

Englishcombe Sustainability Appraisal

Introduction and Methodology

About this Report

The purpose of this scoping report is to identify the sustainability issues within Englishcombe Parish and to set objectives for the Sustainability Appraisal of the Neighbourhood Plan that can be used to determine how the Neighbourhood Plan will address these issues.

Legislation at both a European and national level sets out the requirement to achieve sustainable development. In 2004 the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) set out the requirement for SEA, which has been incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal process in the UK. UK planning law also places a requirement on local development plan documents to ensure a contribution to sustainable development through Sustainability Appraisal.

This report will be the subject of consultation with Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England, and English Heritage.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development has been defined by the Government as ‘a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come’. It is about considering the long-term environmental, social and economic issues and impacts. A set of shared UK principles provide the guidance to achieve the purposes of sustainable development. These principles form the basis for policy in the UK:

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

The land use planning process is a key tool in the delivery of sustainable development. The Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan, which is currently being prepared, will need to be in conformity with the Local Development Plan of B&NES, as it will (if passing examination and referendum) comprise part of a hierarchy of the development plan documents that make up the planning policy framework for the council area. The Neighbourhood Plan can help to achieve sustainable development in the parish, whilst at the same time helping to ensure that any adverse environmental impact is minimised.

Englishcombe Parish

The Englishcombe neighbourhood plan encompasses the civil parish of Englishcombe, which comprises of the villages of Englishcombe, Haycombe, Kilkenny, Nailwell, Padleigh and Barrow Hamlet .



Map of Englishcombe Parish Boundary

Neighbourhood Plan Scope and Main Objectives

The Localism Act introduced Neighbourhood Planning into the hierarchy of spatial planning in England, giving communities the right to shape their future development at a local level. In March 2013, Englishcombe Parish Council was successful with its application to become a Neighbourhood Planning area. The Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan reflects community-wide comments, observations and concerns about its future, bringing them together with census information, strategic and statistical evidence into a “living promise” that mirrors the community’s overwhelming desire to preserve what is best about Englishcombe Parish today – its open rural environment and landscape, its small-village ambience, its history and its sense of place and timelessness -- while ensuring that it has a plan for the future to ensure the continuing health, happiness and well-being of all its residents.

The plan has been produced by a Neighbourhood Planning Committee including Parish Council members and community volunteers. The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies for deciding where development should take place and the type and quality of that development, together with policies influencing social and community growth.

Seven key areas are being explored in the preparation of the plan:

- Planning and Development
- Rural Environment
- Village Environment
- Climate Change
- Facilities, Services and Amenities
- Transport and Movement
- Telecommunications

Methodology

This report has been produced by Englishcombe Parish Council and the Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan Committee. This sustainability appraisal has been based on the parish gathering baseline environmental evidence, identifying key issues and problems and engaging with B&NES Council.

The methodology for this initial scoping stage of the sustainability appraisal was developed in accordance with the following guidance:

- *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive* (ODPM, 2005)
- Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Sustainability Appraisal online guidance at: <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagelId=152450>

This report meets the scoping requirements of the SEA Directive. See attached appendices for an overview of how SEA requirements incorporated in this report.

Government guidance outlines a five stage process for undertaking a SA:

- Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope
- Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects
- Stage C: Preparing the SA
- Stage D: Consulting on the draft plan and the SA
- Stage E: Monitoring implementation of the plan

This scoping report is Stage A in above process and consists of five tasks:

Task A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes and sustainable development objectives. The development of the Neighbourhood Plan (NDP) may be influenced by other plans or programmes and by external environmental objectives such as those laid down in policies or legislation. This stage outlines that policy context, ensuring compliance and highlighting any issues or constraints that may apply to Englishcombe NDP.

Task A2: Collecting baseline information.

The description of the baseline environment and elements within it establishes information on the current context and highlights sensitive elements within the plan area. The information that has been collected is relevant to SEA objectives and is relevant to the characteristics of the plan to provide the evidence base against which its potential effects can be measured and assessed.

Task A3: Identifying sustainability issues and problems

Within the parish, certain sustainability issues are more significant than others, e.g. flooding. These issues will need to be highlighted as areas of concern within the sustainability appraisal. Issues are identified through:

- the review of relevant regional and local plans and programmes.
- identification of baseline characteristics.
- Sustainability issues known locally.

The key sustainability issues have been divided into environmental, social and economic and set out in a table.

Task A4: Developing the SA framework.

The sustainability framework will be used during the next stage to test options and the draft Plan. The starting point for identifying a set of draft objectives specific to the parish are those objectives considered in the Sustainability Appraisal of the B&NES Core Strategy.

Task A5: Consulting on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal.

This report will be sent to statutory consultees and others with an interest in sustainability issues. Feedback from the consultation will be considered and – where appropriate – taken on board in the ongoing SA process.

Policy Context (task A1)

This section provides a summary of key relevant plans and programmes which could influence the Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan.

The purpose of sustainability appraisal is to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are incorporated into all levels of planning policy. The Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan will sit within a hierarchy of national and local planning policies and will need to be in 'general conformity' with the local development plans. It is therefore, this scoping report does not propose to review all international, national and regional policies other than the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as the Sustainability Appraisal of the B&NES Core Strategy reviewed all programme, policies, strategies and guidance that were taken into account in drafting these documents.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay. Local and Neighbourhood Plans policies guide how this presumption will be applied at a local level, in line with 12 core planning principles. Of particular relevance to the parish are direct references to rural economies and communities, and also the continued importance placed on the protection of the Green Belt and AONB.

B&NES Local Plan 2007 - 2011

It contains “saved policies” applicable to Englishcombe that have been retained within B&NES Council Adopted Core Strategy.

B&NES Adopted Core Strategy

The Adopted Core Strategy sets out the policy framework for the location and level of new housing and other development and is the key development plan document for the next 15-20 years. The B&NES Core Strategy was adopted in July 2014 and contains policies applicable to Englishcombe. For example, Englishcombe has been identified as an R3 settlement washed over by the Green Belt.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

- WILDthings Biodiversity Action Plan for Bath and North East Somerset (2006)

The BAP is a strategic framework for the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species. The BAP includes a series of Habitat Action Plans each covering a priority habitat and species. There a number of sensitive habitats within the neighbourhood plan area including the Bath and Bradford upon Avon Bat SAC.

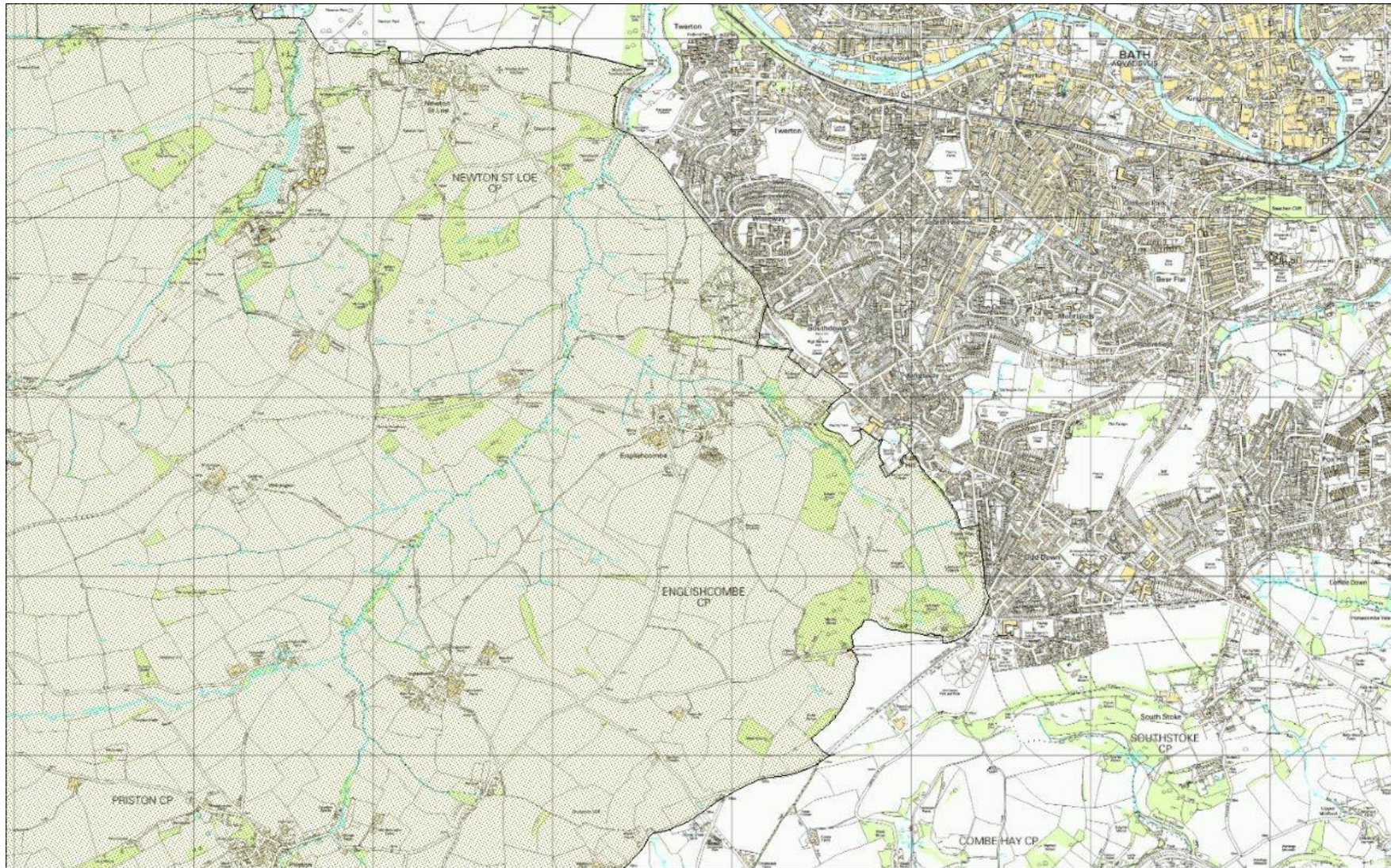
Flood Risk Assessment

- Bath and North East Somerset Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2008 evidence base document used to inform the production of the local authority’s Local Development Framework. The study provide a summary of flood risk in the local authority area, along with how development and allocations may be affected by flooding.
- Regard has been had to the Bristol Avon Catchment Flood Management Plan, Summary Report – June 2012.
http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk/static/documents/Leisure/_CFMP_Bristol_Avon_2012.pdf

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

- Rural Landscapes of Bath North East Somerset LCA Supplementary Planning Document (2003).

The assessments identify and describe the component features and characteristics of the landscape, and guide the maintenance and enhancement of landscape character and local distinctiveness. The neighbourhood plan area is set within a sensitive rural landscape. Information included in the assessments should be used to inform the location of sites of development and the type of development along with a reference for conservation and enhancement activities.



Map of the Hinton Blewett and Newton St Lowe plateau lands.

Cotswolds AONB

The plan area sits within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CONB) and also falls within Bristol and Bath Green Belt. Both designations highlight the sensitive and outstanding nature of the setting of the parish. The AONB Management plan (and accompanying topic papers) highlights fundamental principles that should inform approaches to development in this sensitive landscape.

Next Steps

Appendix A at the end of this report provides a summary of the local programmes, plans and other documents which influence the Neighbourhood Plan. Key objectives and indicators have been identified from the emerging local authority plans and other key plans. These have been incorporated into the sustainability framework and used to inform baseline data and the identification of key issues. Note that the policy context for the Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Appraisal is not static. Therefore, as further relevant plans or programmes are developed, they should be reviewed and incorporated within the assessment at future stages of publication of this Sustainability Appraisal report.

Sustainability Context (task A2)

A collection of information on environmental, social and economic characteristics of the parish is required to provide a basis for predicting and monitoring the effects of the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. The topic areas considered by this scoping report encompass those required by sustainability appraisal guidance and SEA Regulations, and have been informed by the topics included in the Core Strategy Sustainability appraisals of the local authority.

Table: Baseline Information Topics

Topic	SEA Regulation Topic	Sustainability Theme
Biodiversity	Biodiversity	Environmental
	Fauna	
	Flora	
Landscape	Landscape	
Heritage and Character	Cultural Heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage	

Water	Water	
Soil	Soil	
Climatic Factors	Climatic Factors	
Roads, Transport and Movement		Economic
The Local Population	Education and Employment	Social
	Health	
	Housing	
Air Quality	Transport	Environmental
Material Assets	Housing and Facilities	Social/Economic

Biodiversity

The Plan area supports a wide range of habitats and a diverse flora and fauna. Designations along with plans and programme that cover the area aim to provide protection and management to protect habitats.

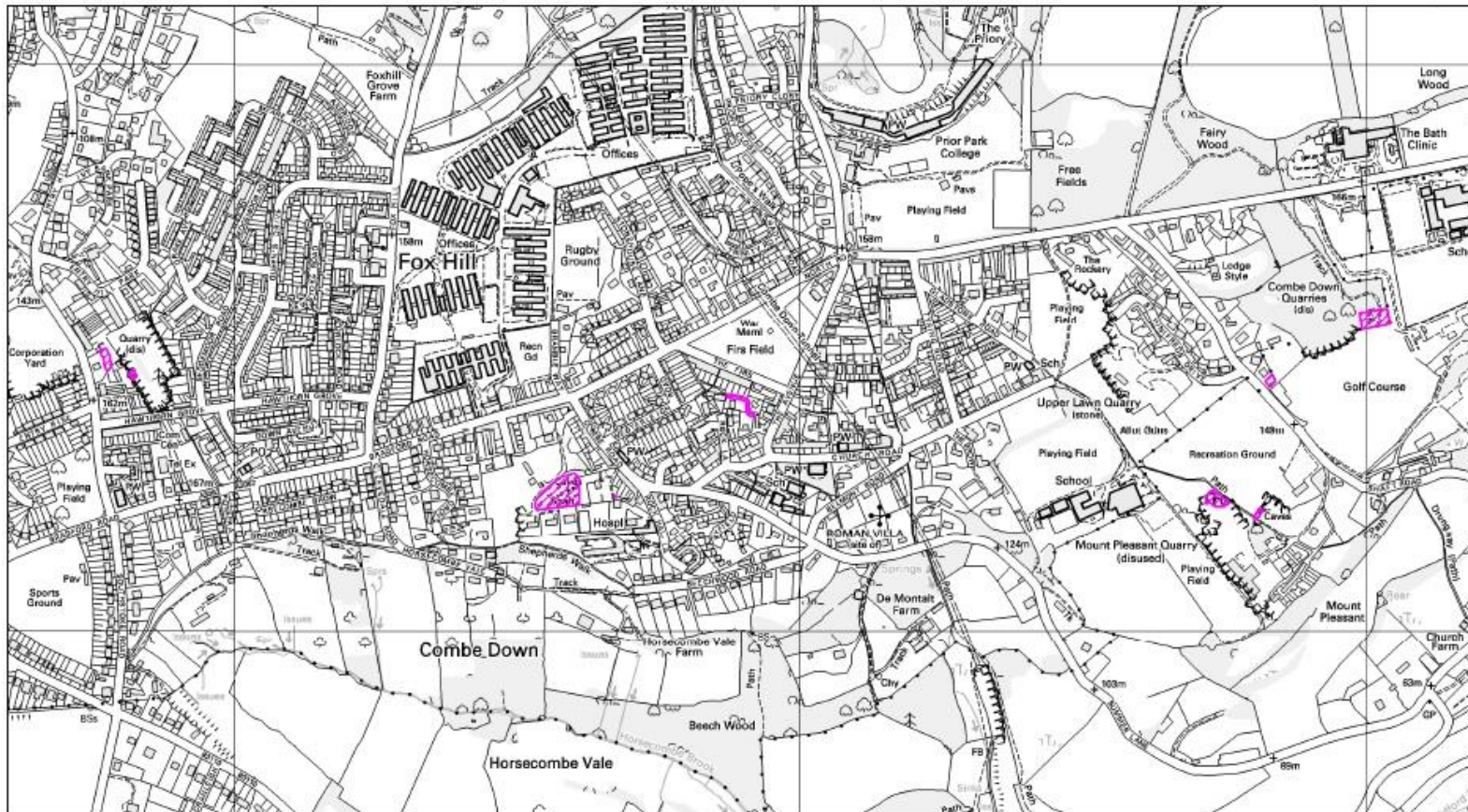
The Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to an HRA Screening and all recommendations have been incorporated into the Draft Plan.

Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats SAC Map2

Map showing boundaries for nine of the eleven sub-sites

Compiled by LC on 3 September 2009 Scale 1:10000

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Regional and Local Priority Habitats

At regional and local levels Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) provide a strategic framework for the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species. Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs) and priority habitats are identified to improve habitat networks and to sustain wildlife within them.

Englishcombe contains a number of protected species including a colony of white clawed crayfish. During the mid-1990's reference was made to greater crested newts. Other species include owls (barn owl), bats namely the greater horseshoe and pipistrelle, birds of prey and kingfishers are also in evidence throughout the Parish, many species of water birds pass through on migration paths. A wide range of habitats and a diverse range of flora and fauna are in evidence across the Parish. Meadowlands are encouraged and promoted by Avon Wildlife Trust as these support many species including butterflies and moths. Grasslands are important as these provide a habitat for species which in turn support other endangered animals such as Barn Owls.

Landscape

Designations

The plan area sits with the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and also falls within Bristol and Bath Green Belt. Both designations highlight the sensitive and outstanding nature of the setting of the parish.

Character

Englishcombe parish is located within the Hinton Blewett and Newton St Lowe plateau lands. The Hinton Blewett and Newton St Lowe plateau lands is a large scale undulating plateau and valley landform, with large fields. The landform is especially undulating in the west, where distinctive rounded hills are a particular feature, while in the east the incised valleys give rise to two distinctive wide ridgelines. Settlements are mostly located within valleys or dips and generally consist of a core of traditional vernacular buildings with modern development around the edges, and walls also typically present. The A37 and the A39 cross north-south through the area, while a network of narrow hedge-lined minor roads and green lanes (also often sunken) connect the villages, hamlets and farms.

Dark Skies

The Cotswold AONB is important as the character and landscape contribute to the tranquillity of the area and the 'dark skies'. The CPRE has developed maps to show comparative levels of both across England and are available to inform planning policy development and planning applications. CPRE <http://www.cpre.org.uk/wht-we-do/countryside/tranquil-places>

Heritage and Character

The housing dates back to the early 18th century. The character of the Parish is therefore of individual houses many built from locally quarried limestone dating back to housing to support farming and large estates. There is therefore no one predominant character of housing across the Parish but more a mixed 'palette' of different designs, age and building materials. There were some small developments built in the 1950's, 1960's 1980's and 1990's which in turn add to the mixture.

Listed Buildings and Structures

There are several listed buildings within the Plan area, a full list can be found at Appendix 9-12 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeology

There are several ancient monuments within the Plan area, a full list can be found at Appendix 13 & 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Water River systems and Waterways

There is only one large stream in the parish called Padleigh Brook and no main waterways. There is a small stream that runs underground in Nailwell, until it emerges on the border with Priston Parish. This stream has caused problems historically for two of the cottages in Nailwell.

Flooding

The Parish is within a Flood Zone 1 area (EA designation) which means a one in one hundred years event will lead to flooding.

Soils

The rocks of region are all of sedimentary origin and range in rock type through limestone, sandstones, clays (marl) to coals. Limestone has over the years been quarried and used for local building. Evidence of this is particularly apparent with cottages built in the latter half of the 19th century and the earlier cottages (Source: B&NES LCA & Magic.gov.uk).

Climatic factors

It is now widely recognised that climate change is an inescapable fact and that its causes and consequences must be addressed. Climate change measures are planned for at a local, national and international level. B&NES have highlighted the need to encourage lower electricity and gas consumption in light of evidence to indicate that national and international carbon reduction targets are not being met at a local level.

Roads, Transport and Movement

Road Network

Priston Road / Englishcombe Lane is the main route through the parish, linking much of the parish and surrounding parishes to the city of Bath. The parish includes many medieval, partially sunken lanes and hedges that are judged of historic significance. This includes medieval grade 1 status hedging along the Priston Road which management recommendations in the Historic Landscape Survey of the Manor of Englishcombe state should be conserved. It is typically busy with commuting traffic between 7:30-9:00 am and 4:00-6:00pm with pinch points in the centre of Englishcombe and Nailwell. At other times of the day tranquillity is restored and it is predominantly used by farm vehicles, the movement of livestock and local residents for recreational purposes.

In addition to Priston Road there are a number of other minor roads, including Kilkenny Lane and Ten Acre Lane, which are often used during peak commuting periods by residents of surrounding parish looking to bypass traffic entering Bath on the A367.

Public Transport

Current bus services are limited both in terms of journeys and the times of services, making commuting to Bath and other potential employment places difficult.

Cycle

The parish does not have any designated car free cycle ways.

Walking

There are a number of public footpaths in the area. The footpaths are well used by locals and tourists.

The Local Population – facts and characteristics (2011)

Population 318 comprising

- 163 males
- 155 females
- 16-0-4 yrs
- 18- 5-9yrs
- 24-10-15 yrs
- 29- 16-24 yrs
- 60-25-44 yrs
- 104-45-64 yrs
- 35- 65-74yrs
- 32-75yrs +
- 314 white
- 165 very good health
- 100 good health
- 171 full time employed
- 71 part time workers
- 49 self employed
- 29 retired
- 14 work from home daily
- 9 use public transport to get to work
- 98 use private cars to get to work

When measured against national statistics the parish is not within deprived areas (The information available relates to the neighbourhood level statistics or 'Lower Layer Super Output Areas' (LSOAs). However not all residents necessarily enjoy the same levels of prosperity, health and access to housing and services. Source: www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

Health

The Parish has no surgeries, necessitating travel into the environs of Bath.

Housing

As Englishcombe parish is washed over by the Green Belt housing development has been limited to infilling or redevelopment within the housing development boundary which in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Education and Employment

There are no schools in the Parish and very limited employment opportunities.

Key Neighbourhood Facilities

The Parish's key facilities including:

- Old School and car park
- Tithe Barn and car park (privately owned)
- Millstream & Orchard
- Wansdyke
- Culverhay Castle
- Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
- St Peters Church
- Wheelwright workshop
- Conference & plays venue at Barrow Castle

Key Environmental and Sustainability Issues (task A3)

Within the parish, certain sustainability issues are more significant than others, e.g. lack of transport or limited broadband which has an impact on Englishcombe. These issues will need to be highlighted as areas of concern within the sustainability appraisal. Issues are identified through:

- the review of relevant regional and local plans and programmes
- identification of baseline characteristics
- local knowledge

Key Issues

There are a number of sustainability issues and challenges facing the parish. While the plan area offers a high quality environment for those who live, work and visit the area, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to manage and seek to resolve a series of issues over its lifetime to achieve sensitive development that meets environmental, social and economic needs of the parish. The absence of a Neighbourhood Plan (and as a consequence a lack of vision and strategy for land use in the parishes), will result in fewer opportunities to address the issues and challenges facing the parishes in a coordinated way.

The list of sustainability issues and baseline environmental information set out in this report, along with the framework from the Core Strategy from the local authority, together with other plans, has been used to formulate the sustainability objectives which form the basis of the Sustainability Framework. The draft framework for Englishcombe Neighbourhood Plan is set out below.

Objectives are listed on the left and in a right hand column will be expanded on to further explain how the objective may be applied to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Objectives	x	x x	0	✓	✓✓	Supporting Evidence
Objective1: Improve the health and well-being of all communities					✓✓	Yes. Policy FC1 aims to increase community involvement and cohesion. Policy P&D 2 and 3 will encourage more people to move into the parish which will contribute to a more vibrant and cohesive community
Objective 2: Meet identified needs for sufficient, high quality and affordable housing					✓✓	Yes. Policy P&D 2 and 3 seek to support housing through reusing existing buildings and conversions in line with the NPPF
Objective 3: Promote stronger more vibrant and cohesive communities and reduce anti-social behaviour, crime and the fear of crime					✓✓	Yes. Policy FC1 aims to increase community involvement and cohesion. Policy P&D 2 and 3 will encourage more people to move into the parish which will contribute to a more vibrant and cohesive community.

Objective 4: Build a strong, competitive economy and enable local businesses to prosper					✓✓	<p>Policy P&D 1 seeks to protect and encourage traditional and new businesses to relocated into the parish</p> <p>Policy TC 1 further facilitates businesses moving into the parish</p>
Objective 5: Ensure everyone has access to high quality and affordable public transport and promote cycling and walking				✓		<p>Yes</p> <p>The facilities, services and amenities section of the plan has the intention to encourage widespread use of of the local bus service</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan transport and movement section has the intention of promoting green modes of transport such as cycling and walking.</p>
Objective 6: Protect and enhance local distinctiveness					✓✓	<p>Yes</p> <p>The neighbourhood plan will support future housing development which will reflect the character, varied materials and varied build design as identified through the Parish Design Statement</p>
Objective 7: Protect and enhance the district's historic, environmental and cultural assets					✓✓	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The plan makes reference to both the Green Belt and the Cotswold AONB.</p> <p>Policies RE 2 and 3 seek to protect and enhance their existing ancient hedgerows and trees within the parish.</p>
Objective 8: Encourage and protect habitats and biodiversity (taking account of climate change)					✓✓	<p>Yes</p> <p>Policies RE 2 and 3 seek to protect and enhance their existing ancient hedgerows and trees within the parish.</p> <p>The plan seeks to protect European sites for bats and other species under biodiversity.</p>

Objective 9: Reduce land, water, air, light, noise pollution				✓✓	<p>Yes</p> <p>Policies CC 1 to 3 all support improvement of the environment.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan transport and movement section has the intention of promoting green modes of transport such as cycling and walking thereby reducing the effect of pollution created by vehicles.</p>
Objective 10: Increase resilience to climate change including flood risk				✓✓	<p>Yes</p> <p>Policies CC 1 to 3 all support improvement of the environment.</p>