

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Sandleheath Neighbourhood Plan

**Environmental Report to accompany Regulation 14 consultation on the
Neighbourhood Plan**

Sandleheath Parish Council

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Quality information

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Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Sandleheath Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as “the Sandleheath NP”).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the Sandleheath NP is a legal requirement.¹

The Sandleheath NP is being prepared by the Parish Council in the context of the adopted local development framework for New Forest District Council (NFDC) and the emerging Local Plan. Once ‘made’, the Sandleheath NP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications alongside the adopted local development framework for NFDC and emerging Local Plan.

This report is the Environmental Report for the Sandleheath NP. It is published alongside the ‘pre-submission’ version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).

Structure of the Environmental Report / Non-Technical Summary

SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

1. Assessment of reasonable alternatives
2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
— i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
3. What happens next?

Each of these questions is answered in turn within a discrete ‘part’ of the Environmental Report and summarised within this Non-Technical Summary (NTS). However, firstly there is a need to set the scene further by answering the questions ‘What is the Plan seeking to achieve?’ and ‘What’s the scope of the SEA?’

What is the Sandleheath NP seeking to achieve?

The Sandleheath NP has a clear vision, which is summarised as follows:

“A unique village whose individual identity and way of life is protected and enhanced by ensuring its future is both sustainable and community led and that development decisions are sympathetic to the local environment, maintaining its rural character, separation and distinctiveness.”

¹ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a ‘screening’ process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (‘the SEA Regulations’). The Sandleheath NP was subject to screening by NFDC in December 2024 and Scoping consultation in February-March 2025 sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

A total of six objectives have been identified to support the delivery of the vision, which are detailed in **Chapter 2** of the main body of the report.

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is summarised in a list of topics, objectives, and assessment questions, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological ‘framework’ for assessment. A summary framework is presented below, and a full framework which includes assessment questions is provided within the main Environmental Report (see **Table 3.2**).

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	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.
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, and protect and enhance water quality, using 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 active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

Plan-making / SEA up to this point

An important element of the SEA process involves assessing ‘reasonable alternatives’ in time to inform development of the draft proposals and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the draft proposals.

As such, **Part 1** of the Environmental Report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches to the allocation of land for housing, including alternative sites.

Specifically, **Part 1** of the report:

1. Presents an assessment of two options in Sandleheath against the SEA framework.
2. Explains reasons for establishing the preferred option, in light of the assessment.

Consideration of site options

To further support the development of a spatial strategy to facilitate the delivery of new homes in Sandleheath through the NP, the Steering Group has considered alternative locations for delivering housing in the neighbourhood area.

The Steering Group have identified **nine sites** from a local ‘Call for Sites’ (CfS) carried out in November-December 2024, as well as from NFDC’s recent CfS carried out in October-December 2024 for the emerging Local Plan. These sites – which are set out in **Table 5.1** in the main body of the report – have been assessed through a draft Site Assessment Report (SAR) prepared by the Parish Council in 2025.

In shortlisting the sites, several factors have been considered. The first is the findings of the draft SAR, particularly with respect to whether there are any significant constraints to development which would influence the suitability of the site for allocation through the Sandleheath NP.

Following the shortlisting process, which is detailed in **Chapter 6** of the main body of the report, only **three sites** were deemed ‘reasonable’ for the purposes of the SEA:

- **Site 2** – This site is identified as a potential local view in Policy SAN3 of the draft Sandleheath NP, across from the main road to the south. However, the site has potential to deliver an area of open space, potentially to include equipped play, subject to local needs assessment and new boundary planting. In this respect, the impact of development on this potential local view is likely to be minimised. Site 2 also has potential to deliver new parking provision for the village hall, as well as a new pedestrian crossing along Station Road to provide safe access to the village hall to the north. The site was ranked first in the community opinion survey; is located near the village hall; and has no other notable constraints.
- **Site 5** – This site is located within the land proposed to be included within Policy SAN 2 of the draft Sandleheath NP as part of the local gap and is identified as an area of ‘low capacity’ in NFDC’s Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016). However, unlike Site 1, this site is adjacent to the existing built-up area of Sandleheath to the west and is only lined by mature trees / hedgerows along its eastern boundary, which would likely be retained to maintain screening between Sandleheath and Fordingbridge. In addition, the site has potential to deliver an area of open space and a play area. The site was ranked second in the community opinion survey; is located near the village hall; and has no other notable constraints.
- **Site 8** – This site is not available for residential development. However, the landowner has confirmed that they will offer this site for community use to the parish council on a 100-year peppercorn rent as part of the development of Site 5. It is recognised that Site 8 is adjacent to the village hall and would therefore be the most suitable site for new parking provision. The site was ranked fifth out of eight sites in the community opinion survey and has no other notable constraints.

Recognising that the housing target of 85 homes is an indicative figure, the SEA has considered a range of growth options as reasonable alternatives for the Sandleheath NP, incorporating combinations of the shortlisted site options discussed above. The relative sustainability merits of the growth options have been discussed and presented within the appraisal findings below. The options are as follows:

- **Option 1 – growth to the south of Station Road** (Site 2) (45-60 homes)
- **Option 2 – growth to the north of Station Road** (Sites 5 and 8) (51 homes)
- **Option 3 – growth to the north and south of Station Road** (Sites 2, 5 and 8) (96-111 homes)

The above options reflect that both **Sites 2 and 8** could deliver new parking provision for the village hall, and that Site 8 will likely only come forward alongside Site 5. They also recognise that **Site 2** is the preferred site by the local community.

Appraisal of the reasonable alternatives

The table below provides a summary of the results of the site assessment. Full appraisal findings are presented in **Chapter 5** of the main body of the report.

SEA topic		Option 1 (Site 2)	Option 2 (Sites 5 and 8)	Option 3 (Sites 2, 5 and 8)
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effects?	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Yes – negative
	Rank	3	1	2
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	1	3	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effects?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
	Rank	3	2	1
Historic environment	Significant effects?	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effects?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	3
Landscape	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative
	Rank	=1	=1	3
Transportation	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	3	1	2

Development of the preferred approach

The group have provided the following reasoning as to why the preferred approach – which aligns with Option 3 appraised in the previous chapter – was chosen for allocation through the Sandleheath NP:

“The Steering Group accept that both land to the north and south of Main (Station) Road are likely to come forward for development. NFDC indicated that if the Sandleheath NP did not consider these sites then the Local Plan would consider their inclusion. Therefore, the group decided to keep both sites within the Sandleheath NP so they can legislate for it and use the NP to provide the policy levers to achieve the desired community benefits from each scheme.”

Assessment findings at this stage

Part 2 of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the draft version of the Sandleheath NP. Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the 'SEA framework' topic headings. The following conclusions are reached:

- **Significant positive effects** are concluded under the community wellbeing SEA topic. This is because the draft Sandleheath NP delivers new homes (including affordable housing); supports accessibility, the rural economy, and the delivery of an Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace; improves access to public open space; enhances the active travel network; and prioritises pedestrian safety.
- **Minor positive effects** are concluded under the biodiversity and geodiversity, historic environment, landscape, and transportation and movement SEA topics. With regard to biodiversity and geodiversity, this is because the policy framework has a strong focus on protecting and enhancing ecological networks, including via the identification of mitigation and enhancement measures for the proposed site allocations, and an emphasis on supporting the integrity of locally valued green infrastructure networks. With regard to the historic environment, this is because the policy framework seeks to protect locally important heritage assets and makes wider heritage considerations, particularly with regard to the design of future developments. With regard to landscape, this is because development is largely contained within the settlement boundary; there is a strong focus on preserving sense of place, identity, and local distinctiveness; and the policy framework discusses the various design factors which will need to be considered by proposals. With regard to transportation and movement, this is because the spatial strategy seeks to deliver a new car park to service the village hall. In addition, the policy framework seeks to improve active travel opportunities and public transport provision locally, which will likely reduce traffic and congestion.
- Broadly **neutral effects** are concluded under the climate change and flood risk and land, soil and water resources SEA topics. With regard to climate change and flood risk, this is because the policy framework suitably addresses areas at increased risk of surface water flooding in the site allocations. With regard to land, soil and water resources, this is because the loss of greenfield / BMV land is largely unavoidable if the draft Sandleheath NP is to meet its indicative housing requirement. In addition, the policy framework suitably addresses any adverse impacts future development may have on water quality locally.

Next steps

This Environmental Report accompanies the Sandleheath NP for Regulation 14 consultation.

Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Sandleheath NP Steering Group, and the Sandleheath NP and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Sandleheath NP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, NFDC, for subsequent Independent Examination.

Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Sandleheath NP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

Assuming that the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Sandleheath NP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by NFDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Sandleheath NP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the Sandleheath NP will become part of the Development Plan for NFDC, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Sandleheath Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as “the Sandleheath NP”).
- 1.2 The Sandleheath NP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted local development framework for New Forest District Council (NFDC) and the emerging Local Plan. Once ‘made’, the Sandleheath NP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications alongside the adopted local development framework for NFDC and emerging Local Plan.
- 1.3 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the Sandleheath NP is a legal requirement.²

SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transposed into national law EU Directive 2001/42/EC on SEA.
- 1.5 In line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that “identifies, describes and evaluates” the likely significant effects of implementing “the plan, and reasonable alternatives”.³ The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.6 More specifically, the report must answer the following three questions:
 1. Assessment of reasonable alternatives.
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage? – i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.7 This report is the Environmental Report for the Sandleheath NP. It is published alongside the ‘pre-submission’ version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).

² Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a ‘screening’ process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (‘the SEA Regulations’). The Sandleheath NP was subject to screening by NFDC in December 2024 and Scoping consultation in February-March 2025 sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

³ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

- 1.8 This report essentially answers questions 1, 2 and 3 above in turn, to provide the required information. Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.9 However, before answering question 1, two initial questions are answered to further set the scene; what is the plan seeking to achieve? And what is the scope of the SEA?

2. What is the Sandleheath NP seeking to achieve?

Introduction

- 2.1 This section considers the strategic planning policy context provided by the adopted local development framework for NFDC and the emerging Local Plan, before then presenting the vision and objectives of the Sandleheath NP. **Figure 2.1** below presents the neighbourhood area.

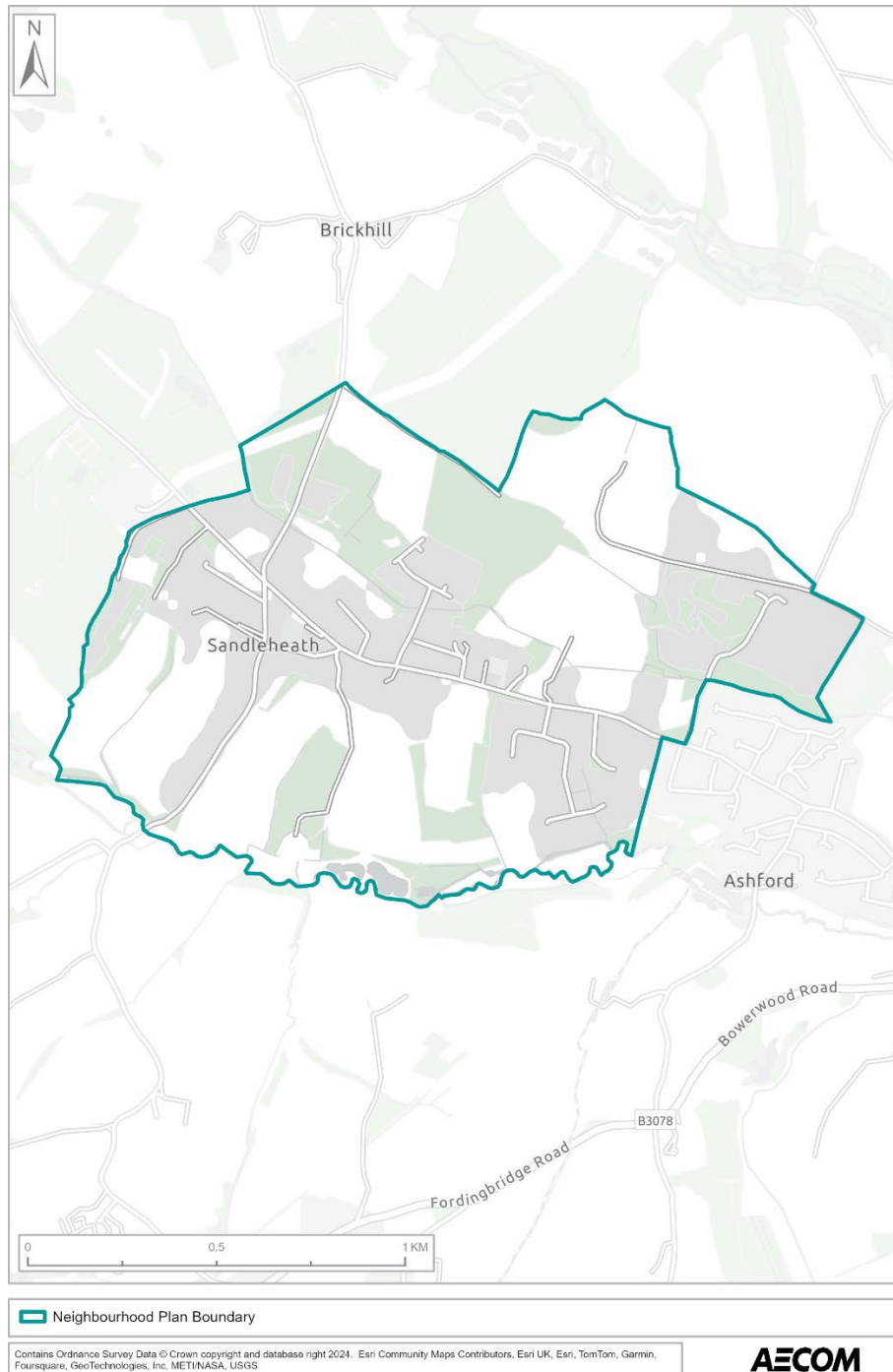


Figure 2.1 The Sandleheath neighbourhood area

Strategic planning policy context

Adopted Local Plan

- 2.2 The Sandleheath NP is being prepared in the context of the adopted local planning framework for NFDC.
- 2.3 This consists of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy for New Forest District (adopted in 2020); Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2009; and Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (adopted in 2014).
- 2.4 Policy STR4 (The Settlement Hierarchy) of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 classifies Sandleheath as a 'main village'. These villages provide a limited to moderate range of local services and in addition to strategic sites, where allocated, they are appropriate locations for small to medium-scale development that sustains their current village role in a manner that is cumulatively proportionate. This includes local service and employment uses.
- 2.5 Policy SAND1 of the Local Plan Part 2 allocates 'Land west of Scout Centre, south of Station Road' in Sandleheath for residential development specifically to provide for local housing needs for affordable and low-cost housing. This site has now been built out.

Emerging Local Plan

- 2.6 In February 2024, the Cabinet for NFDC approved the start of a full review of the adopted Local Plan. Consultation on the 'Issues and Scope' document (Regulation 18) was undertaken between 17th February and 4th April 2025. NFDC have not identified a housing number or any strategic site allocations for Sandleheath at this stage of plan making. However, the Steering Group are maintaining engagement with NFDC with regard to this, particularly in the context of the higher housing figures for the authority area calculated by the revised standard method (NPPF, December 2024).
- 2.7 In light of the above, using the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) methodology⁴, the Steering Group have calculated an indicative requirement for Sandleheath of 4.23 dwellings per annum over the plan period (2024-2044). This equates to an indicative minimum requirement of **85 homes** over the plan period. However, it is recognised that this figure is likely to be subject to local adjustment to take account of the position of the parish in the settlement hierarchy. The figure also does not take into account any recent completions / planning permissions to date, which will also need to be considered.

Sandleheath NP vision and objectives

- 2.8 The Sandleheath NP vision is as follows:

"A unique village whose individual identity and way of life is protected and enhanced by ensuring its future is both sustainable and community led and that development decisions are sympathetic to the local environment, maintaining its rural character, separation and distinctiveness."

⁴ UK Government (2015): [Housing and economic needs assessment](#)

2.9 The six objectives identified to support the delivery of the vision are:

1. Enhance existing community facilities, widen their accessibility and create new facilities where appropriate.
2. Prevent the loss of the local village shop.
3. Bring forward an appropriate level of new residential development to address local housing need.
4. Ensure new development responds to the discrete setting of the village and respects the current layout, form and style of existing buildings.
5. Protect and enhance the local environment for the enjoyment of both local residents and wildlife.
6. Promote opportunities for improved active travel for wellbeing and recreational purposes.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability topics and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives. Further information, including the policy review and baseline information that has supported the development of key sustainability issues and objectives, is presented in **Appendix B**.

Consultation

- 3.2 The SEA Regulations require that “when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.⁵ Hence, these authorities were consulted from 14th February to 21st March 2025. Comments were received from all three consultation bodies. Historic England and Natural England had no specific comments, but the comments received from the Environment Agency are detailed in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1 Scoping consultation responses

Consultation body	Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
Environment Agency, received 21 st March 2025	Please be aware that the Environment Agency will imminently (25 th March 2025) be publishing new flood zone data on the Flood map for planning as part of the new National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2). This data should be utilised for the Plan, alongside the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment etc. Further information about NaFRA2 can be found here – New national flood and coastal erosion risk information .	This has been considered through this report.
	We note that the ‘Land, soil and water resources’ section does not include much reference to groundwater, albeit this is implied by the reference to protecting waterbodies from pollution. We would recommend looking at data about the presence of groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) in the area and ensure there is reference in the Plan to protection of groundwater as relevant. This data can be accessed here – Source Protection Zones [Merged] .	There are no SPZs within the neighbourhood area. However, the protection of groundwater has been considered through this report.

⁵ These consultation bodies were selected “by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

Consultation body	Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
	<p>We have published 'Groundwater protection position statements' which are likely to be of use for reference. Please note section A3 is an important principle, which says:</p> <p>"The Environment Agency encourages everyone whose activities may impact upon groundwater to consider the groundwater protection hierarchy in their strategic plans when proposing new development or activities. The aim is to avoid potentially polluting activities being located in the most sensitive locations for groundwater. A sensitive location with respect to groundwater would depend on the hazard from the proposed activity and importance of the receptor."</p>	The protection of groundwater has been considered through this report.
	<p>We are pleased to see reference to the emerging Local Nature Recovery for Hampshire (Table 4.2). This will be a useful resource for information about valuable areas for wildlife, opportunities to improve nature in the future and local priorities for nature.</p>	Comment noted.
	<p>A further useful resource will be the South West River Basin Management Plan – River basin management plans: updated 2022. River basin management plans (RBMPs) set the legally binding locally specific environmental objectives that underpin water regulation (such as permitting) and planning activities.</p>	This RBMP has been considered through this report.

Key sustainability issues

3.3 The key sustainability issues for the neighbourhood area, identified through scoping, are presented below under each SEA topic.

Air quality

- There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within or in proximity to the neighbourhood area, and air quality is considered to be good across the New Forest. As such, growth through the Sandleheath NP is not anticipated to impact upon air quality within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area. Given this, the **air quality theme is SCOPED OUT of the SEA process for the Sandleheath NP.**

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- The neighbourhood area is located in a very biodiverse and geodiverse landscape, within proximity to a number of internationally and nationally designated sites. Development through the Sandleheath NP could impact upon biodiversity and geodiversity through changes to the existing network, for example through impacts to the nearby internationally designated sites associated with greater use (i.e., increased recreational activities). It will be important for the Sandleheath NP to focus development adjacent to existing development and settlement boundaries wherever possible, to reduce the potential to impact upon overall connectivity.
- Given the very biodiverse landscape surrounding Sandleheath, it is recommended that the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre is consulted, to ensure that important species within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area are identified and potential impacts are mitigated.
- There are sections of the neighbourhood area that intersect with Natural England's National Habitat Network. These areas could provide opportunities to bring forward enhancements to biodiversity, largely through improving connectivity. As such, the Sandleheath NP should take advantage of these opportunities wherever possible, to help deliver and potentially exceed the national 10% biodiversity net gain standard.

Climate change and flood risk

- The largest contributing sector to carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the New Forest district is the transport sector. The Sandleheath NP could help to reduce emissions linked to local transport through strengthening active travel routes and limiting the need to travel outside of the neighbourhood area to access a range of services and facilities. It is noted that domestic emissions could also be addressed through the Sandleheath NP by encouraging a reduction in emissions linked to households – for example, by including design principles that bolster energy efficiency.
- A climate and nature emergency has been declared by NFDC. It will be important for the Sandleheath NP to align with the published documents that work to reduce emissions in the district in order to ensure development takes appropriate mitigation and adaptation action.
- Fluvial flood risk is limited in the neighbourhood area, and whilst surface water flood risk is more prevalent, it could be easily avoided by new development. The potential for the Sandleheath NP to impact on flood risk is largely dependent on the location of development sites. It is recommended that the Sandleheath NP considers exploring opportunities to improve drainage in the area through the targeted application of new sustainable drainage systems, which will help reduce flood risk in higher risk areas (i.e., to the north of Station Road).

Community wellbeing

- The population of Sandleheath is ageing – and as such it will be important to ensure new housing development meets the needs of the elderly residents. However, it is also noted that there are a number of people aged 10 to 14. It will be important to ensure that community infrastructure meets the needs of this age

group, and new housing continues to encourage families into the neighbourhood area to ensure the vitality of the community is maintained and enhanced.

- Whilst Sandleheath generally experiences very low levels of deprivation according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it does experience increased deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services. This could reflect the relative lack of facilities within the neighbourhood area – leading to residents travelling outside the neighbourhood boundaries to access key services and community infrastructure, such as educational and healthcare facilities. It is anticipated that whilst new residential growth will contribute to improving access to housing within the neighbourhood area, it is likely to increase pressure on community infrastructure within the neighbourhood boundaries and within Fordingbridge to the east.

Historic environment

- The historic environment in the neighbourhood area is limited, with several locally important assets and two listed buildings contributing heritage constraints. However, it is anticipated that the historic environment of the neighbourhood area can be maintained through the Sandleheath NP by focusing development away from important features. This will reduce the potential for impacts to the setting and the significance of assets.

Land, soil and water resources

- Allocating land for development in the neighbourhood area is likely to result in the loss of productive agricultural land. To prevent this, development should be focused within and adjacent to settlement boundaries as far as possible – to reduce land take in potentially more productive areas.
- Development could impact upon mineral resources if growth were to come forward within proximity to the mineral consultation areas to the east and north-west of Sandleheath. This could result in the sterilisation / loss of important materials. However, it is anticipated that development through the Sandleheath NP can be steered away from these resources – which will reduce the potential for loss and the need to consult with Hampshire County Council.

Landscape

- The neighbourhood area is adjacent to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs National Landscape, and within proximity to the New Forest National Park. Both designations have associated management plans that include key issues, objectives and policies linked to their designated area. The Sandleheath NP can support these management plans by considering the impact development and neighbourhood plan policies could have on the designations, as well as reflecting the key policies and objectives where applicable.
- The Sandleheath NP should seek development that is considerate of the National Character Area and Local Character Area that overlap with the neighbourhood area. Understanding their unique characteristics and supporting considerate design will help to ensure development brought forward in the neighbourhood area is appropriate, is in keeping with the landscape context and allows for their continued distinction.

Transportation and movement

- There are limited opportunities to engage with sustainable transportation within the neighbourhood area. This is due to the lack of any bus service provision locally and the distance from the neighbourhood area to the nearest train station in Salisbury. However, the Sandleheath NP provides the opportunity to encourage active transportation engagement given the relatively good level of pavement along Station Road. However, it is noted that there is no pavement at the east end of the road as it approaches Ashford.
- The Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan Update should be referred to within the emerging Sandleheath NP, to ensure development does not lead to increased levels of dangerous driving in the neighbourhood area.

The SEA framework

- 3.4 The SEA scope is summarised in a list of topics, objectives, and assessment questions, known as the SEA framework. These draw on the key sustainability issues identified through scoping. **Table 3.2** below presents the SEA framework as agreed in February 2025, and updated following comments received from the statutory consultees.

Table 3.2 SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance internationally and nationally designated sites, including supporting the maintenance and/ or improvement of their condition, and support habitats and species that are important to the integrity of these sites? • Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species? • 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 of, and understanding of 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid vulnerable development in areas of elevated flood risk? • Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel? • Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking,

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
	potential effects of climate change.	<p>cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area? • Sustainably manage water runoff, and reduce runoff where possible? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
		and character of the neighbourhood area?
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible? • Identify and avoid the development of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land? • Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste? • Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development? • Protect waterbodies from pollution? • Avoid negative impacts on the mineral safeguarding area and associated consultation zone? • Avoid negative impacts to the wastewater treatment facility and associated consultation zone?
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the objectives and policies highlighted in the associated management plans for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs National Landscape, and the New Forest National Park? • 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 landscape setting, including trees and hedgerows?
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the objectives within the Hampshire County Council Local Transport Plan, to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes? • Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?

SEA topic	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?• Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change?• Improve road safety and reduce pollution from vehicles?

Part 1: Assessment of reasonable alternatives

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the Sandleheath NP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives through the SEA process.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Sandleheath NP, namely the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites.

Why focus on sites?

- 4.3 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:
- Sandleheath NP objectives, particularly housing objectives to provide sufficient and appropriate high-quality housing to meet local needs.
 - Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
 - The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Sandleheath NP. National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

Structure of this part of the report

- 4.4 This part of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 5 and Chapter 6** – discuss the options appraised as reasonable alternatives, and the findings of the appraisal of these options.
 - **Chapter 7** – explains reasons for selecting the preferred option, in light of the appraisal findings and wider evidence base for the Sandleheath NP.

5. Establishing reasonable alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 This chapter sets out how the options assessed as reasonable alternatives through the SEA process have been established and then presents the assessment findings.

Strategic parameters

Adopted Local Plan

- 5.2 As discussed in **Section 2.1**, the Sandleheath NP is being prepared in the context of the adopted local planning framework for NFDC.
- 5.3 This consists of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy for New Forest District (adopted July 2020); Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2009; and Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (adopted April 2014).
- 5.4 Policy STR4 (The Settlement Hierarchy) of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 classifies Sandleheath as a 'main village'. These villages provide a limited to moderate range of local services and in addition to strategic sites, where allocated, they are appropriate locations for small to medium-scale development that sustains their current village role in a manner that is cumulatively proportionate. This includes local service and employment uses.
- 5.5 Policy SAND1 of the Local Plan Part 2 allocates 'Land west of Scout Centre, south of Station Road' in Sandleheath for residential development, specifically to provide for local housing needs for affordable and low-cost housing. This site has now been built out.

Emerging Local Plan

- 5.6 In February 2024, the Cabinet for NFDC approved the start of a full review of the adopted Local Plan. Consultation on the 'Issues and Scope' document (Regulation 18) was undertaken between 17th February and 4th April 2025. NFDC have not identified a housing number or any strategic site allocations for Sandleheath at this stage of plan making. However, the Steering Group are maintaining engagement with NFDC with regard to this, particularly in the context of the higher housing figures for the authority area calculated by the revised standard method (NPPF, December 2024).
- 5.7 In light of the above, using the PPG methodology⁶, the Steering Group have calculated an indicative requirement for Sandleheath of 4.23 dwellings per annum over the plan period (2024-2044). This equates to an indicative minimum requirement of **85 homes** over the plan period. However, it is recognised that this figure is likely to be subject to local adjustment to take account of the position of the parish in the settlement hierarchy. The figure also does not take into account any recent completions / planning permissions to date, which will also need to be taken into account.

⁶ UK Government (2015): [Housing and economic needs assessment](#)

Consideration of site options

- 5.8 To further support the development of a spatial strategy to facilitate the delivery of new homes in Sandleheath through the NP, the Steering Group has considered alternative locations for delivering housing in the neighbourhood area.
- 5.9 The Steering Group have identified **nine sites** from a local 'Call for Sites' (CfS) carried out in November-December 2024, as well as from NFDC's recent CfS carried out in October-December 2024 for the emerging Local Plan. These sites – which are set out in **Table 5.1** below – have been assessed through a draft Site Assessment Report (SAR)⁷ prepared by the Parish Council in 2025.

Table 5.1 Sites identified through the local CfS and NFDC's recent CfS

Site reference	Site name	Area (ha)	Capacity
Site 1	174 Station Road	0.86	12-19
Site 2	Land south of Village Hall, Station Road	3.3	45-60
Site 3	Hill Top, Main Road	0.28	5-6
Site 4	The Old Stores, Scats Lane	1.15	5-11
Site 5	Land north of Station Road	3.34	51
Site 6	Richmond, Main Road	1.4	7
Site 7	Hatches, Sandle Copse	2.9*	44-58
Site 8	Land east of Kerry Gardens	0.46	0
Site 9	Old Court Wood	0.45	1

* Area not including woodland (total with woodland 5.6ha)

- 5.10 In shortlisting the above sites, several factors have been considered. The first is the findings of the draft SAR, particularly with respect to whether there are any significant constraints to development which would influence the suitability of the site for allocation through the Sandleheath NP.
- 5.11 The second is the community opinion survey, where residents were asked to rank the sites in order of preference. **Site 9** was not considered at this stage as it only has capacity to deliver one home, and therefore it was discounted through the draft SAR. The SEA discounts this site for the same reason.
- 5.12 The third is the Steering Group's preference for development close to the village hall as to provide new parking provision to accommodate continued development of the village hall to deliver a wider range of community uses.
- 5.13 The fourth is the adopted and emerging local planning framework for NFDC. Specifically, Policy STR5 (Meeting Our Housing Need) of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 states that the housing provision will comprise – in addition to strategic site allocations, site allocations of ten or more homes, and existing commitments – *“an estimated 924 homes on small developments of 1-9 homes reflecting past trends”*. In relation to this, the plan sets out that *“the balance of*

⁷ Sandleheath Parish Council (2025): [Draft Site Assessment Report](#)

the required housing supply is expected to come forward on small unidentified ('windfall') sites of under ten homes, plus rural exception sites".

- 5.14 In light of the above, **Site 1** is considered less suitable for development as it is located in an area considered under emerging Policy SAN2 of the draft Sandleheath NP as part of the local gap and is identified as an area of 'low capacity'⁸ in NFDC's Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016).⁹ Notably, all of the site's boundaries are lined with mature trees / hedgerow, which provide a degree of screening between Sandleheath and Fordingbridge, further contributing to the local gap. In this respect, development of Site 1 would ultimately contribute to the coalescence of Sandleheath and Fordingbridge. In addition, access would have to come from Station Road, which in this location is on a hill and a bend, therefore raising safety concerns. Due to this, the site has been discounted for the purposes of the SEA.
- 5.15 **Sites 3 and 4** – which are located in the western extent of the village, away from the village hall, are also considered less suitable for development. These sites will also likely come forward as windfall development, whilst Site 3 also falls below the threshold for affordable housing. Whilst Site 4 has capacity for up to 11 homes, exceeding the threshold for windfall development (1-9 homes), it is noted that this figure was provided by the developer and therefore is only indicative at this stage. In addition, Site 4 contains a substantial area of woodland, and therefore the capacity of this site is likely to be at the lower / medium part of this range if the woodland were to be retained. The draft SAR highlights that access would be difficult to achieve for Site 4, as Scats Lane is considered narrow and potentially unsuitable for additional traffic. It is also noted that Site 4 was ranked eighth – or last – in the community opinion survey. Due to this, Sites 3 and 4 sites are not considered reasonable and are therefore discounted for the purposes of the SEA.
- 5.16 **Sites 6 and 7** are also considered less suitable for development. The southern extent of Site 6 is at medium-high risk of surface water flooding. Similarly, the southern extent of Site 7 is at medium-high risk of both surface water and fluvial flooding. Access would also be difficult to achieve for both sites as they are both set back from Station Road; therefore access would need to bypass existing development. In addition, Site 7 contains an extensive area of woodland, whilst Site 6 also contains an area of woodland. The landowner of Site 6 previously submitted a planning application for three homes (23/10712), which was withdrawn but is understood to be resubmitted shortly. In this respect, development may come forward on this site ahead of the emerging Sandleheath NP. Finally, Sites 6 and 7 were ranked sixth and seventh respectively, out of eight sites, in the community opinion survey. Considering the aforementioned points, Sites 6 and 7 are not considered reasonable and are therefore discounted for the purposes of the SEA.
- 5.17 Notably, as the Sandleheath NP is likely going to allocate sites for the delivery of over 50 homes, an Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG) will need to be delivered alongside development. Whilst **Site 7** is not considered

⁸ The landscape character area or landscape type could not accommodate new development without a significant and adverse impact on landscape character. Small-scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement, and the character and sensitivity of the adjacent landscape.

⁹ NFDC (2016): [Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study](#)

suitable for residential development, due to the constraints outlined above, it is recognised that this site could be suitable for designation as an ANRG.

5.18 This leaves the following three sites available for assessment through the SEA:

- **Site 2** – This site is identified as a potential local view in Policy SAN3 of the draft Sandleheath NP, across from the main road to the south. However, the site has potential to deliver an area of open space, potentially to include equipped play, subject to local needs assessment and new boundary planting. In this respect, the impact of development on this potential local view is likely to be minimised. Site 2 also has potential to deliver new parking provision for the village hall, as well as a new pedestrian crossing along Station Road to provide safe access to the village hall to the north. The site was ranked first in the community opinion survey; is located near the village hall; and has no other notable constraints.
- **Site 5** – This site is located within the land proposed to be included within Policy SAN 2 of the draft Sandleheath NP as part of the local gap and is identified as an area of ‘low capacity’ in NFDC’s Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016). However, unlike Site 1, this site is adjacent to the existing built-up area of Sandleheath to the west and is only lined by mature trees / hedgerows along its eastern boundary, which would likely be retained to maintain screening between Sandleheath and Fordingbridge. In addition, the site has potential to deliver an area of open space and a play area. The site was ranked second in the community opinion survey; is located near the village hall; and has no other notable constraints.
- **Site 8** – This site is not available for residential development. However, the landowner has confirmed that they will offer this site for community use to the parish council on a 100-year peppercorn rent as part of the development of Site 5. It is recognised that Site 8 is adjacent to the village hall and would therefore be the most suitable site for new parking provision. The site was ranked fifth out of eight sites in the community opinion survey and has no other notable constraints.

5.19 Recognising that the housing target of 85 homes is an indicative figure, the SEA has considered a range of growth options as reasonable alternatives for the Sandleheath NP, incorporating combinations of the shortlisted site options discussed above. The relative sustainability merits of the growth options have been discussed and presented within the appraisal findings below. The options, which are shown in **Figure 5.1** overleaf, are as follows:

- **Option 1 – growth to the south of Station Road** (Site 2) (45-60 homes).
- **Option 2 – growth to the north of Station Road** (Sites 5 and 8) (51 homes).
- **Option 3 – growth to the north and south of Station Road** (Sites 2, 5 and 8) (96-111 homes).

5.20 The above options reflect that both **Sites 2 and 8** could deliver new parking provision for the village hall, and that Site 8 will likely only come forward alongside Site 5. They also recognise that **Site 2** is the preferred site by the local community.

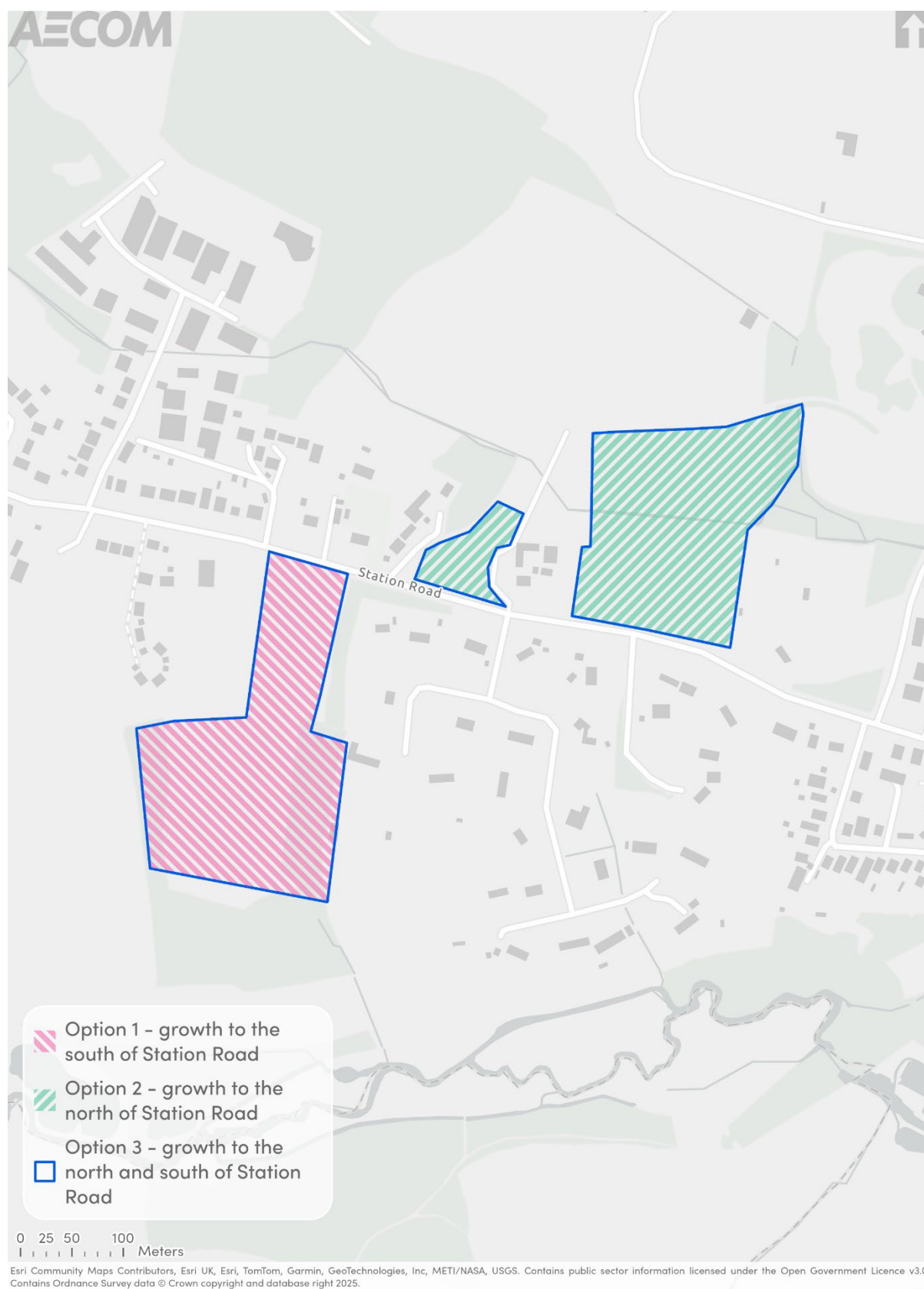


Figure 5.1 Reasonable alternatives for the Sandleheath NP

Appraisal of reasonable alternatives

5.21 An appraisal of the reasonable alternatives, as set out above, is presented below under each of the SEA topics. **Table 5.2** overleaf provides a summary of the findings.

Methodology

- 5.22 For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through SEA scoping as a methodological framework. Green is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst red is used to indicate significant negative effects. Where appropriate, uncertainty will also be noted.
- 5.23 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions in order to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.
- 5.24 Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the most favourably.
- 5.25 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency and reversibility of effects.

Summary of findings

Table 5.2 Summary of findings

SEA topic		Option 1 (Site 2)	Option 2 (Sites 5 and 8)	Option 3 (Sites 2, 5 and 8)
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effects?	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Yes – negative
	Rank	3	1	2
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	1	3	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effects?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
	Rank	3	2	1
Historic environment	Significant effects?	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effects?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	3
Landscape	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative
	Rank	=1	=1	3
Transportation	Significant effects?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	3	1	2

Biodiversity and geodiversity

5.26 All three options are within 2km of the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is located to the east of the neighbourhood area in Fordingbridge. The three sites which comprise the options are all within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) which affects rural residential development of 50 or more units outside existing settlements / urban areas. In this respect, development through any of the options would require consultation with Natural England.

5.27 With respect to Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats, the northeastern corner of Site 5 (**Options 2 and 3**) contains deciduous woodland. Meanwhile, Site 2 (**Options 1 and 3**) almost entirely overlaps with an area of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, and deciduous woodland is also present within the site, running along its far eastern and western boundaries. In this respect, **Option 1** is the most constrained as it directs all growth to Site 2, and as such would likely necessitate the clearing of priority habitats for development.

- 5.28 In terms of the National Habitat Network, all three sites overlap with Network Enhancement Zone 2¹⁰. The northeastern extent of Site 5 (**Options 2 and 3**) also overlaps with the Network Expansion Zone¹¹, whilst Site 2 (**Options 1 and 3**) contains Primary Habitat – the priority habitat which is the focus of the individual habitat network – along its far eastern and western boundaries. In this respect, all three options provide opportunities for enhancing the local ecological network through delivering biodiversity net gain (BNG). However, it is recognised that on-site BNG is perhaps less readily achievable for Site 2 given that most of the site encompasses areas of BAP priority habitat, which would inevitably be impacted by development.
- 5.29 The entire neighbourhood area overlaps with a priority area for Countryside Stewardship (CS) measures addressing Curlew and Lapwing habitat issues. Hence, development through any of the options should consider how it will impact these species' habitats, including opportunities to enhance them.
- 5.30 Overall, **Option 1** is considered to perform least favourably from a biodiversity and geodiversity standpoint, and **significant negative effects** are considered likely at this stage due to the inevitable loss of BAP priority habitats through this option. **Option 3** is ranked second and is also considered likely to lead to **significant negative effects** as it will also likely lead to the loss of BAP priority habitats within Site 2. Whilst **Option 2** is considered the least constrained option in this respect, **uncertainty** is noted as development through this option still has the potential to disturb the BAP priority habitat within Site 5. However, it is recognised that given this habitat is only contained in the northeastern corner of the site, it is likely that this will be retained if the site were developed.

Climate change and flood risk

- 5.31 It is assumed that all three options will lead to an increase in overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the neighbourhood area due to an increase in the local population. Two of the largest contributors to emissions will likely be the construction and operation of new homes, as well as an uptake in private vehicle usage. Whilst all three options are accessible to local services and facilities, these are limited and do not include a general practice (GP) or primary or secondary school. However, this increase in overall GHG emissions is unlikely to be significant given the scale of development proposed. Notably, strategic-scale interventions, such as decentralised energy schemes, are unlikely at the scale of development proposed through all three options.
- 5.32 None of the sites are connected to the existing public rights of way (PRoW) network. However, it is assumed that development through any of the options would include pedestrian access to the existing network of footpaths, which would encourage the use of active travel to access local services and facilities.
- 5.33 None of the options contain sites at risk of fluvial flooding. However, a strip of land at medium-high risk of surface water flooding runs east to west through the centre of Site 5 (**Options 2 and 3**). This strip of land at risk of flooding also runs adjacent to the northern boundary of Site 8 (**Options 2 and 3**). Whilst narrower, there are two thin strips of land at medium-high risk of surface water flooding which run north to south through Site 2 (**Options 1 and 3**), parallel with

¹⁰ Land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is less likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.

¹¹ Land beyond the Network Enhancement Zones with potential for expanding, linking / joining networks across the landscape i.e. conditions such as soils are potentially suitable for habitat creation for the specific habitat.

its far eastern and western boundaries. In this respect, development through any of the options will need to consider how surface water flooding risk can be mitigated through measures such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

- 5.34 Overall, given that climate change is a global issue, and the scale of growth being considered in the neighbourhood area is low, no significant effects are considered likely with regard to climate change mitigation. However, given all three options contain site(s) at medium-high risk of surface water flooding, a degree of **uncertainty** is noted at this stage. However, it is recognised that these areas of increased surface water flood risk as relatively isolated and therefore will likely be avoided if the site(s) were to be developed. In addition, measures such as SuDS could be utilised to help mitigate flood risk.
- 5.35 **Option 2** is ranked least favourably as it only directs growth to Sites 5 and 8, the latter of which contains the largest area at medium-high risk of surface water flooding. **Option 3** is ranked second as it directs growth to Site 2 in addition to Sites 5 and 8, which could facilitate lower density development on Site 5. **Option 1** is considered the least constrained as it only directs growth to Site 2; whilst this site also contains areas at medium-high risk of surface water flooding, these areas are more isolated and therefore more likely to be avoided.

Community wellbeing

- 5.36 All three options meet the identified housing need figure for the neighbourhood area and perform well in this respect. However, **Option 3** has the potential to deliver the highest level of growth (and the highest level of affordable housing) and therefore performs most favourably in this respect. This is followed by **Option 2**, which has the potential to deliver the second highest level of growth, then **Option 1**, the lowest growth option.
- 5.37 All three options contain sites adjacent to the existing built-up area of Sandleheath, and in this respect they all perform well in terms of integrating with the existing community. Similarly, all three options are well located to the village hall and village store, thereby performing well from an accessibility standpoint. However, it is noted that future residents – as with existing residents – will likely make trips outside of the neighbourhood area to access wider services and facilities, as well as educational and employment opportunities, due to the limited offer within Sandleheath.
- 5.38 With a focus on employment, according to data from the 2021 census¹² approximately a third of the working population of the neighbourhood area work mainly from home (33.2%), which is broadly in line with the national average (31.5%). Of those who do not mainly work from home, the majority (55%) travel to work by driving a car or van. This is unsurprising given Sandleheath has limited employment opportunities and public transport options. In this respect, growth through any of the options is likely to result in an increase in traffic and congestion on local roads, which could adversely impact human health through increased pollutants associated with vehicular emissions.
- 5.39 With regard to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (2019), the neighbourhood area overlaps with the New Forest 001C Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA), which is amongst the 10% least deprived neighbourhood

¹² It is recognised that Census 2021 data may not accurately reflect current working patterns as Covid-19 would have likely impacted data collected during this time; it is likely that fewer people work mainly from home in 2025. However, it is also recognised that hybrid working has become more common post-pandemic, and this working pattern is likely to remain.

in the country overall. However, when looking at the 'barriers to housing and services' domain in isolation, this LSOA is amongst the 30% most deprived. In this respect, all three options perform well by contributing new homes to the neighbourhood area, including affordable housing.

- 5.40 As noted at the start of this chapter, as the Sandleheath NP is likely going to allocate sites for the delivery of over 50 homes, an ANRG will need to be delivered alongside development. In this respect, all three options perform well by proposing to deliver over 50 homes. However, it is noted that the lower range for **Option 1** is 45 homes, which is below this threshold. More broadly, all three options performs well due to their proximity to the open countryside, thereby encouraging active lifestyles and supporting recreational opportunities and general health and wellbeing, contributing to a high quality of life.
- 5.41 Overall, all three options are anticipated to lead to **significant positive effects** given they meet the indicative housing requirement for the neighbourhood area and will deliver affordable housing. This is particularly significant given Sandleheath overlaps with an LSOA amongst the 30% most deprived in the country with regard to the 'barriers to housing and services' domain of the IMD. The options are ranking according to the quantum of growth they propose to deliver, with **Option 3** (highest growth) ranked first and **Option 1** (lowest growth) ranked third. However, it is recognised that higher growth, whilst favourable from a housing perspective, may put pressure on existing services and facilities if not accompanied by supporting infrastructure. Therefore, wider benefits to community wellbeing will also be influenced by the extent to which proposals contribute to local projects or initiatives which seek to improve and enhance service provision and local amenities.

Historic environment

- 5.42 None of the options are constrained from an historic environment standpoint. Whilst Site 5 (**Options 2 and 3**) is approximately 250 southwest of grade II listed building 'Sandle Manor School', this designated heritage asset is well screened by vegetation between the site and heritage asset.
- 5.43 With regard to locally important heritage assets, a detailed search of the Heritage Gateway only produces seven results for Sandleheath parish. None of these are within or near the sites considered through the three options.
- 5.44 Overall, given that the neighbourhood area is relatively unconstrained from a historic environment standpoint, **no significant effects** are anticipated across all three options. Nevertheless, it is noted that development through any of the options should consider the historic character of the settlement and wider area, particularly at the design stage of development.

Land, soil and water resources

- 5.45 All three options comprise greenfield land, and therefore development through any of the options would lead to the loss of greenfield land. However, it is recognised that brownfield sites are limited in the neighbourhood area, and in this respect the loss of greenfield land is largely unavoidable if the Sandleheath NP is to facilitate additional housing growth during the plan period.
- 5.46 According to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (2013), Site 5 (**Options 2 and 3**) overlaps with a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) for superficial sand

and gravel. Therefore, if development were to come forward through either of these options, consultation with Hampshire County Council would be required. However, it is noted that given the size of the MCA relative to the sites, growth through any of the options is unlikely to significantly impact the integrity of, or lead to the sterilisation of any, mineral resources.

- 5.47 All three options contain sites underlain by grade 3 ('good to moderate') agricultural land. Post 1988 Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) data is available for Site 8, and the southern half of Site 5, and this confirms that this is grade 3a (i.e. better quality) agricultural land. In this respect, development through **Options 2 and 3**, and potentially **Option 1**, would lead to the loss of 'best and most versatile' (BMV) agricultural land.
- 5.48 The neighbourhood area falls within the Avon Hampshire Operational Catchment, but there are no waterbodies in proximity to the sites contained within the options. In this respect, growth through any of the options is unlikely to impact local waterbodies through diffuse pollution arising from runoff.
- 5.49 Overall, all three options are considered likely to lead to minor negative effects due to the loss of greenfield / BMV land. However, **no significant effects** are anticipated recognising that brownfield sites are limited in the neighbourhood area, and there are no suitable alternative sites underlain by lower grade agricultural land. The options are ranking according to the quantum of growth they propose to deliver, and the amount of land take required to deliver the growth, with **Option 1** (lowest growth) ranked first and **Option 3** (highest growth) ranked third.

Landscape

- 5.50 All three options are within 1.5km of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs National Landscape, which is located to the west of the neighbourhood area. However, given the distance (and existing development) between the sites and the National Landscape, significant effects are unlikely to arise. Nevertheless, it is noted that the National Landscape is at a higher elevation than Sandleheath, and therefore development in the settlement has the potential to impact views from the National Landscape to the east.
- 5.51 All three options contain sites adjacent to the existing built-up area of Sandleheath, and in this respect they all perform well by limiting growth in the open countryside. However, it is noted that Site 2 (**Options 1 and 3**) would result in the largest extension into the open countryside, with potential to impact locally important views from Station Road to the south. In addition, Site 5 (**Options 2 and 3**) would reduce the current size of the 'green gap' between Sandleheath and Fordingbridge to the east. This could set a precedence for further development in this location, which could eventually result in the coalesce of the two settlements.
- 5.52 None of the sites contain Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). However, Site 2 (**Options 1 and 3**) and Site 8 (**Options 2 and 3**) are in proximity to TPO(s). In addition, Site 2 contains a notable area of deciduous woodland, which if lost through development could adversely impact landscape and villagescape character in this location. Site 5 (**Options 2 and 3**) also contains an area of deciduous woodland; however, this does not cover such a large proportion of the site and is therefore more likely to be retained through development.

5.53 Overall, all three options have the potential to lead to minor negative effects by extending the built-up area of Sandleheath into the open countryside and/or reducing the green gap between Sandleheath and Ashford. **Option 3** is considered to perform least favourably as it directs growth to both Sites 2 and 5, which are considered the most constrained from a landscape standpoint. Due to this, **significant negative effects** are considered likely under this option. **Options 1 and 2** are ranked equally – whilst they have different constraints associated with them, they are constrained to a similar degree. **Uncertainty** is noted under Options 1 and 2 as there is potential for these constraint to be mitigated. Notably, the impact of development on landscape and villagescape character is largely dependent on the design and layout of development, which is not known at this stage.

Transportation and movement

- 5.54 There are no railway stations within proximity to the neighbourhood area and bus services are limited to the Damory 49 service, which only runs on a Tuesday morning and stops in Ashford, Fordingbridge, Whitsbury, and Salisbury. In this respect, growth through any of the options will inevitably result in an increase in trips by private vehicle outside of the neighbourhood area to access wider services and facilities, as well as educational and employment opportunities. Station Road provides access to Ashford and Fordingbridge to the east, the latter of which most residents will likely frequent.
- 5.55 According to data from the 2021 census¹³, approximately a third of the working population of the neighbourhood area work mainly from home (33.2%), which is broadly in line with the national average (31.5%). Of those who do not mainly work from home, the majority (55%) travel to work by driving a car or van. This is unsurprising given Sandleheath has limited employment opportunities and public transport options. In this respect, growth through any of the options is likely to result in an increase in traffic and congestion on local roads.
- 5.56 In terms of access, it is assumed that access for all three sites considered through the options would be provided from Station Road. In this respect, **Option 3** – by proposing the highest level of growth – has the greatest potential to increase traffic and congestion along this road.
- 5.57 None of the sites are connected to the existing public rights of way (PRoW) network. However, it is assumed that development through any of the options would include pedestrian access to the existing network of footpaths.
- 5.58 All three options have the potential to provide new parking provision for the village hall, and they all perform well in this respect. Site 8 (**Options 2 and 3**) is located adjacent to the village hall and is therefore arguably the most suitable for this purpose. Site 2 (**Options 1 and 3**) could also provide new parking provision, as well as a new pedestrian crossing along Station Road to provide safe access to the village hall to the north. This is considered to be more feasible under **Option 3**, as under **Option 1** the site would need to accommodate both housing and new parking provision.
- 5.59 Overall, all three options have the potential to lead to minor negative effects given the poor public transport provision in Sandleheath, which will likely result

¹³ It is recognised that Census 2021 data may not accurately reflect current working patterns as Covid-19 would have likely impacted data collected during this time; it is likely that fewer people work mainly from home in 2025. However, it is also recognised that hybrid working has become more common post-pandemic, and this working pattern is likely to remain.

in an increase in trips by private vehicle outside of the neighbourhood area, and a consequent increase in traffic and congestion on local roads. Despite this, no significant effects are anticipated as development must take place if the neighbourhood area is to deliver housing growth. Nevertheless, a degree of **uncertainty** is noted across all three options with regard to whether new parking provision will be provided. This also reflects that the impacts of development will be dependent on the design of new development and the extent to which growth helps to facilitate active and sustainable travel locally.

- 5.60 **Option 1** is considered to perform least favourably as it may not have the capacity to deliver new parking provision if it is also to meet the indicative housing requirement and retain priority habitat areas within the site. Conversely, **Option 2** is considered to perform most favourably as it would likely deliver new parking provision at Site 8, which is arguably the most suitable for this purpose. Whilst **Option 3** could also deliver new parking provision at Site 8, by delivering the highest level of growth it is more likely to worsen traffic and congestion on local roads if appropriate infrastructure upgrades are not delivered alongside development.

6. Preferred approach for the Sandleheath NP

- 6.1 The group have provided the following reasoning as to why the preferred approach – which aligns with Option 3 appraised in the previous chapter – was chosen for allocation through the Sandleheath NP:

“The Steering Group accept that both land to the north and south of Main (Station) Road are likely to come forward for development. NFDC indicated that if the Sandleheath NP did not consider these sites then the Local Plan would consider their inclusion. Therefore, the group decided to keep both sites within the Sandleheath NP so they can legislate for it and use the NP to provide the policy levers to achieve the desired community benefits from each scheme.”

Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

7. Introduction (to Part 2)

Overview

7.1 The aim of this part of the Environmental Report is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current Regulation 14 ‘pre-submission’ version of the Sandleheath NP. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version of the Sandleheath NP under the seven SEA topic headings; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

Sandleheath NP policies

7.2 The policies within the Sandleheath NP are outlined in **Table 7.1** below.

Table 7.1 Sandleheath NP policies

Policy reference	Policy name
SAN1	Spatial Strategy
SAN2	Local Gap
SAN3	Design Guidance and Codes
SAN4	Housing Mix, Type and Tenure
SAN5	Site Allocations
SAN6	Local Business and Employment
SAN7	Green Infrastructure
SAN8	Connecting the Village
SAN9	Dark Skies
SAN10	Mitigating Effects of European Sites
SAN11	Local Heritage Assets

Methodology

7.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates ‘likely significant effects’ on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.2**) as a methodological framework.

7.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a ‘no plan’ scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g., in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable

assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.

- 7.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Sandleheath NP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

8. Assessment of the plan

Introduction

- 8.1 The assessment is presented below under seven topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework (see **Section 3**). A final section (**Chapter 9**) then presents overall conclusions.

Plan contents, aims and objectives

- 8.2 The spatial strategy of the draft Sandleheath NP is set out under policy SAN1, which defines a settlement boundary for Sandleheath. This policy sets a preference for development proposals within the defined settlement boundary; however, development proposals outside of the settlement boundary will be supported where they are appropriate to a countryside setting, or where they support the rural economy, as defined within the policy.
- 8.3 Policy SAN5 allocates 'land to the north of Main Road' for a high-quality mixed use, residential led development of up to 51 dwellings. The policy separates the land into two parcels; parcel A (which largely falls within the settlement boundary as defined in SAN1) is allocated for the housing scheme, and parcel B will be designated as F2 Community Use land. This will be secured through a legal agreement on a 100-year lease at a peppercorn rent to the Parish Council for the purpose of the creation of a car park to serve the village hall, as well as the provision of public open space for community use.
- 8.4 Policy SAN5 also allocates 'land to the south of Main Road' for high-quality residential development of up to 57 dwellings. Similarly to the above, the policy separates the land into two parcels; parcel A (which largely falls within the settlement boundary as defined in SAN1) is allocated for up to 23 dwellings, a car park to serve the ANRG and the village hall (for up to 30 cars), two areas of public open space, and a community facility. Meanwhile, parcel B (which also largely falls within the settlement boundary) is allocated for up to 34 dwellings surrounded on three sides by an area of ANRG (minimum 1ha).
- 8.5 The sites allocated through policy SAN5, which are in line with **Option 3** assessed through Part 1 (assessment of reasonable alternatives) of this report, have a combined capacity of up to 108 homes. Therefore, the draft Sandleheath NP exceeds the indicative minimum requirement of 85 homes.
- 8.6 Housing mix, type and tenure are outlined under policy SAN4, which sets an expectation for residential development to "provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes to address the nature of local needs and contribute to the objective of creating a mixed and balanced community". To achieve this objective, the policy outlines that provision should be made for smaller dwellings (1-3 bedroom); these should comprise 50% or more of the total in new residential development schemes of five or more dwellings. The tenure mix should also be suitable for those looking to rent/buy their first home, as well as downsizers.
- 8.7 The draft Sandleheath NP identifies four sites in established employment use under Policy SAN6; these are of economic value to the parish and fundamental to providing local employment opportunities and include: 1) Sandleheath Village Shop; 2) Sandleheath Industrial Estate; 3) Forres Sandle Manor School & FSM

- Nursery; and 4) Rockbourne Road (DT Stone). The policy supports proposals for the intensification or diversification of employment uses on these sites.
- 8.8 Biodiversity and geodiversity – with a focus on European sites – are considered through Policy SAN10, which seeks to mitigate the effects of development on the River Avon SAC. In particular, the policy addresses the need for developments to demonstrate nutrient neutrality for phosphorus.
- 8.9 Landscape is considered through policies SAN2 (Local Gap), SAN7 (Green Infrastructure), SAN9 (Dark Skies), and SAN10 (Mitigating Effects of European Sites), the latter of which covers the New Forest National Park. These policies are also relevant to biodiversity and geodiversity and community wellbeing.
- 8.10 The historic environment is addressed under policy SAN11, which identifies eight buildings and structures as Local Heritage Assets. These are: 1) Sandleheath Uniting Church; 2) Sandleheath Village Hall; 3) The Ladies Walk Gates, near Village Hall; 4) Coronation Terrace; 5) Oakdene; 6) Victoria House; 7) Waltham House; and 8) Cabin Cottage.
- 8.11 Transportation and movement are considered through policy SAN8 (Connecting the Village), which is also relevant to community wellbeing. This policy identifies the existing Active Travel Network, as well as opportunities to improve it, and the Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan.
- 8.12 More broadly, and with a focus on design, Policy SAN3 requires development proposals to be well-designed and respond positively to the character of the local area. To achieve this, the policy sets out that development proposals must have full regard to the design strategy and coding as set out in the Sandleheath Design Guidance and Codes for the Sandleheath NP.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 8.13 All of the sites allocated through SAN5 are within 2km of the River Avon SAC and SSSI. They are also all within an SSSI IRZ which affects rural residential development of 50 or more units outside existing settlements / urban areas. In this respect, development through the Sandleheath NP would require consultation with Natural England. In relation to this, Policy SAN10 outlines that all developments will need to demonstrate nutrient neutrality for phosphorus in relation to the River Avon SAC. This should be done using Natural England's River Avon nutrient budget calculator and securing the delivery of offsetting measures as necessary to achieve neutrality.
- 8.14 With respect to BAP priority habitats, parcel A of 'land to the north of Main Road' contains a small area of deciduous woodland. However, given the size of this habitat relative to the site, there is potential for it to be retained as part of the development. Meanwhile, 'land to the south of Main Road' almost entirely overlaps with an area of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh; it also contains an area of deciduous woodland. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the area of deciduous woodland, and much of the area of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, falls within parcel B of the site, which is partially allocated for an area of ANRG (minimum 1ha) according to policy SAN5. This will likely ensure that a proportion of these habitats is maintained as part of the development.
- 8.15 In addition to the above, policy SAN5 requires development proposals to undertake an ecological survey to the satisfaction of the local planning

authority. This is in addition an arboricultural survey to BS5837¹⁴ of all trees within / adjoining the site which are likely to be affected by development. The policy requires all mature trees and hedgerows within the site to be retained, unless their removal is essential and the minimum required to facilitate an efficient development layout. The existing tree belt along the site boundaries will also need to be retained and reinforced. It is considered that the proposed mitigation measures will help ensure that development does not lead to significant adverse effects on the habitats present within the site allocations.

- 8.16 With respect to the policy framework within the draft Sandleheath NP, policy SAN7 also requires new development to retain trees and hedgerows and secure opportunities to create connected habitats suitable for species adaptation to climate change. The policy sets out that where trees and hedgerows are unavoidably lost, indigenous species must be planted as replacements. Moreover, the policy outlines that all proposals for development in the neighbourhood area must ensure that any potential impacts upon rare and threatened species are fully assessed, and that, where necessary, mitigation measures are incorporated to safeguard and protect those species.
- 8.17 The draft Sandleheath NP designates the Sandleheath Green Infrastructure Network through policy SAN7. The policy requires new development to demonstrate how it protects and enhances the features of the Network under current legislation, national and local policy, and secure a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity in line with the statutory framework for BNG. In doing so, this policy performs well by supporting the retention and enhancement of habitats and ecological networks across the neighbourhood area. Specifically, delivering enhancements to the Green Infrastructure Network (including via net gains) will help to ensure that targeted measures are implemented to support locally identified areas of ecological significance and value across Sandleheath.
- 8.18 More broadly, Policy SAN9, which outlines that all development proposals should be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution, will have indirect positive effects for biodiversity by minimising disturbance to species.
- 8.19 Overall, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to **minor positive effects** under the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA topic. Whilst the site allocations are within proximity to the River Avon SAC and SSSI, and contain areas of BAP priority habitat, the policy framework appropriately addresses and mitigates these constraints. Specifically, it has a strong focus on protecting and enhancing ecological networks, including via the identification of mitigation and enhancement measures for the proposed site allocations, and an emphasis on supporting the integrity of locally valued green infrastructure networks.

Climate change and flood risk

- 8.20 It is assumed that development through the draft Sandleheath NP will lead to an increase in overall GHG emissions within the neighbourhood area due to an increase in the local population. This is partially due to an uptake in private vehicle usage, as the village has a limited range of services and facilities and existing bus services are limited to a single service once a week.
- 8.21 In response to the above, the draft Sandleheath NP identifies the existing Active Travel Network, as well as opportunities to improve the Network, under

¹⁴ Arbtech (2025): [Understanding the BS5837 Tree Survey](#)

Policy SAN8. The purpose of this is to prioritise active travel in Sandleheath and encourage the use of public transport. The policy also states that “all major residential developments must incorporate or fund measures that improve local bus services, including but not limited to, route extensions, frequency enhancements, flexible bus services (Demand Responsive Transport) or community transport services, in support of the Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (2024- 2036)”. In this respect, the draft Sandleheath NP encourages the use of active travel and public transport to access wider services and facilities, which will have positive implications for climate change mitigation by reducing emissions associated with private vehicle usage.

- 8.22 In addition to the above, Policy SAN5 requires development proposals to maximise opportunities to produce and use renewable energy on-site. This will also have positive implications for climate change mitigation.
- 8.23 With regard to climate change adaptation, none of the sites allocated through SAN5 are at risk of fluvial flooding. However, a strip of land at medium-high risk of surface water flooding runs east to west through the centre of parcel A of ‘land to the north of Main Road’. This strip of land at risk of flooding also runs adjacent to the northern boundary of parcel B, but it is noted that part of this parcel will comprise public open space which could mitigate this to some degree. Whilst narrower, there are two thin strips of land at medium-high risk of surface water flooding which run north to south through ‘land to the south of Main Road’, parallel with its far eastern and western boundaries. However, these areas fall within parcel B of the site, which is partially allocated for an area of ANRG (minimum 1ha) according to policy SAN5. In addition, policy SAN5 requires development proposals to prepare a sustainable drainage strategy for approval by the local planning authority to address the effects of surface water run-off within and adjoining the land.
- 8.24 More broadly, and with a focus on biodiversity, policy SAN7 requires new development to retain trees and hedgerows and secure opportunities to create connected habitats suitable for species adaptation to climate change. In addition, green infrastructure enhancements, which are supported through policy SAN7, will increase vegetation cover and opportunities to absorb pollutants, whilst also providing natural shading during period of hot weather, and a natural flood defence for people and wildlife during periods of wet weather (e.g., by intercepting rainfall and reducing runoff).
- 8.25 Overall, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** under the climate change and flood risk SEA topic. Whilst growth through the draft Sandleheath NP will inevitably lead to an uptake in private vehicle usage, and the site allocations contain areas at increased risk of surface water flooding, the policy framework suitably addresses these issues.

Community wellbeing

- 8.26 The sites allocated through SAN5 have a combined capacity of up to 108 homes and therefore exceed the indicative minimum requirement of 85 homes. Policy SAN5 states that the housing scheme elements of the sites “shall comprise a tenure mix to include 40% affordable housing, with an emphasis on smaller houses as defined in SAN4 suitable as starter homes and for downsizers”. In this respect, the draft Sandleheath NP performs well by delivering new homes tailored to the identified needs of the local population.

This is particularly important given that when looking at the 'barriers to housing and services' domain of the IMD (2019) in isolation, the LSOA which the neighbourhood area falls within (New Forest 001C) is amongst the 30% most deprived.

- 8.27 As noted earlier in this report, if over 50 homes are delivered in the neighbourhood area an ANRG will need to be delivered alongside development. As such, policy SAN5 sets out that parcel B of 'land to the south of Main Road' will partially comprise an area of ANGR (minimum 1ha). The ANRG will serve as a recreational space to wrap around the southern end of the site, creating dog walking and exercise opportunities. In this respect, the ANRG will have positive implications for health and wellbeing and quality of life.
- 8.28 In addition to the above, parcel A of 'land to the south of Main Road' will include two areas of public open space and a community facility, whilst parcel B of 'land to the north of Main Road' will also include public open space. This will further support the health and wellbeing and quality of life of residents.
- 8.29 Notably, the housing scheme element of both sites is within the settlement boundary as defined in SAN1, and therefore the draft Sandleheath NP delivers new homes in accessible locations. Accessibility is further supported through policy SAN4, which states that "all development proposals should be delivered as accessible and adaptable dwellings in accordance with Building Regulations M4(2) or M4(3), unless evidence can be provided to demonstrate that such provision would be impracticable or render the scheme unviable".
- 8.30 With a focus on the local economy, Policy SAN1 highlights that development proposals outside of the settlement boundary will be supported where they support the rural economy. This includes through a) encouraging agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises and farm diversification projects; b) keeping existing employment sites and encouraging improvements and redevelopments; c) supporting local business development through the conversion of existing buildings; and d) supporting the local delivery of services.
- 8.31 In addition to the above, policy SAN6 sets out that proposals for change of use of land or premises which result in the loss of local employment (which will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that the employment use will be re-provided elsewhere within the parish) must demonstrate that the loss of the facility would not harm the social cohesion or self-sufficiency of the village. In this respect, the draft Sandleheath NP performs well by both supporting the local economy and mitigating adverse impacts on community wellbeing.
- 8.32 The Sandleheath Green Infrastructure Network is designated through policy SAN7. The policy states that "development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network are required to have full regard to maintaining and improving the functionality of the Network in the design of their layouts, landscaping schemes and public open space provisions". In this respect, the draft Sandleheath NP supports health and wellbeing and quality of life by improving access to public open space. This will help to promote active lifestyles for both local residents and those visiting the neighbourhood area.
- 8.33 The draft Sandleheath NP further supports health and wellbeing and quality of life by identifying the existing Active Travel Network, as well as opportunities to improve the Network, under Policy SAN8. This is for the purpose of prioritising active travel in Sandleheath and encouraging the use of public transport. The

policy states that “the Active Travel Network identifies opportunities where public realm improvements are required to enhance the walking and cycling environment, improve residential amenity and highway safety”.

- 8.34 Policy SAN8 also identifies the Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan (TMP), which prioritises pedestrian safety. The policy states that “the Sandleheath TMP identifies opportunities where public realm improvements are required to improve highway safety”. In addition, “development which lies within or adjacent to areas identified within the TMP must avoid measures which would adversely affect the ability to implement these proposals”. This will also bring benefits to the health and wellbeing and quality of life of residents.
- 8.35 Overall, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to **significant positive effects** under the community wellbeing SEA topic. This is because it delivers new homes (including affordable housing); supports accessibility, the rural economy, and the delivery of an ANRG; improves access to public open space; enhances the active travel network; and prioritises pedestrian safety.

Historic environment

- 8.36 None of the sites allocated through SAN5 are constrained from an historic environment standpoint. Whilst parcel A of ‘land to the north of Main Road’ is approximately 250 southwest of grade II listed building ‘Sandle Manor School’, this designated heritage asset is well screened by vegetation between the site and heritage asset. With regard to locally important heritage assets, a detailed search of the Heritage Gateway only produces seven results for Sandleheath parish. None of these are within or near the site allocations.
- 8.37 Nonetheless, the policy framework within the draft Sandleheath NP has a strong focus on protecting the heritage significance of the neighbourhood area. Key policies in this respect include SAN11, SAN3, and SAN6. The first policy, SAN11, identifies eight buildings and structures as Local Heritage Assets. The policy sets out that the effect of a development proposal on the significance of an identified Local Heritage Asset should be taken into account in determining planning applications. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect Local Heritage Assets, a balanced judgement will be required, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 8.38 With a focus on design, policy SAN3 states that “the design, scale and appearance of development proposals must be relevant to their location and must preserve the significance of local heritage assets, locally important views and respect the rural character and discrete setting of the parish”. This will help preserve the historic character of the village and performs well in this respect.
- 8.39 More broadly, Policy SAN6 supports proposals for the intensification or diversification of employment uses on the identified employment sites, provided they protect the setting of any heritage assets in close proximity to the site.
- 8.40 Overall, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to **minor positive effects** under the historic environment SEA topic. Whilst the neighbourhood area is relatively unconstrained from a heritage standpoint, the draft Sandleheath NP still seeks to protect locally important heritage assets. In addition, heritage considerations are considered throughout the policy framework, particularly with regard to the design of future developments.

Land, soil and water resources

- 8.41 All of the sites allocated through SAN5 comprise greenfield land, and therefore development through the draft Sandleheath NP would lead to the loss of greenfield land. However, it is recognised that brownfield sites are limited in the neighbourhood area, and in this respect the loss of greenfield land is largely unavoidable if the Sandleheath NP is to facilitate additional housing growth during the plan period. Additionally, growth is being proposed within the settlement boundary, which will indirectly protect the integrity of natural resources across the neighbourhood area's rural environments. Hence, adverse effects in this respect are not considered significant.
- 8.42 According to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (2013), parcel A of 'land to the north of Main Road' overlaps with an MCA for superficial sand and gravel. Therefore, consultation with Hampshire County Council will be required. However, it is noted that given the size of the MCA relative to the site, growth through the draft Sandleheath NP is unlikely to significantly impact the integrity of, or lead to the sterilisation of any, mineral resources.
- 8.43 All of the sites allocated through SAN5 are underlain by grade 3 ('good to moderate') agricultural land. Post 1988 ALC data is available for parcel B of 'land to the north of Main Road', and the southern half of parcel A, and this confirms that this is grade 3a (i.e. better quality) agricultural land. In this respect, development through the draft Sandleheath NP will lead to the loss of BMV land. However, it is noted that the entire neighbourhood area is underlain by grade 3 agricultural land. As such, development at any location within the neighbourhood area has the potential to lead to the loss of BMV land.
- 8.44 The neighbourhood area falls within the Avon Hampshire Operational Catchment, but there are no waterbodies in proximity to the sites allocated through SAN5. In this respect, growth through the draft Sandleheath NP is unlikely to impact local waterbodies through diffuse pollution arising from runoff. Nevertheless, policy SAN5 requires development proposals to prepare a sustainable drainage strategy for approval by the local planning authority to address the effects of surface water run-off within and adjoining the land.
- 8.45 Overall, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** under the land, soil and water resources SEA topic. Whilst the spatial strategy will lead to the loss of greenfield / BMV land, this is largely unavoidable if the draft Sandleheath NP is to meet its indicative housing requirement. In addition, the policy framework suitably addresses any adverse impacts future development may have on water quality locally.

Landscape

- 8.46 All of the sites allocated through policy SAN5 are within 1.5km of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs National Landscape, which is located to the west of the neighbourhood area. They are also all within 2.7km of the New Forest National Park, which is located to the east of the neighbourhood area. However, given the distance (and existing development) between the sites and these landscape designations, significant effects are unlikely to arise from the scale of growth which is likely to come forward during the plan period.

- 8.47 However, the policy framework within the draft Sandleheath NP aims to protect the special qualities and significance of the nationally designated landscapes in proximity to the neighbourhood area. For example, policy SAN1 states that “proposals for development outside the National Landscape of Cranborne Chase and the New Forest National Park that are sufficiently prominent (in terms of its siting or scale) to have an impact on the special qualities of either of these areas will need to demonstrate that it would not adversely affect their setting”. In addition, policy SAN10 outlines that all net new housing in the neighbourhood area may need to make a financial contribution to the delivery of the New Forest Recreation Management Strategy, or appropriate mitigation measures as outlined in the New Forest National Park Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme.
- 8.48 The housing scheme element of both sites is within the settlement boundary as defined in SAN1. Therefore, the spatial strategy performs well by limiting growth in the open countryside. However, it is noted that ‘land to the south of Main Road’ would result in the largest extension into the open countryside, with potential to impact locally important views from Station Road to the south. However, policy SAN5 outlines that the housing scheme in parcel B will be surrounded on three sides by an area of ANRG, which will ensure a strong defensible boundary between the site and the open countryside beyond. In addition, parcel A of ‘land to the north of Main Road’ would reduce the current size of the ‘green gap’ between Sandleheath and Fordingbridge to the east. This could set a precedence for further development in this location, which could eventually result in the coalesce of the two settlements.
- 8.49 With a view to safeguarding local distinctiveness and sense of place, a settlement gap between Sandleheath and Fordingbridge is defined through policy SAN2 for the purpose of preventing the coalescence of the settlements. The policy does not permit development in this area which would result in the joining of the two settlements, or where it would erode their separate identities. With regards to the sites allocated through SAN5, policy SAN2 states that “any development...located within the defined gap will need to respect the gap in its design and layout and strengthen the gap through landscaping and visual impact, demonstrating that they have regard to the New Forest District Council’s Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016 or subsequent edition)”. In this respect, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to cumulative positive effects given the links to wider plans / strategies.
- 8.50 In addition to the above, policy SAN5 requires development proposals to deliver a layout and landscape scheme to deliver defensible boundaries between the sites and the adjacent countryside to create a definitive settlement edge. For ‘land to the north of Main Road’, this includes a landscape buffer to strengthen the Local Gap as defined in SAN2. Notably, development at ‘land to the south of Main Road’ “should respond to the locally important view from the village hall to the south across the site, as set out in the design code analysis”. The policy also sets out that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is undertaken to the satisfaction of the local planning authority.
- 8.51 Whilst none of the sites allocated through SAN5 contain TPOs, ‘land to the south of Main Road’ and parcel B of ‘land to the north of Main Road’ are in proximity to TPO(s). In addition, ‘land to the south of Main Road’ contains a notable area of deciduous woodland, which if lost through development could adversely impact landscape and villagescape character in this location.

However, it is noted that this area falls within parcel B of the site, which is partially allocated for an area of ANRG (minimum 1ha) according to policy SAN5. Parcel A of 'land to the north of Main Road' also contains an area of deciduous woodland. However, this does not cover such a large proportion of the site and is therefore more likely to be retained through development.

- 8.52 In response to this, policy SAN5 requires development proposals to undertake an arboricultural survey to BS5837 of all trees within / adjoining the site which are likely to be affected by development. The policy requires all mature trees and hedgerows within the site to be retained, unless their removal is essential and the minimum required to facilitate an efficient development layout. The existing tree belt along the site boundaries will also need to be retained and reinforced. Policy SAN7 also requires new development to retain trees and hedgerows. The policy sets out that where trees and hedgerows are unavoidably lost, indigenous species must be planted as replacements.
- 8.53 The draft Sandleheath NP further supports landscape character by designating the Sandleheath Green Infrastructure Network through policy SAN7. The policy states that "proposals for new development requiring the provision of on-site open space will be supported where the design of open space is integral to the scheme and is effectively connected to any adjoining green infrastructure assets". In addition, "development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network are required to have full regard to maintaining and improving the functionality of the Network in the design of their layouts, landscaping schemes and public open space provisions". The policy sets out that where appropriate, developers will be expected to enter into a planning obligation to secure satisfactory arrangements for the long-term management of this open space.
- 8.54 Also of relevance to landscape character, policy SAN9 outlines that all development proposals should be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution. Specifically, streetlighting should be avoided unless a significant safety issue has been identified, and safety and security lighting schemes should be kept to a minimum necessary to achieve its purpose. Moreover, proposals for all development will be expected to demonstrate how they intend to prevent light pollution, and the design of new buildings should consider the need to minimise light projected from windows and doors.
- 8.55 More broadly, policy SAN6 supports proposals for the intensification or diversification of employment uses on the identified employment sites, provided they protect the setting of any landscape designations in close proximity to the site. This is important given the rural nature of the economy in Sandleheath.
- 8.56 Overall, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to **minor positive effects** under the landscape SEA topic. It is recognised that the spatial strategy will ultimately result in an extension of the built-up area of the village into the open countryside. Nevertheless, development is largely contained within the settlement boundary; there is a strong focus on preserving sense of place, identity, and local distinctiveness; and the policy framework discusses the various design factors which will need to be considered by proposals.

Transportation and movement

- 8.57 There are no railway stations within proximity to the neighbourhood area and bus services are limited to a single service once a week. In this respect, growth

through the draft Sandleheath NP will inevitably result in an increase in trips by private vehicle outside of the neighbourhood area to access wider services and facilities, as well as educational and employment opportunities. Station Road provides access to Fordingbridge to the east, which most residents will likely frequent.

- 8.58 In light of the above, the draft Sandleheath NP focuses on strengthening sustainable trips locally by identifying the existing Active Travel Network, as well as opportunities to improve the Network, under Policy SAN8. This is for the purpose of prioritising active travel in Sandleheath and encouraging the use of public transport. The policy states that “development proposals on land that lies within or adjacent to the Network should avoid harm, should sustain and where practicable enhance the connectivity of the Network by virtue of their layout, means of access and landscape treatment, including the creation of safe and suitable links to the existing footways, footpaths and walking routes”.
- 8.59 Policy SAN8 also sets out that “new developments should encourage the provision of conveniently located bus shelters, with seating and step-free access at boarding points”. In addition, “all major residential developments must incorporate or fund measures that improve local bus services, including but not limited to, route extensions, frequency enhancements, flexible bus services (Demand Responsive Transport) or community transport services, in support of the Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (2024- 2036)”. The draft Sandleheath NP performs well in this respect.
- 8.60 With regard to the sites allocated through policy SAN5, parcel B of ‘land to the north of Main Road’ will be designated as F2 Community Use land for the purpose of the creation of a car park to serve the village hall. In addition, parcel A of ‘land to the south of Main Road’ is partially allocated for a car park to serve the ANRG and the village hall (for up to 30 cars). In this respect, the draft Sandleheath NP performs well by reducing the need for residents to park on local roads, which will likely reduce traffic and congestion.
- 8.61 With regard to site access, policy SAN5 states that, for both site allocations, “the scheme is accessed from Station Road using a single access point in a suitable location to the satisfaction of the Highways Authority”. In addition, the policy sets out that the layout of both sites should provide a pedestrian link from the development to provide a safe connection into the existing footway on the northern side of Station Road to enable pedestrian access to village amenities. For ‘land to the south of Main Road’, this should also include a pedestrian crossing point to enable pedestrians to access the village hall.
- 8.62 With regard to ‘land to the north of Main Road’, this access should create “a distinctive “gateway” to the village to mark a clear limit of settlement to re-enforce the Parish Council Villagisation Scheme”. In addition, “bus stop infrastructure should also be installed to allow for public transport opportunities into Fordingbridge and beyond” and “the layout shall provide pedestrian links from the development to Lady’s Walk to facilitate the creation of a circular walking route for the village as identified in SAN8.”
- 8.63 With regard to ‘land to the south of Main Road’, “the layout shall provide a pedestrian link from the development site to create a new footpath south across the stream to connect into the existing restricted byway to Alderholt Mill to

facilitate the creation of a circular walking route for the village as identified in SAN8”.

- 8.64 More broadly, Policy SAN6 supports proposals for the intensification or diversification of employment uses on the identified employment sites, provided they are “supported by a transport assessment in accordance with the development plan to manage satisfactorily its traffic effects on the road network and to encourage and enable improvements to sustainable transport methods”.
- 8.65 Overall, the draft Sandleheath NP is considered likely to lead to **minor positive effects** under the transportation and movement SEA topic. Whilst growth through the draft NP will ultimately lead to any uptake in private vehicle usage, reflecting the relatively rural nature of the neighbourhood area, the spatial strategy seeks to deliver a new car park to service the village hall. In addition, the policy framework seeks to improve active travel opportunities and public transport provision locally, which will likely reduce traffic and congestion.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 9.1 **Significant positive effects** are concluded under the community wellbeing SEA topic. This is because the draft Sandleheath NP delivers new homes (including affordable housing); supports accessibility, the rural economy, and the delivery of an ANRG; improves access to public open space; enhances the active travel network; and prioritises pedestrian safety.
- 9.2 **Minor positive effects** are concluded under the biodiversity and geodiversity, historic environment, landscape, and transportation and movement SEA topics. With regard to biodiversity and geodiversity, this is because the policy framework has a strong focus on protecting and enhancing ecological networks, including via the identification of mitigation and enhancement measures for the proposed site allocations, and an emphasis on supporting the integrity of locally valued green infrastructure networks. With regard to the historic environment, this is because the policy framework seeks to protect locally important heritage assets and makes wider heritage considerations, particularly with regard to the design of future developments. With regard to landscape, this is because development is largely contained within the settlement boundary; there is a strong focus on preserving sense of place, identity, and local distinctiveness; and the policy framework discusses the various design factors which will need to be considered by proposals. With regard to transportation and movement, this is because the spatial strategy seeks to deliver a new car park to service the village hall. In addition, the policy framework seeks to improve active travel opportunities and public transport provision locally, which will likely reduce traffic and congestion.
- 9.3 Broadly **neutral effects** are concluded under the climate change and flood risk and land, soil and water resources SEA topics. With regard to climate change and flood risk, this is because the policy framework suitably addresses areas at increased risk of surface water flooding in the site allocations. With regard to land, soil and water resources, this is because the loss of greenfield / BMV land is largely unavoidable if the draft Sandleheath NP is to meet its indicative housing requirement. In addition, the policy framework suitably addresses any adverse impacts future development may have on water quality locally.

Recommendations

- 9.4 No specific recommendations are made with regard to the draft Sandleheath NP at this time.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

10. Next steps

Overview

10.1 This part of the report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

Plan finalisation

10.2 This Environmental Report accompanies the Sandleheath NP for Regulation 14 consultation.

10.3 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Sandleheath NP Steering Group, and the Sandleheath NP and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Sandleheath NP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, NFDC, for subsequent Independent Examination.

10.4 Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Sandleheath NP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

10.5 Assuming that the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Sandleheath NP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by NFDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Sandleheath NP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the Sandleheath NP will become part of the Development Plan for NFDC, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

10.6 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Sandleheath NP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

10.7 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Sandleheath NP will be undertaken by NFDC as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the Sandleheath NP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by NFDC.

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1**, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report. However, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table AA.1** overleaf links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table AA.2** explains this interpretation. Finally, **Table AA.3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have / will be met.

Table A.1 Questions answered by this report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

	Questions answered		As per regulations, the report must include...
Introduction	What's the plan seeking to achieve?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
	What's the SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level. ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan, including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
		What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. ▪ The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be affected. ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan, including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
		What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
Part 1	What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach). ▪ The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.
Part 2	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan. ▪ The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the 'pre-submission' version of the plan.
Part 3	What happens next?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A description of the monitoring measures envisaged.

Table A.2 Interpretation of the regulations

<u>Schedule 2</u>	<u>Interpretation of Schedule 2</u>		
<i>The report must include...</i>	<i>The report must include...</i>		
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>	
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>	i.e. answer – <i>What's the scope of the SA?</i>
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level		
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>	
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected		
(f) the likely significant effects 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;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance		
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>	
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]	
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.		
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]	
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan		
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]	

Table A.3 ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements are met

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
A) The Environmental Report must present certain information	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	<p>These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report.</p> <p>The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Appendix B alongside key issues and scoping consultation responses.</p>
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	<p>The SEA framework is presented within Appendix B. Appendix B also presents key issues identified through scoping.</p> <p>With regards to explaining “<i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i>”, Chapter 4 explains how alternatives have been considered.</p>
6. The likely significant effects 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. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	<p>Chapter 4 explains how alternatives have been considered.</p> <p>Chapter 5 presents an assessment of the ‘pre-submission’ version of the plan.</p> <p>With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 5 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions.</p>
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned when finalising the plan, and specific recommendations are made in Chapter 5.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Chapter 4 explains how alternatives have been considered.
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 6 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.
B) The Report must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan	
Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)	This Environmental Report is being published alongside the draft version of the HHNP for Regulation 14 consultation.
C) The report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan	
The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.	This Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, have been taken into account whilst finalising the plan.

Appendix B Scoping information

Introduction

This appendix provides a summary of the information that was presented in the Scoping Report. The Scoping Report, which can be accessed on the Sandleheath NP website, provides the information in full, alongside a number of figures.

Air quality

Key statistics

- There are no declared AQMAs within the New Forest district, nor is the neighbourhood area in proximity to any AQMAs declared by other local authorities.

Commentary

In the district, the main pollutants of concern are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂). These are largely linked to traffic emissions and industrial emissions in the area. The latest Annual Status Report (ASR), published in 2024, demonstrates that pollutant levels are low in the New Forest district.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Key statistics

- Whilst there are no internationally designated sites for biodiversity or geodiversity within the neighbourhood boundaries, the Avon Valley Ramsar is approximately 2.5km to the south-east. Additionally, the New Forest Ramsar is approximately 2.9km to the north-east, and the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar is approximately 3km to the south.
- Further to the three Ramsar sites within proximity to the neighbourhood area, there are also three SACs: the River Avon is approximately 1.3km to the south-east, the New Forest is approximately 2.9km to the north-east, and the Dorset Heaths is approximately 3km to the south. Additionally, there are three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within proximity – the New Forest, the Avon Valley, and the Dorset Heathlands. These designations overlap with the associated Ramsar sites.
- There are no SSSIs within the neighbourhood area, but there are a number within proximity of the neighbourhood boundary. This includes the Avon River System approximately 1.3km to the east, the New Forest approximately 2.9km to the north-east, the Avon Valley (Bickton to Christchurch) approximately 2.9km to the south-east, Cranborne Common approximately 3km to the south, and Breamore Marsh approximately 3.2km to the north-east.
- BAP Priority Habitat coverage in the neighbourhood area comprises of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, good quality semi-improved grassland, ancient woodland, and deciduous woodland.

Commentary

Given the proximity of the neighbourhood area to SSSIs, it intersects with SSSI IRZs. However, the level of development proposed to come forward through the Sandleheath NP does not exceed thresholds for the likely types of development (residential, rural residential, and rural non-residential). As such, focused consultation with Natural England is unlikely to be required.

BAP Priority Habitat is dispersed across the neighbourhood area. There are large concentrations of the coastal and floodplain grazing marsh within the southern half of the neighbourhood area, especially along the southern neighbourhood boundary – which is adjacent to the River Allen. The northern half of the neighbourhood area has a large amount of deciduous woodland, which connects to woodland outside of the neighbourhood area. The location of these important habitats demonstrates the importance of the neighbourhood area to biodiversity connectivity in the local area.

In terms of Natural England's National Habitat Network, the majority of the neighbourhood area is within Network Enhancement Zone 2 – which is considered to be suitable for the creation of new habitats, but not to the same extent as Network Enhancement Zone 1 is. Additionally, the north-eastern extent of the neighbourhood area overlaps with areas of Network Expansion Zone. This is considered to have the potential to support the expansion and linking / joining of networks across the landscape.

Climate change and flood risk

Key statistics

- The largest contributor to CO₂ emissions in the New Forest district is transport, totalling 401 kilotons of CO₂ equivalent (kt CO₂ e) in 2022. This accounts for approximately 44% of total emissions in the district in 2022. The second most polluting sector is the domestic sector, followed by the industry sector.
- Overall CO₂ emissions have decreased from approximately 3,083.3 kt CO₂ e in 2005 to 909.1 kt CO₂ e in 2022.
- The land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector has continuously worked to offset CO₂ emissions in the New Forest district. In total, approximately 2,138.5 kt CO₂ e have been offset between 2005 and 2022.
- In 2022, average per capita emissions in the New Forest were 5.2 tons CO₂ equivalent (t CO₂ e) per person per year. This is broadly the same as the average for England (5.1 t CO₂ e), and higher than the average for Hampshire (4.5 t CO₂ e) and the South East region (4.4 t CO₂ e).

Commentary

NFDC declared a climate and nature emergency on 11th October 2021. The associated SPD is part of a wider set of actions undertaken by NFDC to help reduce emissions in the local authority area.

Fluvial flood risk is present in the neighbourhood area, concentrated in the southern extent along the neighbourhood boundary. It is a medium to high risk and is associated with the presence of the River Allen. However, the built footprint of the neighbourhood area is not impacted by this flood risk given development is focused away from the watercourse.

Surface water flood risk is present across the neighbourhood area – with greater risk along the southern neighbourhood boundary and another area north of Station Road. Whilst much of the surface water flood risk is likely associated with the drainage pattern of waterbodies into the River Allen and the River Avon, areas at risk along Station Road and Alderholt Road could be associated with road surfaces and their associated run off.

Community wellbeing

Key statistics

- According to the 2021 Census, there are approximately 610 people living in the Sandleheath neighbourhood area. The largest age group is the aged 70- to 74-year-olds (11.1% of the population), followed by the aged 10- to 14-year-olds (9.8% of the population), and then the aged 55 to 59 and the 60- to 64-year-olds (both 9.1% of the population). This indicates that there is an ageing population within Sandleheath, but that it could also be a popular location for families.
- Overall, the majority of residents of the neighbourhood area report very good health (49.9% of the population) or good health (35.4% of the population). This demonstrates that in comparison to health for the New Forest district, the South East region, and England, Sandleheath residents lead healthier lives. This is further demonstrated by less residents in Sandleheath reporting bad health (1.7% of the population). Whilst slightly more people in Sandleheath report very bad health (1.3% of the population) in comparison to the New Forest district, the South East region, and England, it is not a substantial difference.
- 62.5% of the Sandleheath population own their home outright. This is a much larger proportion in comparison to the New Forest district (46.6%), the South East (34.3%) and England (32.5%). 27.9% of the Sandleheath population own their home with a mortgage, a loan, or through a shared ownership scheme. Social renting makes up 0.8% of the neighbourhood area, and private renting makes up 8.8%.

Commentary

The neighbourhood area is served by a range of community infrastructure. This includes the Sandleheath Village Store, the Sandleheath Village Hall, a number of small businesses, the Sandleheath Scout Hut and Camp, and allotments. Given the proximity of Fordingbridge to the east, it is likely that residents travel along Station Road to access further facilities, such as GP surgeries, dental practices, and educational facilities.

The IMD is an overall relative measure of deprivation and is the combination of several different domains: income; employment; education, skills and training; health deprivation and disability; crime; barriers to housing and services; and living environment. Lower super output areas (LSOAs) are designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardised geographies intended to be as consistent as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. Deprivation levels are typically examined at the LSOA level. In this respect, the Sandleheath neighbourhood area sits within the Newforest 001C LSOA. This LSOA covers the civil parish of Sandleheath and part of Fordingbridge; as such it is important to acknowledge that deprivation results also

reflect deprivation in the western extent of Fordingbridge and may not be an accurate representation of Sandleheath alone.

According to data from 2019, the New Forest 001C LSOA is one of the 10% least deprived neighbourhoods when considering overall deprivation. It is within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods for deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services.

Historic environment

Key statistics

- There are only two listed buildings within the neighbourhood area, both of which are Grade II listed. These are the Sandle Manor School and The Old Ship.
- None of the designated heritage assets within the neighbourhood area are on the Heritage at Risk 2024 register.

Commentary

Locally important, non-designated heritage assets are an integral part of the historic environment. The Hampshire Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates there are a number of records within the neighbourhood area. These are largely associated with Old Brickyard Road and the industrial estate.

Land, soil and water resources

Key statistics

- There is no overlap between the neighbourhood area and water designations – there are no overlapping nitrate vulnerable zones (NVS) or drinking water safeguarding zones.
- Sandleheath is within the Avon Hampshire Operational Catchment and overlaps with two separate waterbody catchments. These are Sweatfords Water in the northern half, and Ashford Water (Allen River) in the southern half.
- The neighbourhood area overlaps with two features under the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan: a superficial sand and gravel mineral consultation area in the eastern extent, and a brick clay mineral consultation area in the north-western extent.

Commentary

The provisional ALC dataset provided by Natural England indicates that the neighbourhood area is mostly underlain with Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural land, with an area of Grade 4 'Poor' land associated with the River Allen watercourse along the southern neighbourhood boundary. Outside of the built-up area of Sandleheath, the land is considered to have a moderate likelihood of being BMV land, according to the supporting dataset also provided by Natural England. The settlement of Sandleheath is given an urban / industrial use under the BMV dataset.

The northern half of the neighbourhood area is within the Sweatfords Water waterbody catchment. As of 2022 it had a good ecological status. The Ashford Water (Allen River) waterbody catchment also had a good ecological status in 2022.

Wessex Water is the primary water supplier of the neighbourhood area. For those in Elms Close, Bournemouth Water is the water supplier, with Wessex Water providing sewage services only. The latest WRMP identifies how Wessex Water expects to balance the demand for safe and reliable water and wastewater services with the increasing challenges associated with the changing climate over the next 25 years.

Given the mineral consultation areas within Sandleheath, development could require consultation with Hampshire County Council – the minerals and waste local authority area for the neighbourhood area.

Landscape

Key statistics

- The neighbourhood area is adjacent to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs National Landscape, located to the west. It is also within proximity to the New Forest National Park – which is approximately 2.2km eastwards.
- The entire neighbourhood area sits within the Dorset Heaths National Character Area.
- There are no brownfield sites within the neighbourhood area.
- There are 22 tree preservation orders within the neighbourhood area, largely along Station Road. There is a large group tree preservation order covering Lops Copse and Sandle Copse north of Station Road and the industrial estate.

Commentary

The neighbourhood area is within proximity to the New Forest National Park. A number of special qualities contribute to this important landscape designation, including:

- The outstanding natural beauty: the sights, sounds and smells of ancient woodland with veteran trees, heathland, bog, autumn colour and an unspoilt coastline with views of the Solent and the Isle of Wight.
- Extraordinary diversity of plants and animals of international importance.
- Unique historic, cultural and archaeological heritage from royal hunting ground to shipbuilding, salt-making and 500 years of military coastal defence.
- An historic communing system that maintains so much of what people know and love as ‘the New Forest’ forming the heart of a working landscape based on farming and forestry.
- The iconic New Forest pony together with donkeys, pigs, cattle, and deer roaming free.
- Tranquillity in the midst of the busy, built-up south of England
- Wonderful opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery in one of the last extensive, gentle landscapes in the south including unmatched open access on foot and horseback.
- Healthy environment: fresh air, clean water, local produce and a sense of ‘wildness’.

- Strong and distinctive local communities with real pride in and sense of identity with their local area.

Sandleheath is also adjacent to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs National Landscape. Key features of the landscape designation include:

- Scarp slopes that hold remnants of an extensive chalk grassland.
- Biologically rich chalk streams.
- Arable fields forming large habitats.
- Woodland, much of which is ancient in origin.
- Numerous international nature conservation designations.

Sandleheath is within the Dorset Heathlands National Character Area. Key characteristics of this landscape type include (but are not limited to): predominantly sandy soils that are relatively unproductive and susceptible to erosion; a low relief landscape with incised but shallow valleys that are dry or hold small watercourses, and small areas of wet woodland and ancient semi-natural woodland.

According to the Hampshire Integrated Character Assessment, the Sandleheath neighbourhood area is located within landscape character area 2g – Sandleheath Woodland Farmland. Key characteristics of this landscape area include (but are not limited to): a quiet, peaceful rural landscape with few landscapes, leafy winding lanes that connect dispersed settlements and larger built-up areas, and a mosaic of land uses including woodland, pasture, arable and water meadows.

An area within Sandleheath was assessed under the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study by New Forest District Council in 2016. Sandle Manor is the undeveloped gap between Sandleheath and Ashford; topography here is generally flat, rising gradually to the north, with important copses providing a woodland backdrop to this important landscape area. It has a moderate visual sensitivity, with fleeting views from Station Road and Marl Lane, and it is visually enclosed – and is considered to have some potential to mitigate small scale development. However the area has a high landscape sensitivity, linked to its role as an important gap between Sandleheath and Ashford.

Transportation and movement

Key statistics

- The majority of the Sandleheath population aged 16 and over and in employment work mainly from home – 33.2%, in comparison to an average of 30.4% for New Forest, 35.8% for the South East region, and 31.5% for England. It is noted that a greater proportion of the Sandleheath working population travel between 10km and 30km to access their workplace in comparison to the average for New Forest, the South East, and England.
- Of the employed residents in Highclere that do not mainly work from home, most (55%) travel to work by driving a car or van. A lower proportion travel as a passenger in a car or van – 3.1% in Sandleheath in comparison to 3.5% for New Forest, 3.5% for the South East, and 3.9% for England.

Commentary

There are no train stations within proximity to the neighbourhood area. The nearest is located approximately 14.7km to the north in Salisbury. Managed by South Western Railway, the train station allows for rail access to locations including London Waterloo, West Country (Bristol and Exeter), South Wales, Worcester, Romsey, Southampton, Southampton Airport, and Portsmouth.

Bus services in the neighbourhood area are limited. There are only two bus stops in the neighbourhood area, located at the crossroads between Court Hill, Station Road, Alderholt Road and Rockbourne Road. These allow for access to the Damory 49 service, which runs only on a Tuesday morning and allows for bus access to locations including Ashford, Fordingbridge, Whitsbury, and Salisbury.

In terms of the local road network, the main road in Sandleheath is Station Road, which intersects the neighbourhood area in a north-east to south-east direction. It allows for vehicular access to Fordingbridge, and pedestrian access given the raised pavement that runs alongside the road.

Road usage is a concern of the Sandleheath Parish Council, in particular excessive speeding and dangerous driving in the settlement. The emerging Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan Update outlines plans to bring forward balanced, interlocking traffic calming measures in order to deter speeding and improve safety and security.

Within the neighbourhood area there are PRowS, including footpaths and bridleways. It is noted that the neighbourhood boundaries are adjacent to further PRowS, allowing for active transportation access and connectivity in the local area. Furthermore, the Fordingbridge off road cycle route is within the neighbourhood area in the northern extent and along the neighbourhood boundary.

