

SANDLEHEATH PARISH  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

DRAFT SITE ASSESSMENT REPORT

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# SANDLEHEATH PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## DRAFT SITE ASSESSMENT REPORT: JUNE 2025

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sandleheath Parish Council (SPC) is preparing its first Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish (SNP). An essential part of the process for neighbourhood plans proposing to allocate land for development is an assessment of the suitability and deliverability of the alternative sites put forward by land interests for assessment.

1.2 The process differs from the equivalent process for Local Plan allocations in two ways. Firstly, it must be proportionate, acknowledging that allocation policies in neighbourhood plans do not have to meet the 'tests of soundness' and do not have access to the same resources. Secondly, the process must take into account community opinion, given the fact that to be made (adopted), proposed neighbourhood plans must pass a referendum.

1.3 This draft report summarises the initial site assessment process that has informed the selection of housing site allocations taken forward to informal community engagement and subsequently to Regulation 14. The SG is being advised throughout this process by the professional planning consultancy, ONH, with support also provided by officers at New Forest District Council.

1.4 SPC has been mindful of the intention of the local planning authority, New Forest District Council (NFDC) to review its adopted Local Plan. The timescales for the emerging Local Plan over the coming two- three years enables the SNP to take responsibility for planning to meet local housing need in the Parish for the plan period rather than that being left to the new Local Plan.

1.5 Whilst NPPF paragraph §70 requires the Local Planning Authority to provide an indicative figure for housing requirement over the plan period, this is not currently available and NFDC officers confirmed in April that any indicative figure would not be available in 2025 until the emerging Local Plan has progressed further. As such, using the December 2024 PPG methodology, an indicative minimum requirement for Sandleheath is around 85-90 dwellings over a 20-year plan period (equating to 4.23 dwellings per annum, rounded up) although this figure may be subject to local adjustment to take account of the position of the parish in the settlement hierarchy and desire to bring forward community benefits and affordable housing. The figure also does not take into account any recent completions/planning permissions to date which may be included although it is understood that there are no outstanding permissions.

1.6 The site assessment process comprises two stages. The first stage generates a 'long list' schedule of all potential housing development sites, derived from a local Call for Sites undertaken by the SNP Steering Group in November-December 2024 and the NFDC Call for site carried out in October to December 2024 for the emerging Local Plan. Sites were disqualified if they were deemed unsuitable as a matter of principle or otherwise unachievable. Each site has been mapped with an indicative site size and potential yield. Potential constraints and opportunities were also listed.

1.7 The second stage is to carry out three suitability tests on the 'long listed' sites:

- a community assessment via a community opinion survey;
- a technical assessment via the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA);
- a further assessment of deliverability (including viability) including dialogue with site landowners

1.8 The local Call for Sites resulted in the submission of 9 sites. This document was passed to NFDC to confirm that there were no additional sites within their call for sites which had not been included by the Steering Group. It was confirmed that no other sites had come forward in either the Nov/Dec 2024 Call for Sites or the subsequent Call for Sites undertaken by NFDC in Feb-Apr 2025.

1.9 Following an initial screening process, this resulted in 8 sites being carried forward to stage 2 which commenced with community engagement. These sites also formed the basis of the SEA scoping being carried out by AECOM in January 2025 ready for the preparation of a technical assessment on the sites and then initial dialogue with the site landowner also taking place.

1.10 The sites were tested with the community at informal engagement in February 2025 where the community were asked to rank all of the sites in order of preference (1 being most preferred and 8 being least preferred)

1.11 A further assessment was then carried out which drew conclusions for site-specific development principles, including any mitigation measures identified in the emerging SEA, any necessary supporting infrastructure requirements and inclusion of any community benefits sought.

1.12 From the combination of the three suitability tests the sites were then short listed in order of suitability and preference. Given the inability of the LPA to confirm how many houses Sandleheath will be expected to deliver during the Plan period and therefore how many of the short-listed sites should be included within the NP the Steering Group took a pragmatic approach in considering the number of sites to take forward and the potential quantum on each site, given the PPG standard method indicative figure as a guide.

1.13 It will then be for SPC to agree the appropriate number of sites in the Draft SNP ready for the Regulation 14 Consultation with the community and statutory consultees.

## 2. STAGE ONE ASSESSMENT

2.1 The process began with the Parish Council forming a Steering Group to oversee the progression of the SNP on its behalf. The group observed that the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 (2014) had only resulted in the inclusion of for a single site for Sandleheath which has now been built out and no strategic allocations were made in the Local Plan Part 1 (2020), which defined Sandleheath as a Main Village. As such it is defined in the Local Plan this is an appropriate location for:

*“small (under 10 homes) or medium-scale (10 - 49 homes) development that sustains their current village role in a manner that is cumulatively proportionate”.*

2.2 The Steering Group were also aware that under the provisions of Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) there will be greater protection from speculative applications in the future with an approved Neighbourhood Plan in place which puts forward suitable development proposals which meet the housing requirement of the parish.

2.3 The Steering Group undertook a Housing Needs Survey in November 2024 to understand the level of demand for additional development from within the village, including affordable and this information will be combined with additional evidence provided by NDfC in relation to the wider need established through the local Housing Register, including those who do not currently live in Sandleheath ( and in this case Fordingbridge) as the register is wider than just the parish)

2.4 The Steering Group undertook a local Call for Sites in November to December 2024, inviting submission of plans by landowners showing the extent of any land in their control that they wished to make available in the plan period and any relevant supplementary information that may assist the Steering Group in assessing the land for potential allocation. The Call for Sites letter noted that there is a preference for schemes that:

- *Will not harm the character of the village or the surrounding landscape.*
- *Will provide safe pedestrian access to local facilities as well as improving connections into the surrounding countryside.*
- *Provide accessible and adaptable homes enabling people to live longer within their own home*
- *Be energy efficient.*
- *Be affordable for local people (inc. options for part or all of a site being made available for a Community Land Trust to ensure local people can have genuinely affordable homes in perpetuity.*

2.5 It was further noted that: *“In recent years the village has made a significant investment in Sandleheath Village Hall and is looking to develop the facility for a wider range of community uses. As such the Steering Group would be particularly keen to discuss with landowners opportunities for development close to the village hall which would include a parking area for this facility as not all users are able to access on foot and on-site provision is very limited”.*

2.6 This Call for Sites resulted in nine sites being put forward as detailed in the table below. Where an indicative capacity of dwellings was included by the landowner/developer this has been used. Where no number has been given a desk-based yield based on overall site size was used and highlighted with a \* These figures are therefore subject to change as the NP progresses depending upon the developable area within the site and development constraints.

	Site Name	Area/indicative Capacity*
1	174 Station Road, Sandleheath SP6 1DS.	0.86ha (12-19)*
2	Land South of Village Hall, Station Road, Sandleheath.	3.3 Ha (45-60)*
3	Hill Top, Main Road, Sandleheath SP6 1PP	0.28ha (5-6)*
4	The Old Stores, Scats Lane, Sandleheath SP6 1PL	1.15ha (5- 11+)
5	Land North of Station Road	3.34ha (51)
6	Richmond, Main Road, Sandleheath SP6 1TD	1.4ha (7)
7	Hatches, Sandle Copse Sandleheath SP6 1DX	2.9ha** (44-58)*
8	Land east of Kerry Gardens	0.46ha (7-9)
9	Old Court Wood, Sandleheath	0.45 (1)

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

2.7 All 9 sites are mapped in Figure 1 together with the existing settlement boundary which illustrates the edge of the current built-up area of the village as defined by the Local Plan. Only land that lies within, adjoining or near the boundary would be considered suitable in principle by being consistent with national policy and with adopted Local Plan policy for managing the growth of settlements and protecting the countryside.

2.8 Following an initial review by the Steering Group, site 9 was considered unsuitable for further consideration as it is too small with only a yield of a single additional dwelling indicated by the landowner.

2.9 For the remaining sites the summary information in Table A below shows the opportunities and constraints of each site.

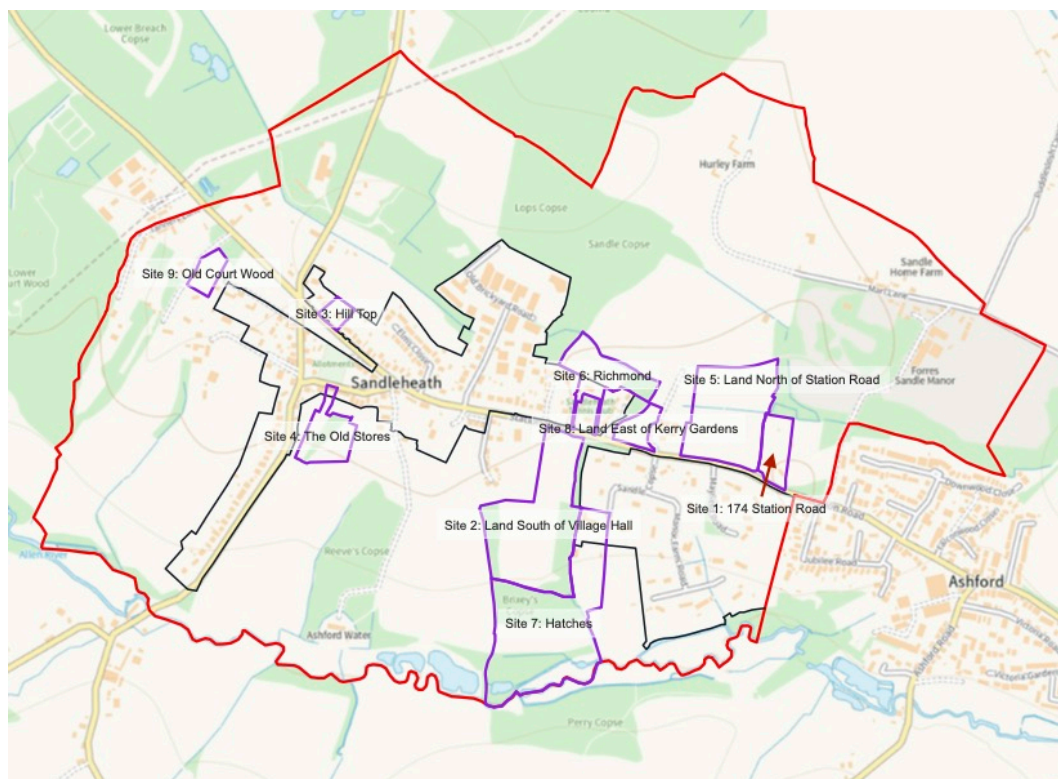
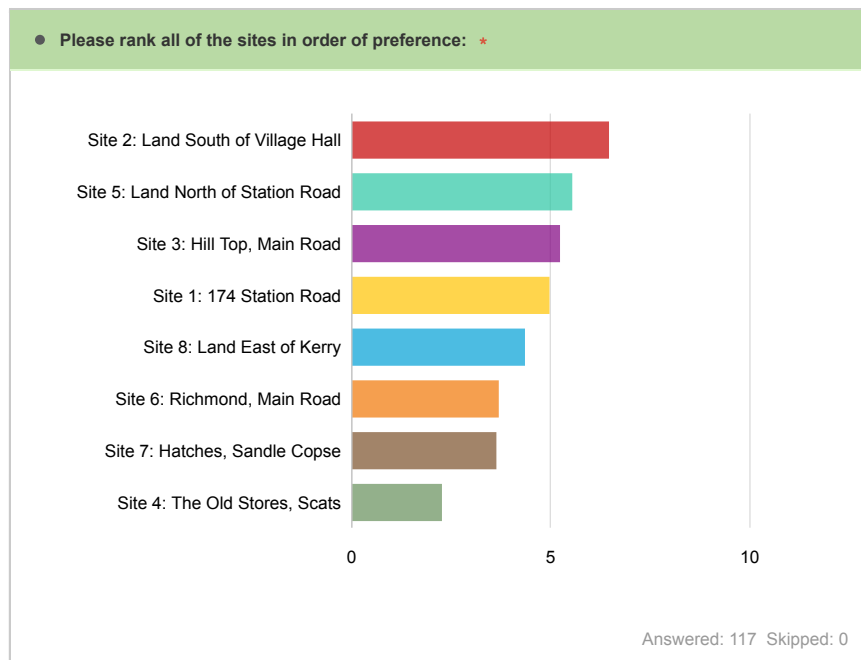


Figure 1 - All sites submitted in purple with the settlement policy boundary in black

### 3. STAGE TWO ASSESSMENT

3.1 Community Assessment. As outlined above, the first element of Stage 2 was to consider the ranking of the sites in a Community Survey. The community were invited to review the information provided including the potential constraints and opportunities for each location (See Appendix A) and then rank the sites in order of preference and provide any comments they wish to give on any individual sites. The sites were ranked by the community as follows:

### Site preferences



3.2 The site allocations community engagement and long list of sites was also passed to consultants at AECOM who are providing the Strategic Environment Assessment for the SNP, to assess each site and the wider plan, against a number of environmental factors including (but not limited to) impacts on the landscape, water and flooding, pollution, cultural heritage, population, health, biodiversity, flora and fauna.

3.3 The illustrations below show known potential environmental impacts at Sandleheath.

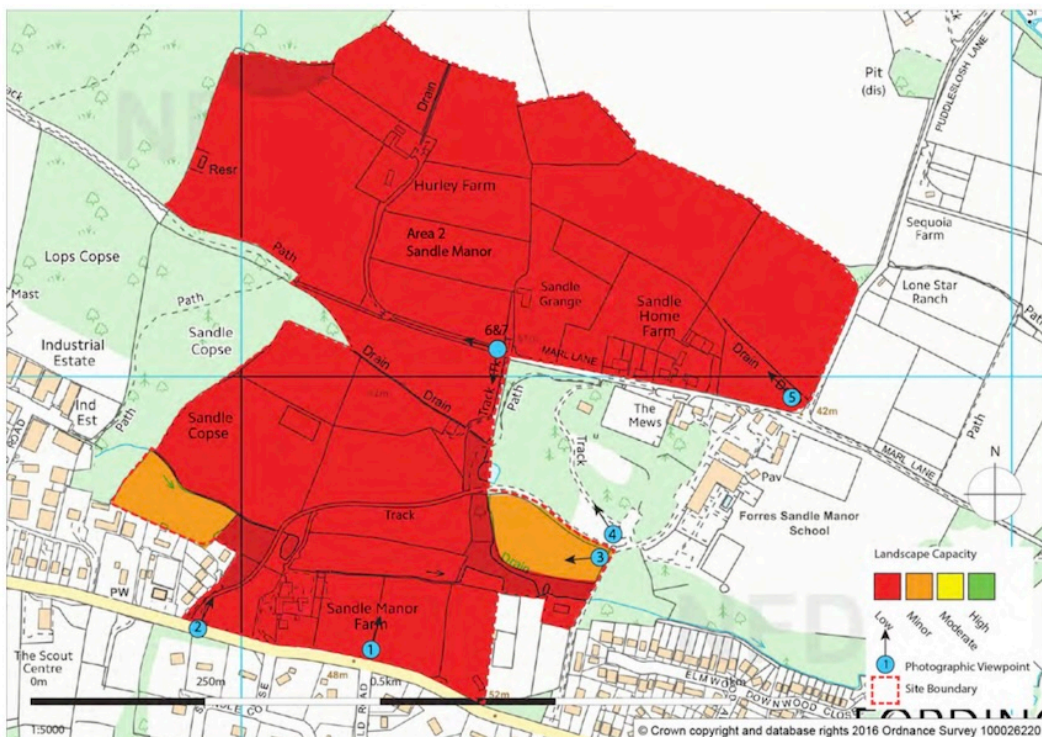


Figure 2 NFDC Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Map (2015) draft.



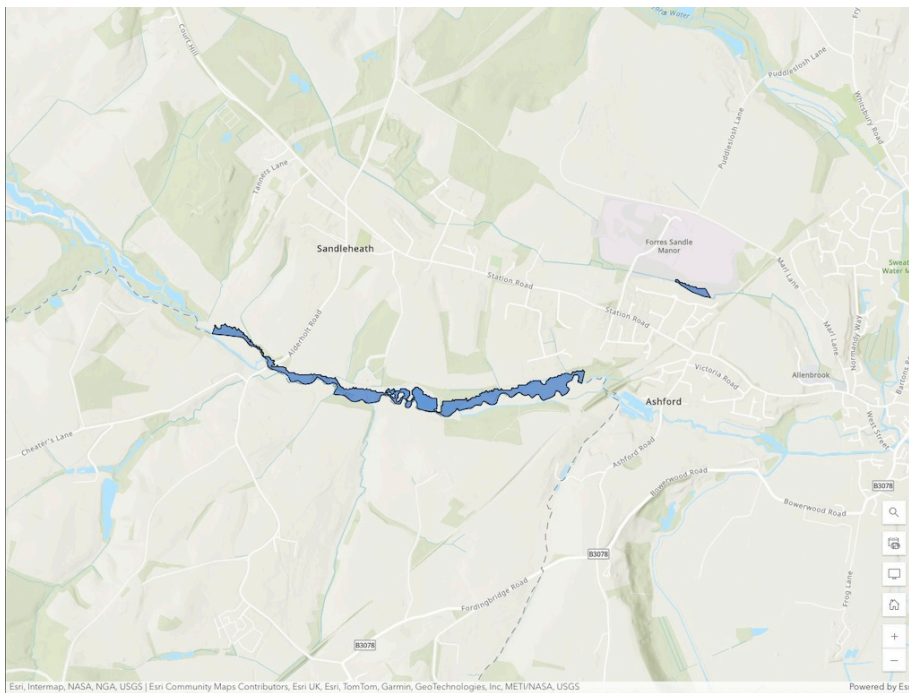


Figure 3 Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 (Fluvial)

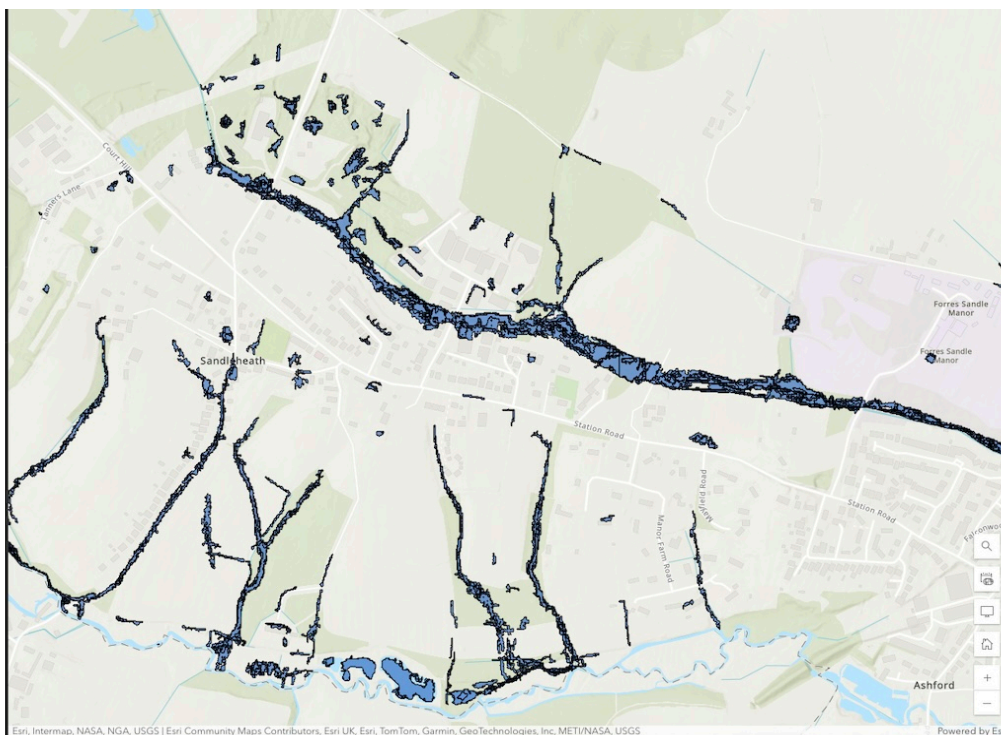


Figure 4 Surface water risk areas.

3.4 In reviewing the results of the community engagement and the initial consideration of reasonable alternatives for the SEA, the following conclusions were drawn.

- 1) Future development of the parish should follow the existing spatial pattern, i.e directly accessed from the Main (Station) Road, rather than side roads.
- 2) It is important to keep a measure of separation from Ashford and Fordingbridge and so a Local Gap should be maintained wherever possible.
- 3) The only site within the existing settlement boundary should be discounted (Site 3) as by definition it is deemed acceptable and is likely to bring forward around 5 dwellings. It would

therefore be counted as windfall, as given its size it would be unlikely to provide the community benefits sought.

- 4) With no indicative housing number offered by NFDC, the Steering Group wished to seek a growth option for the community which respects the position of Sandleheath in the settlement hierarchy but brings forward sufficient growth to ensure the sustainability of the parish to 2050.
- 5) In addition, with no housing number tabled, the Steering Group wished to demonstrate that the Neighbourhood Plan could achieve a suitable and sustainable level of growth for the parish. As such it has used the PPG standard method calculation as a starting point to enable the community, through the NP to control the future growth of the parish and not defer to the Local Plan process which has no firm adoption date. The NP process also provides an ability for the parish to use policy levers to impose the requirement for the community benefits sought through development at a local level, unlikely to be achieved through a Local Plan allocation.

3.5. It is noted that NFDC carried out two Call for Sites between October and December 2024 and February to April 2025. It was confirmed that no other potential sites for Sandleheath came forward as a result of this process, enabling the Neighbourhood Plan to have a complete picture of planned growth options for the parish.

3.6 Using points 1 – 5 in 3.4 above, three plausible growth options were considered, growth to the south of the Main Road, growth to the north of Main Road and a third option of growth both south and north of the Main Road.

3.7 It is noted that NFDC carried out two Call for Sites between October and December 2024 and February to April 2025. It was confirmed that no other potential sites for Sandleheath came forward as a result of this process, enabling the Neighbourhood Plan to have a complete picture of planned growth options for the parish.

3.8 Initial engagement was carried out with the landowners of the sites which ranked 1 (site 2 – south of Main Road) and 2 (site 5 – north of Main Road) in the community survey to discuss the potential opportunities and constraints of their respective locations. These sites would together bring forward around 108 dwellings if the full extent of each location was delivered. This represents what is felt to be the upper limit to ensure that the overall growth in the village is not considered excessive and still considered in keeping with its status in the settlement hierarchy and provides the maximum community benefits to safeguard the future sustainability of the community and provide opportunities to improve local active travel options and social infrastructure. The Steering Group recognises that the neighbourhood plan is having to make hard decisions around the development of the parish over the coming years but on balance feel it is better to control their own destiny where they can, rather than putting the policy decisions about future growth of the parish to the District Council or, an as yet unknown unitary authority or leaving the parish open to speculative development. In setting out clearly the future of the parish through the SNP and meeting its identified need (defined as the standard method calculation with no alternative figure put forward) the community are taking a proactive and pragmatic approach to plan for and shape their own future. This policy enables the SNP to fill the policy void and engage §14 of the NPPF to enable the parish defend applications for unplanned development, particularly in view of the lack of five-year land supply in the New Forest and the position of the Local Plan which is considered out of date in July 2025.

3.9 The Steering Group have worked positively and collaboratively to negotiate the community benefits set out in the policy and brings forward development which respects the countryside setting of the parish and its historic core but provides better public access to open spaces, improved access to leisure and functional walking routes, community facilities in the form of car parking for the village hall and flexible use leisure facilities. The two sites will each provide opportunities for affordable homes, starter homes



and appropriately sized homes for downsizers and are both located in the eastern side of the village, towards Fordingbridge, which is considered the more sustainable part of the parish.

Site 5 (north of Main Road) - With site 5 and site 8 (which ranked 4<sup>th</sup>) being in the same ownership, the Steering Group asked the landowner if they would be willing to include site 8 within the site 5 proposal, designated as a community use site (with no residential development). This was verbally agreed with an offer to lease site 8 to the parish council for 100 years for a peppercorn rent for community use as part of any development of site 5. This would enable a car park for the village hall to be created less than 100m away on the same side of the road and provide much needed space for recreational and community uses.

Site 2 (south of Main Road) – At this location, the Parish Council discussed with the landowner the desire to secure open space to serve a number of purposes. With the requirement for ARNG on site the Parish Council have expressed interest, subject to negotiation with the landowner and NFDC for this land to be transferred directly to the parish council, along with provision for future maintenance and management. The ARNG will not only serve as recreational space to wrap around the southern end of the site and create dog walking and exercise opportunities but will ensure a strong defensible boundary between the site and the open countryside beyond and minimal impact when viewed from the Cranborne Chase National Landscape to the southwest of the site. The second areas of open space are two parcels at the northern end of the site near the entrance, which will provide extended facilities for both the village hall and wider community in the form of recreational space, including a timber framed “pavilion” an open fronted structure which would provide seating and shade for those enjoying the open space, provide a covered area for local pop up events or for use as an outdoor classroom/meeting space. The provision of these spaces at the entrance to the site ensures the development reflects the overall layout of the village, which is discretely set back from the Main Road with pockets of green space fronting the road, as seen along the common by the village shop and to the front of Elm Close.

3.10 Given their size, each site is also above the threshold for the provision of affordable housing. To date there is not a single affordable house in the village for either social or affordable rent or ownership options including shared ownership, so these sites provide the opportunity for local people to have a wider choice of housing options and enabling those who wish to move to Sandleheath, including families where children have previously moved away due to the cost of housing within the parish, to have the opportunity to come back. Located on the Main Road to the western side of the parish, whilst there is currently no bus service into Fordingbridge (which it is hoped can be addressed through additional demand and funding opportunities from CIL) , the school bus to Burgates does stop close to both sites.

3.11 The SEA process was informed of the on-going work and the development of the pre-submission plan to enable a further assessment of the preferred growth strategy, which has developed as option 3. This represents an overall higher growth strategy for the parish but considers environment constraints, community opinion and a level of growth considered to be sustainable for a parish which currently has limited social and active travel infrastructure (which is sought to be improved through the inclusion of these sites) and in keeping with the settlement hierarchy designation of the parish. It is noted that whilst site 2 is promoting a quantum slightly in excess of the number defined as suitable in the Local Plan ( i.e medium up to 49 homes per site) the overall scale, design and location are not out of keeping with the village setting.

3.12 This has resulted in the SNP promoting up to 108 homes across Land North of Main Road (up to 51- Parcel A) with Parcel B reserved for community use and “Land South of Main Road” for up to 57.

# APPENDIX A

SITE 1		Gross Size 0.86Ha.	Potential Site Capacity 12 - 19
Description		Opportunities	Constraints
<p>The site has been proposed by the landowner and falls entirely within their ownership. It is therefore considered as available.</p> <p>It is located towards the eastern boundary of the parish, outside of the village settlement policy boundary and adjoining the settlement boundary of Sandle Manor/Ashford.</p> <p>There is an existing 5 dwelling located within the site which is accessed off Station Road. The site is well screened with all boundaries lined with mature trees/hedgerow. The majority of the site area is extensive gardens laid mostly to lawn and meadow. No indication of community benefits arising from development.</p>		<p>Site capacity would allow for the inclusion of affordable homes within the development.</p> <p>There is an existing pavement on the opposite side of the road to the site providing pedestrian access into the village. The creation of a safe crossing point would be required.</p>	<p>It is located in an area considered under emerging Policy SAN2 as part of the local gap and identified as an area of Low Capacity (Area 2 Sandle Manor, Fordingbridge Avon Valley) <a href="#">NFDC Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016)</a> - See Figure 2</p> <p>The creation of a safe crossing point may be considered an urbanising feature at the entrance to the village.</p>
SITE 2		Gross Size 3.30Ha.	Potential Site Capacity 45 - 60
Description		Opportunities	Constraints
<p>The site has been proposed by the agent for the landowner and falls entirely within their ownership. It is therefore considered as available.</p> <p>It is located adjoining the village settlement boundary opposite the Sandleheath Village Hall with direct access onto Station Road.</p> <p>The site is currently grazing land with extensive mature tree belt to the eastern boundary and low-level hedging to the western boundary with long views to the south.</p>		<p>Site capacity would allow for the inclusion of affordable homes within the development.</p> <p>Submission indicates the opportunity for a new pedestrian crossing from village hall to a proposed car park to serve the village hall for up to 25 vehicles. To include disability bays and electric charging points. Also potential for secure, covered cycle parking.</p> <p>Submission indicates the opportunity for an area of open space, potentially to include equipped play, subject to local needs assessment and new boundary planting.</p>	<p>Identified as a potential local view across from the main road to the south.</p> <p>Parking for the village hall would be on the southern side of Station Road and the pedestrian crossing may be considered an urbanising feature.</p>

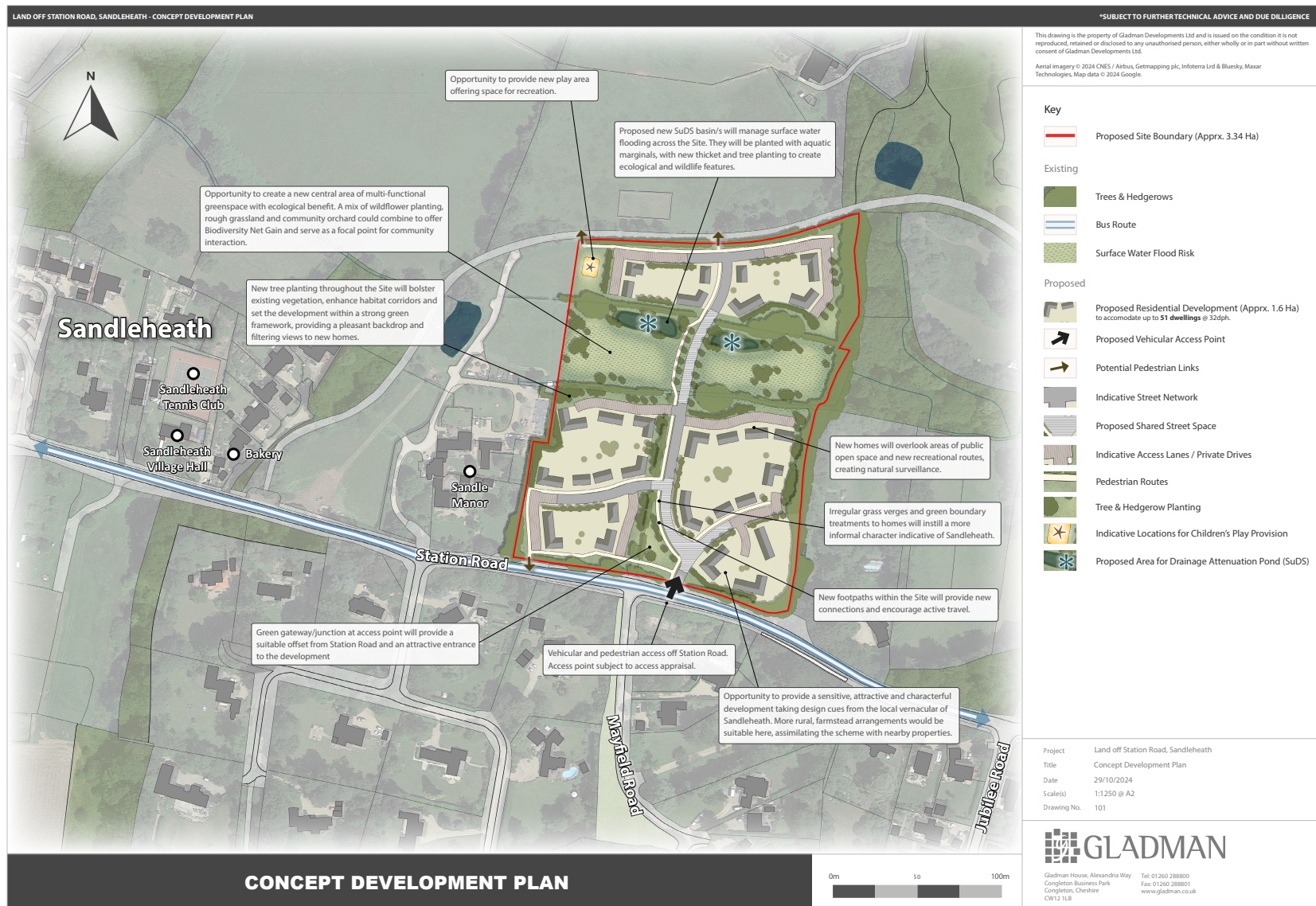
SITE 3Hill Top, Main Road, Sandleheath SP6 1PP		Gross Size 0.28Ha.	Potential Site Capacity 5- 6
Description	Opportunities	Constraints	
<p>The site has been proposed by the landowner and falls entirely within their ownership. It is therefore considered available. This is a smallholding, with approximately 54m of road frontage with direct access off Main Road, opposite the common. The site is well screened.</p> <p>There is an existing dwelling on the site and the site is currently vacant.</p>	<p>Site falls entirely within the existing settlement policy boundary.</p> <p>The site is located within a short walk of the village shop, church, industrial estate and bus stop.</p> <p>Re-development of the site may provide an opportunity to widen the footway through maintenance of the hedge alongside the road frontage.</p>	<p>The site falls below the threshold for affordable housing.</p> <p>No specific community benefits have currently been offered with the site.</p>	
SITE 4The Old Stores, Scats Lane, Sandleheath SP6 1PL		Gross Size 1.15ha	Potential Site Capacity 5 - 11+
Description	Opportunities	Constraints	
<p>The site has been proposed by the landowner. It has been confirmed that the whole of the site is within their ownership and therefore the land is considered available. The proposed access to the site is off Scats Lane.</p> <p>The site entrance is within the village settlement policy boundary but the developable area is entirely outside and not adjoining.</p> <p>The landowner has indicated that part of the land is considered brownfield as the area near to the northern boundary (to the south of the current gardens) was part of the village forge complex and the steam workshop was placed here in the early to mid-part of the 20th century.</p> <p>The owner has indicated that they are open to a number of development options on the site from 5 affordable units on the brownfield portion of the site up to development of the whole site.</p>	<p>The site is located near the centre of the village opposite the allotments and footpath to the village shop and common and a short walk to the bus stop.</p> <p>There may be an opportunity to create a pedestrian walkway through the site to allow residents in the lower part of Alderholt Road to access the village shop more safely, rather than walking along the road.</p> <p>The development has indicated it is able to offer affordable housing within the site, despite the minimal and medium options falling below the affordable housing threshold.</p>	<p>Depending upon the extent of site development the existing dwelling of The Old Stores may need to be demolished.</p> <p>Access is off Scats Lane which is considered narrow and potentially unsuitable for additional traffic.</p>	

SITE 5Land North of Station Road		Gross Size 3.34ha	Potential Site Capacity 51
Description	Opportunities	Constraints	
<p>This site has been put forward by a planning agent on behalf of the landowner. The land is understood to be in single ownership and is considered available.</p> <p>The site is located towards the eastern boundary of the parish, outside of the village settlement policy boundary and adjoining the settlement boundary of Ashford.</p> <p>Access to the site is directly off Station Road.</p>	<p>It has been indicated that the site may be able to provide parking for the village hall which is located within a 5-minute walk from the site</p> <p>It has been indicated that the development would offer the creation of additional public open space and a play area.</p> <p>There is an existing footway on the western end of the site which connects into the village.</p> <p>Site capacity would allow for the inclusion of affordable homes within the development.</p> <p>The location may provide an opportunity to create a new footpath linking into the existing network to create a circular walk around the parish.</p>	<p>The site is located within the land proposed to be included within Policy SAN2 Local Gap and identified as an area of Low Capacity (Area 2 Sandle Manor Avon Valley (Fordingbridge) <a href="#">NFDC Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016)</a> - See Figure 2</p> <p>It is a 10 + minute walk to the village shop, church, allotments and bus stop.</p>	
SITE 6Richmond, Main Road, Sandleheath SP6 1TD		Gross Size 1.4ha	Potential Site Capacity 7
Description	Opportunities	Constraints	
<p>This site has been put forward by the landowner and falls entirely within their ownership. It is therefore considered available.</p> <p>The landowner has previously submitted an application for 3 properties 23/10712 and demolition of existing dwelling, although this was withdrawn and is understood to be resubmitted shortly.</p>	<p>The site lies partially within the existing village settlement policy boundary (0.2 ha)</p> <p>It has been indicated that the site may be able to provide parking for the village hall on the land currently within the current settlement boundary (existing location of Richmond).</p> <p>It has been indicated that the site may be able to provide additional open space including play area.</p>	<p>The site is identified as an area of minor landscape capacity (Area 2 Sandle Manor Avon Valley (Fordingbridge) <a href="#">NFDC Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016)</a> - See Figure 2</p> <p>Part of the site is within an area which is indicated as having a potential risk of surface water flooding - see Figure 4, although the landowner has stated that previous</p>	

		Site capacity would allow for the inclusion of affordable homes within the development	reports showed no possibility of flooding and none has been experienced whilst in their ownership. They have confirmed the eastern boundary can be “damp” due to the topography and would be outside any developable area.
SITE 7	Hatches, Sandle Copse, Sandleheath SP6 1DX	Gross Size 5.6ha (inc. woodland)/2.9ha	Potential Site Capacity 44 - 58
Description		Opportunities	Constraints
This site has been put forward by the landowner and falls entirely within their ownership. It is therefore considered available.  The land is located partially within the Ashford Settlement Policy Boundary.		Site capacity would allow for the inclusion of affordable homes within the development	The southern and south western extent of the site is indicated to be an area of risk of surface water flooding and is located within flood zone 3. - See Figure 3 and Figure 4
SITE 8	Land East of Kerry Gardens, Sandleheath	Gross Size 0.46ha	Potential site capacity 7 - 9
Description		Opportunities	Constraints
This site has been put forward by the Steering Group and as such has not yet been confirmed with the landowner as to whether it is considered available.		The site is located close to the village hall and may be a suitable location for a car park to serve it.  The site is served by an existing footway providing pedestrian access to the centre of the village.  The site may provide access to connect into the existing footpath network to provide a circular walk around the parish.	Site capacity would not meet the threshold for the inclusion of affordable homes within the development

Table A: Stage One Sites Schedule





Indicative concept plan for Land north of Main (Station) Road. Parcel A





Indicative concept plan for Land south of Main (Station) Road