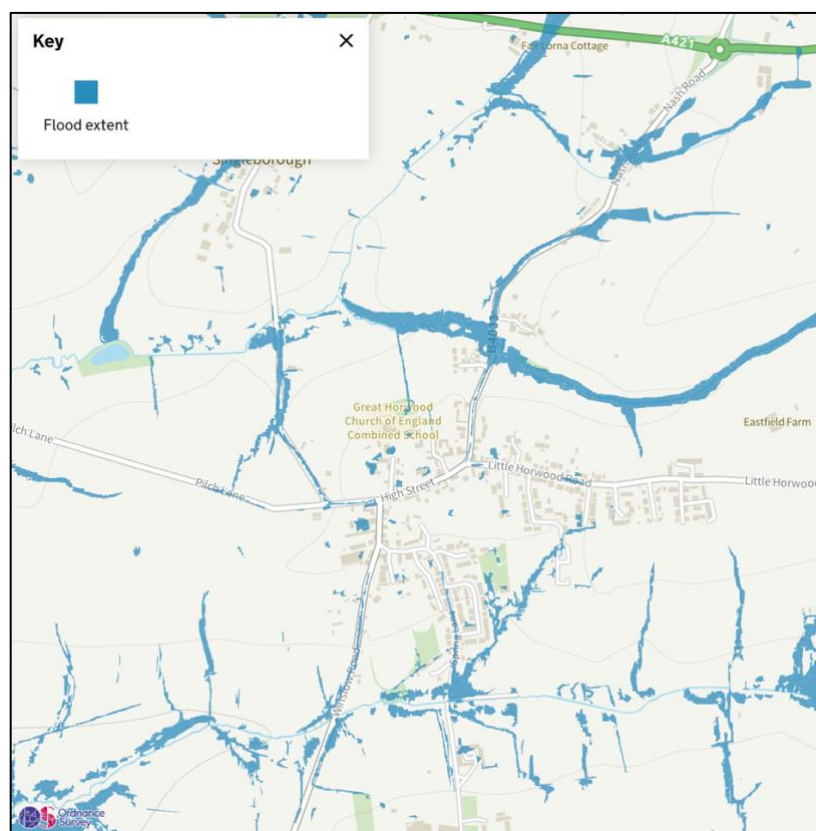
## Flood Risk and Water Cycle

2.15 There are no areas of Flood Zones 2 or 3 around the edge of the village – the two watercourses north and south of the village (and their zones) are beyond the areas of search for housing site allocations in the Plan (see Plan E). There are some pockets of land that may be at risk of surface water flooding but they are inconsequential for the selection of developable land, even at the 1:1000 likelihood level (see Plan F).





Plan E: Flood Zone 2/3 Mapping for Great Horwood



Plan F: Surface Water Flood Risk Mapping for Great Horwood (1:1000)

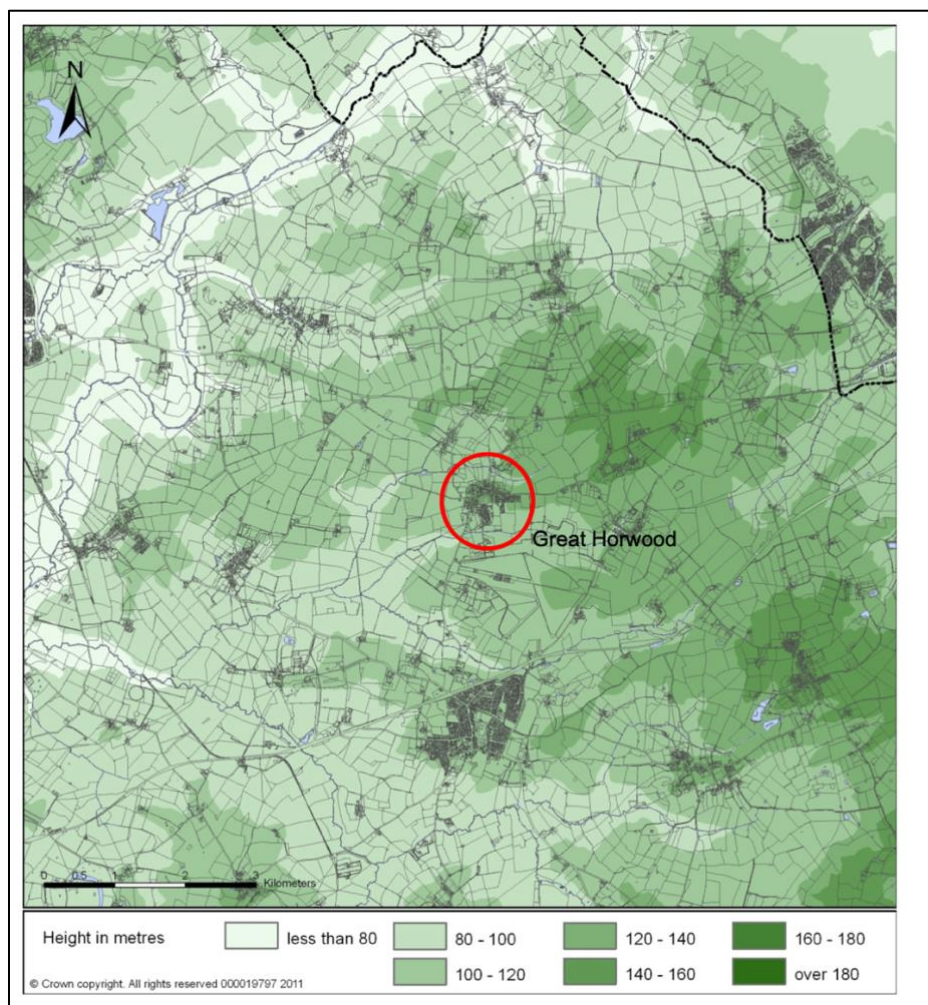
2.16 The scale of development to be planned for in the Plan will not have consequences for local waste water network infrastructure but it is understood there may be longer term capacity constraints requiring upgrades.

### Landscape

2.17 Great Horwood sits on a narrow ridge between two valleys (see Plan G). These two valleys contain small streams - tributaries of the Claydon Brook. The village sits below higher ground to the east, upon which are Little Horwood Manor and College Wood. To the north, west and south the village overlooks the surrounding stream valleys, affording good views from the settlement across adjacent agricultural land.

2.18 There are no designated landscapes in the Parish and no other policy constraints that distinguish land around the edge of the village in terms of their sensitivity to development.

2.19 Although not strictly a landscape issue, the close proximity of the village's southern edge with the town of Winslow less than 1 mile to its south is noted. The landscape quality is not high but its openness creates a strong sense of separation between the two settlements.



*Plan G: Great Horwood Topography*

## Heritage

2.20 Great Horwood is an ancient settlement which dates back to at least the Anglo Saxon period. There is evidence of Roman settlement in the Parish, although it is unclear whether the settlement of Great Horwood was established during this period. The first documentary reference to the village is contained in the Carticularium Saxonicum in AD 792.



*Plan H: Great Horwood Historic Map (Jefferies 1770)*

*Plan I: Great Horwood Historic Map (Bryant 1825)*

2.21 In the 19th century farming was the principal occupation of the majority of residents within the village, and the population of the settlement in 1801 was recorded as 537 people. Between 1801 and 1871 the population of the settlement rose in line with agricultural prosperity. However, there was a steep decline after 1871. It was not until the Second World War, and the post-war period, that Great Horwood saw another steep rise in population, as a result of the influx of people to the Little Horwood Airfield (opened in 1942) and the redevelopment of World War II RAF sites within the village for housing after the war.

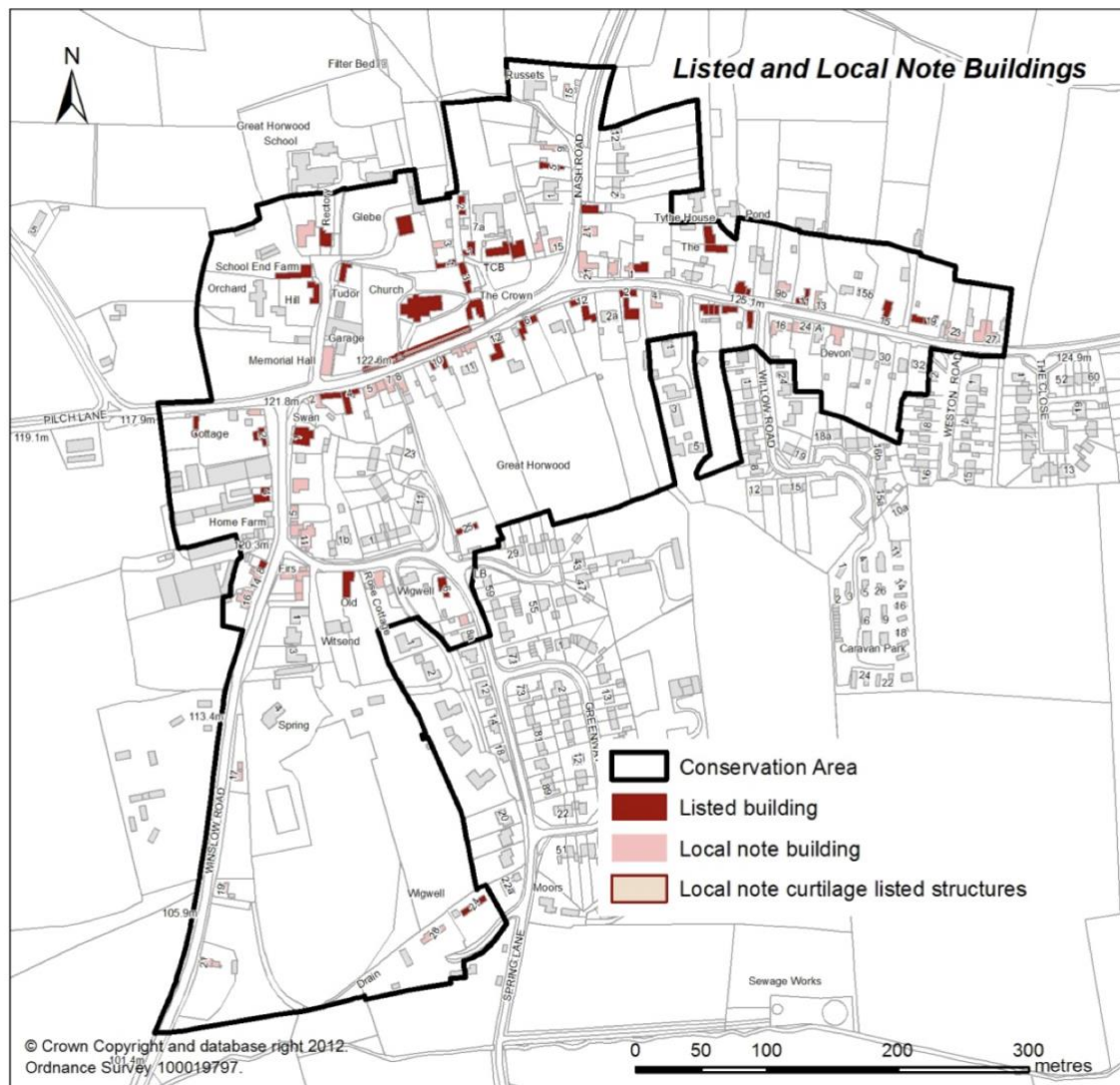
2.22 The village is a regular row settlement which, whilst a village, displays some urban characteristics (see plan form below) with development of a linear form along both sides of the main street (High Street/Winslow Road).

2.23 The historic plan form of the village is still easily visible on modern day maps of the settlement. There is a strong feeling of regularity within the settlement. Along High Street plots of the same width and length indicate deliberate planning in their layout. Such features are usually found in historic towns, but less commonly in villages, leading to Great Horwood having a more urban character than other villages in the District. This form of planning is usually indicative of early 12th or 13th century development or later 18th and 19th century development. In the case of Great Horwood it is likely to be the former.

2.24 There are 40 listed buildings in and around the village, primarily clustered within the historic core along High Street, The Green, Winslow Road and Little Horwood Road (see Plan J). They are all Grade II apart from the Church of St. James which is Grade II\*. There are many others identified in the 2012 Conservation Area Appraisal that are



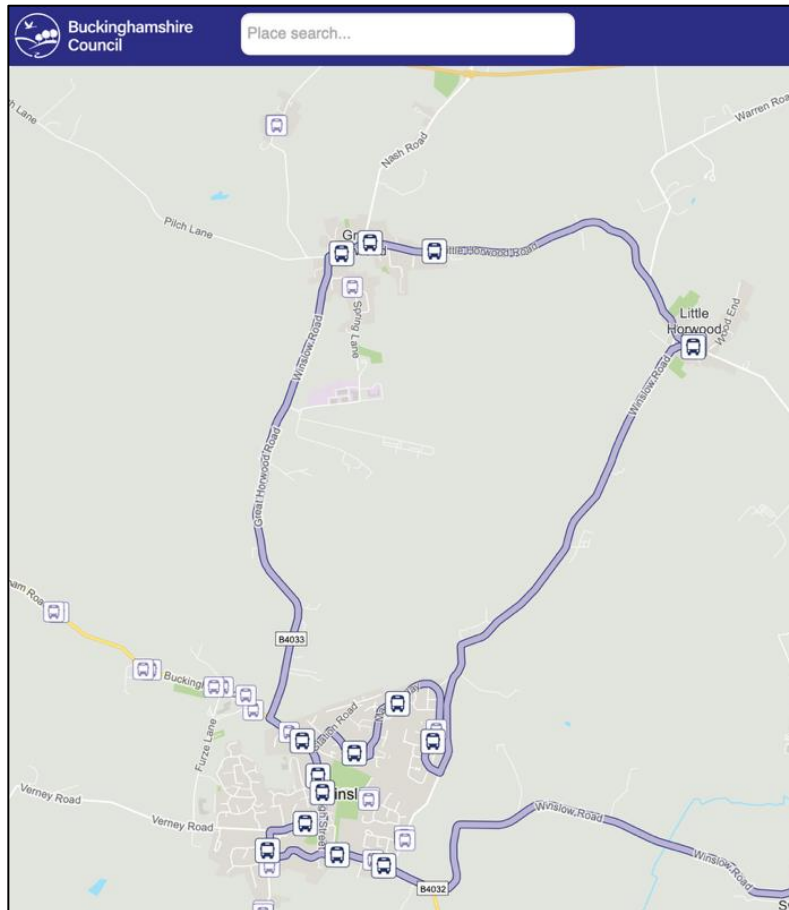
of local historical or architectural value. Most of the village lies in the Great Horwood Conservation Area, first designated in 1989 and modified following that Appraisal.



*Plan J: Great Horwood Heritage Assets*

## Access & Movement

2.25 There are a number of bus services linking the village to Winslow and other surrounding towns and villages. Only one (#50) operates a timetable that offers a viable part-time worker commute to Winslow and Milton Keynes (see Plan K). All of the village and its edges lie within 400m of the main bus routes and stops.



*Plan K: #50 Bus Route Map October 2025*

### Other Environmental Issues

2.26 No other environmental issues have been identified that are relevant to the assessment of the policies of this Plan, e.g. air quality.

### **Summary of Key Issues**

2.27 The main challenge for the Plan will be in planning for housing growth that is of a scale, location and type that will fit with the village's historic character and identity. Its surrounding countryside landscape in all directions is cherished by the local community. Its proximity to Winslow to the south means that any significant growth northwards of that town has the potential to coalesce with the village.



### 3. PROPOSED ASSESSMENT SCOPE

- 3.1. The proposed SEA scope has been derived from this understanding of context, baseline data and key issues. In doing so, the assessment must focus on issues that will enable the policies and their reasonable alternatives to be considered proportionately, consistently and accurately. It must also acknowledge the tight focus of the Plan on the village and its edges, and not the remainder of the Parish.
- 3.2. The assessment has borne in mind that the Neighbourhood Plan proposals must have regard to national policy and be in general conformity with the VALP. In respect of meeting local housing needs there would appear to be little prospect of the LP4B proposing the village moves up the established settlement hierarchy.
- 3.3. The process of drafting the Plan and assessing the sites will be informed by the Parish Council's judgement on the number of new homes to allocate. It is not expected that the LPA will provide a formal indicative housing figure beyond the informal advice already provided, and will only provide the indicative housing target in its submitted LP4B.
- 3.4. It will also be confined to a relatively high level of information to measure the potential effects at this local scale. In some cases, those effects may be so relatively negligible that they cannot be measured with any confidence. The data itself may not be available and the assessment will note if that is the case.
- 3.4 The proposed framework of assessment topics, objectives and metrics is set out in the table below:

| SEA Topic    | SEA Objective  | SEA Metrics   |
|--------------|--|---|
| Heritage     | To conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets.   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Will the proposal conserve and enhance the significance of a listed building and its setting?</li><li>2. Will the proposal conserve and enhance the significance of the Conservation Area and its setting?</li><li>3. Will the proposal conserve and enhance the significance of a building of local heritage value?</li></ol> |
| Biodiversity | To contribute to delivering local nature recovery.             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Will the proposal realise an opportunity to invest in on-site local nature recovery?</li></ol>   |
| Landscape    | To prevent the visual coalescence of the village with Winslow. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Will the proposal be located so that it may avoid leading to the visual coalescence of the village with Winslow?</li></ol>   |

## Reasonable Alternatives

3.5 The assessment of reasonable alternatives will take two forms. Firstly, for the site allocating policy it will assess the individual sites as alternatives for selection but acknowledging where two or more sites may have 'in-combination' effects. Secondly, for the remaining policies it will assess the alternative of the Plan not containing that policy and instead relying on other development plan policies.

## 4. CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 This SEA scoping report will now be consulted on with the statutory consultation bodies – the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England and Buckinghamshire Council – for the required five-week period.
- 4.2 The consultees are invited to comment on whether or not they agree with the proposed framework. They may also advise on the timeliness and range of data in the evidence base. Their comments will be considered by the Parish Council to determine if the framework needs to be modified in any way. The final framework of topics, objectives and metrics will then be used to assess the emerging, draft and final Neighbourhood Plan policies in due course.

## 5. APPENDIX A: SCREENING OPINION SUMMARY



# **Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 – Scope**

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

**Final Screening Outcome**

**November 2025**

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Last updated: 18 November 2025

Version: 1

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## 5. Buckinghamshire Council's Screening Opinion

- 5.1. Based on the above assessment, the screening outcome is that the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review Scope is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore does require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 5.2. Under the Habitat Regulations (HRA) it is not considered there is any need for an HRA Report or to proceed to Stage 2 of HRA- an Appropriate Assessment.
- 5.3. The Council's Final Screening Outcome reflects the views of the response received from Historic England and Natural England during the consultation. No response was received from the Environment Agency.
- 5.4. Historic England agrees with the Council's screening conclusion that an SEA is required.
- 5.5. Natural England advises that, based on the information provided, the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects that would necessitate an SEA. However, they note; *"The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA"*.
- 5.6. Buckinghamshire Council concludes that an SEA is required for the following reasons:
  - To maintain consistency with the Council's approach to screening Neighbourhood Plans that include site allocations
  - Natural England has identified potential local environmental sensitivities that could justify the need for an SEA
  - Historic England has taken a precautionary stance, supporting the need for an SEA due to potential impacts on the historic environment, particularly in relation to site-specific and localised heritage concerns
- 5.7. Natural England agrees with the Council's conclusion that no HRA is required.