Sandleheath Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Habitat Regulations Assessment

Sandleheath Parish Council

September 2025

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Quality information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
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1. Introduction

Background to the project

1.1 AECOM was appointed by Locality to assist in undertaking a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Sandleheath Neighbourhood Development Plan Draft Neighbourhood Plan (September 2023) for Sandleheath Parish (hereafter referred to as the 'Neighbourhood Plan' or the 'Plan'). The objectives of the assessment are to:

- Identify any aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan that would cause a likely significant effect on any Habitat Sites, which include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), candidate SACs (cSACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and potential SPAs (pSPAs) and as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites, both in isolation and in combination with other plans and projects;
- Determine whether appropriate assessment would be required; and
- Undertake an analysis to inform the appropriate assessment, with a view to whether any aspects of the plan would have an adverse effect on the integrity of any Habitat sites.

Legislation

1.2 The UK left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020 under the terms set out in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 ("the Withdrawal Act"). While the UK is no longer a member of the EU, a requirement for Habitats Regulations Assessment continues as set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019[2]. The ultimate aim of the Directive is to "*maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest*" (Habitats Directive, Article 2(2)).

1.3 The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to Habitat sites. Plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site(s) in question. Plans and projects with predicted adverse impacts on Habitat sites may still be permitted if there are no reasonable alternatives to them and there are Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest. (IROPI) as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation would be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.

1.4 In order to ascertain whether or not site integrity will be affected, a Habitats Regulations Assessment should be undertaken of the plan or project in question:

[2] These don't replace the 2017 Regulations but are just another set of amendments.

Box 1. The legislative basis for Appropriate Assessment

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Regulations state that:

"*A competent authority, before deciding to … give any consent for a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site … shall make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that sites conservation objectives… The authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site*".

1.5 Over the years the phrase 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' has come into wide currency to describe the overall process set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations from screening through to IROPI. This has arisen in order to distinguish the process from the individual stage described in the law as an 'appropriate assessment'. Throughout this report we use the term Habitats Regulations Assessment for the overall process.

1.6 In spring 2018 the 'Sweetman' European Court of Justice ruling[3] clarified that 'mitigation' (i.e. measures that are specifically introduced to avoid or reduce a harmful effect on a Habitats Site that would otherwise arise) should **not** be taken into account when forming a view on Likely Significant Effects. Mitigation should instead only be considered at the Appropriate Assessment stage. Appropriate assessment is not a technical term: it simply means 'an assessment that is appropriate' for the plan or project in question. As such, the law purposely does not prescribe what it should consist of or how it should be presented; these are decisions to be made on a case by case basis by the competent authority. As this report consists of a test of likely significant effect, mitigation measures are therefore not taken into consideration at this stage.

Report structure

1.7 Section 2 of this report summarises the methodology for the assessment. Section 3 details background information on the Habitat Sites discussed in this report. Section 4 identifies the possible pathway by which adverse effects on protected Habitat sites could arise. Section 5 discusses the results from the test of likely significant effects and Section 5 covers the Appropriate Assessment. The full initial policy screening table is present in Appendix B.

2. Methodology

Introduction

2.1 This section sets out our approach and methodology for undertaking the HRA. Habitats Regulations Assessment itself operates independently from the Planning Policy system, being a legal requirement of a discrete Statutory Instrument.

A proportionate assessment

2.2 Project-related HRA often requires bespoke survey work and novel data generation in order to accurately determine the significance of adverse effects. In other words, to look

[3] People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)

beyond the risk of an effect to a justified prediction of the actual likely effect and to the development of avoidance or mitigation measures.

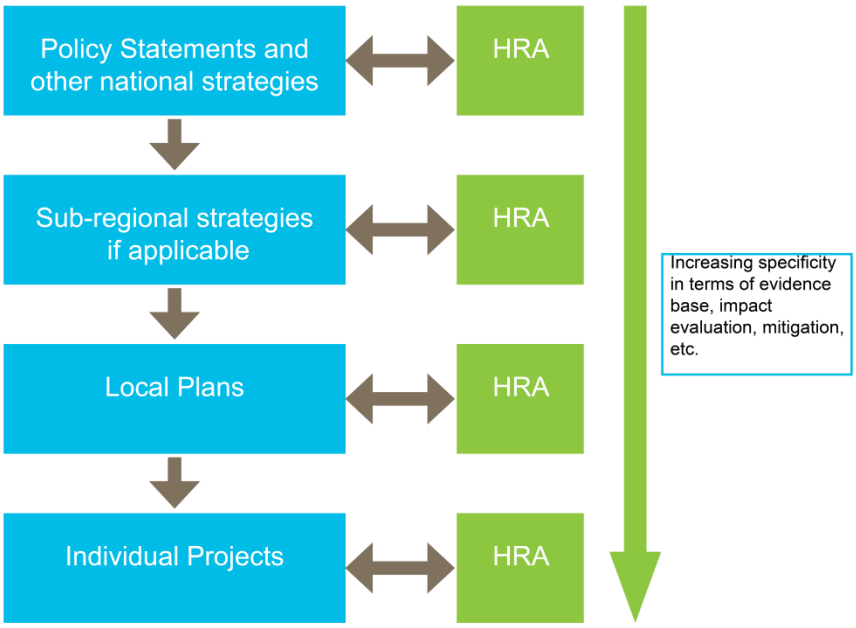
2.3 However, the draft CLG guidance[4] makes it clear that when implementing HRA of land-use plans, the AA should be undertaken at a level of detail that is appropriate and proportional to the level of detail provided within the plan itself:

2.4 'The comprehensiveness of the [Appropriate] assessment work undertaken should be proportionate to the geographical scope of the option and the nature and extent of any effects identified. An AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose. It would be inappropriate and impracticable to assess the effects [of a strategic land use plan] in the degree of detail that would normally be required for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a project.'

2.5 In other words, there is a tacit acceptance that appropriate assessment can be tiered and that all impacts are not necessarily appropriate for consideration to the same degree of detail at all tiers (**Box 2**).

2.6 For a Development Plan the level of detail concerning the developments that will be delivered is usually insufficient to make a highly detailed assessment of significance of effects. For example, precise and full determination of the impacts and significant effects of a new settlement will require extensive details concerning the design of the town, including layout of greenspace and type of development to be delivered in particular locations, yet these data will not be decided until subsequent stages.

2.7 The most robust and defensible approach to the absence of fine grain detail at this level is to make use of the precautionary principle. In other words, the plan is never given the benefit of the doubt; it must be assumed that a policy/measure is likely to have an impact leading to a significant adverse effect upon a Habitat site unless it can be clearly established otherwise.



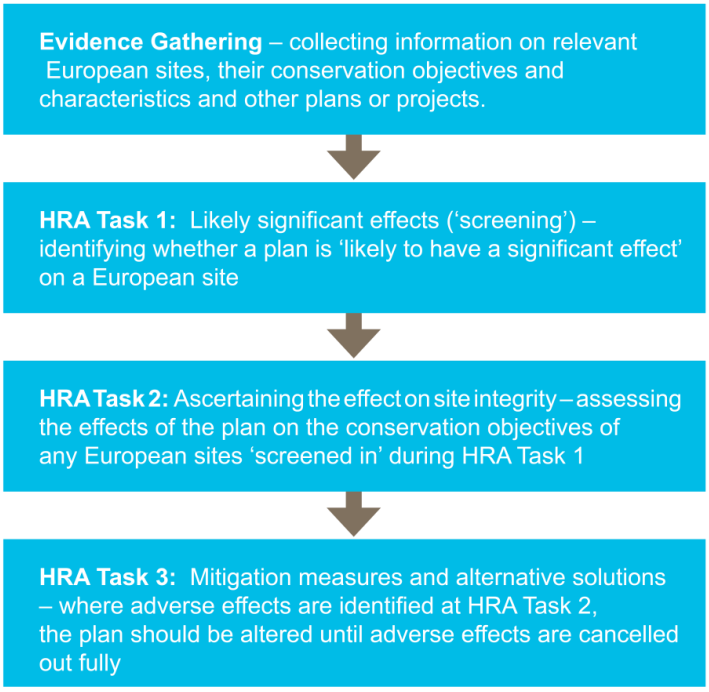
Box 2. Tiering in HRA of Land Use Plans

[4] CLG (2006) Planning for the Protection of European Sites, Consultation Paper

The process of HRA

2.8 The HRA has been carried out in the continuing absence of formal Government guidance. CLG released a consultation paper on AA of Plans in 2006[5]. As yet, no further formal guidance has emerged.

2.9 Box 3 below outlines the stages of HRA according to current draft CLG guidance. The stages are essentially iterative, being revisited as necessary in response to more detailed information, recommendation and any relevant changes to the plan until no significant adverse effects remain.



Box 3. Four-Stage Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.10 In practice, this broad outline requires some amendment in order to feed into a developing land use plan such as a Neighbourhood Plan. The following process has been adopted for carrying out the HRA.

Physical scope

2.11 The physical scope of the assessment i.e. the range of Habitat sites to be considered will be based upon a combination of tracing impact pathways and using distances derived from various studies.

2.12 The Habitat sites of relevance to this HRA are as follows:

- The New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar - ~2.8km east of the parish
- Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar - ~2.4km southeast of the parish
- River Avon SAC - ~1.2km east of the parish
- Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar - ~2.7km southwest of the parish
- Dorset Heaths SAC - ~2.7km southwest of the parish

[5] Ibid

The ‘in-combination’ scope – other plans and projects

2.13 It is a requirement of the Regulations that the impact and effects of any plan being assessed are not considered in isolation but in combination with other plans and projects that may also be affecting the Habitat sites(s) in question.

2.14 In practice, ‘in-combination assessment’ is of greatest importance when the Neighbourhood Plan would otherwise be screened out because the individual contribution is inconsequential. It is neither practical nor necessary to assess the ‘in-combination’ effects of the Neighbourhood Plan in the context of all other plans and projects within the region.

Stage One: Likely Significant Effect test (screening)

2.15 The first stage of any Habitats Regulations Assessment is a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) test - essentially a high level assessment to decide whether the full subsequent stage known as Appropriate Assessment is required. The essential question is:

> ‘Is the Plan, either alone or in combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon Habitat sites?’

2.16 The objective is to ‘screen out’ those plans and projects (or site allocations/policies) that can, without any detailed appraisal, be said to be unlikely to result in significant adverse effects upon Habitat sites, usually because there is no mechanism or pathway for an adverse interaction with Habitat sites. This stage is undertaken in Section 4 of this report.

2.17 In evaluating significance, AECOM have relied on our professional judgement as well as the results of previous stakeholder consultation regarding development impacts on the Habitat sites considered within this assessment.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

2.18 Habitat Site(s) which have been ‘screened in’ during the previous Task will have a detailed assessment undertaken on the effect of the policies on the Habitat Site(s) site integrity. Avoidance and mitigation measures to avoid adverse significant effects will be incorporated where necessary.

2.19 As established by case law, ‘appropriate assessment’ is not a technical term; it simply means whatever further assessment is necessary to confirm whether there would be adverse effects on the integrity of any Habitat sites that have not been dismissed at Likely Significant Effects. Since it is not a technical term it has no firmly established methodology except that it essentially involves repeating the analysis for the likely significant effects stage, but to a greater level of detail on a smaller number of policies and sites, this time with a view to determining if there would be adverse effects on integrity. For the air quality pathway the appropriate assessment is where detailed traffic and air quality modelling is reported.

2.20 One of the key considerations during appropriate assessment is whether there is available mitigation that would entirely address the potential effect. In practice, the appropriate assessment takes any policies or allocations that could not be dismissed following the high-level Likely Significant Effects analysis and analyse the potential for an effect in more detail, with a view to concluding whether there would actually be an adverse effect on integrity (in other words, disruption of the coherent structure and function of the Habitat site(s)).

2.21 The analysis first subjects each policy or site allocation to screening based upon potential pathways of impact. That is documented in Table 6-1 of Appendix B. The results

of that screening are summarised in Section 4. Policies that cannot be screened out are then taken forward to appropriate assessment in Section 5. Therefore, it should be noted that Appendix B does not present a summary of the whole assessment process.

3. Relevant Habitat Sites

3.1 The Solent European sites are not specifically discussed regarding recreational pressure because they lie over 5.6km from Sandleheath Parish. The parish is therefore outside the recreational zone of influence of the Solent European sites.

The New Forest SAC, SPA & Ramsar

Introduction

3.2 The New Forest is located in southern Hampshire, west of the Solent in southern England. It comprises a complex mosaic of habitats overlying mainly nutrient-poor soils over plateau gravels. The major components are the extensive wet and dry heaths with their rich valley mires and associated wet and dry grasslands, the ancient pasture woodlands and inclosure woodlands, the network of clean rivers and streams, and frequent permanent and temporary ponds.

Conservation Objectives[6][7]

3.3 With regard to the SAC and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

3.4 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contribute to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

3.5 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

3.6 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features

[6] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5727577884852224 [Accessed 10/09/2018]
[7] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5816333400801280 [Accessed 10/09/2018]

- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Qualifying Features[89]

3.7 The following features are reasons for designation as an SAC:

Annex I habitats that are primary reason for selection of this site:

- Nutrient-poor shallow waters with aquatic vegetation on sandy plains
- Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient level
- Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath
- Dry heaths
- Purple moor-grass meadows
- Depressions on peat substrates
- Beech forests on acid soils
- Beech forests on neutral to rich soils
- Old acidophilous oak woods with Quercus robur on sandy plains
- Bog woodland
- Alder woodland on floodplains

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface
- Calcium-rich spring-water-fed fens

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercurial*
- Stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Great crested newts *Triturus cistatus*

The following features are reasons for designation as an SPA:

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season;

- Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, 538 pairs representing at least 33.6% of the breeding population in Great Britain
- Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, 2 pairs representing at least 10.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain
- Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, 300 pairs representing at least 8.8% of the breeding population in Great Britain

[8] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012557 [Accessed 10/09/2018
[9] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2035-theme=default [Accessed 10/09/2018]

- Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, 184 pairs representing at least 12.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count as at 1997)

Over winter;

- Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, 15 individuals representing at least 2.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain

3.8 The following features are reasons for designation as a Ramsar:

Ramsar criterion 1

Valley mires and wet heaths are found throughout the site and are of outstanding scientific interest. The mires and heaths are within catchments whose uncultivated and undeveloped state buffer the mires against adverse ecological change. This is the largest concentration of intact valley mires of their type in Britain.

Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports a diverse assemblage of wetland plants and animals including several nationally rare species. Seven species of nationally rare plant are found on the site, as are at least 65 British Red Data Book species of invertebrate.

Ramsar criterion 3

The mire habitats are of high ecological quality and diversity and have undisturbed transition zones. The invertebrate fauna of the site is important due to the concentration of rare and scare wetland species. The whole site complex, with its examples of semi-natural habitats is essential to the genetic and ecological diversity of southern England.

Environmental Vulnerabilities Relevant to the Plan[10]

3.9 The threats and pressures likely to affect the SPA, SAC and Ramsar are listed below:

- Drainage
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Fish stocking
- Deer
- Air pollution
- Public access/disturbance
- Change in land management
- Change in species distribution
- Water pollution
- Forestry and woodland management
- Inappropriate ditch management
- Invasive species
- Vehicles
- Inappropriate cutting/mowing
- Direct impact from 3rd party

[10] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5174614971908096 [Accessed 10/09/2018]

Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

3.10 The Avon Valley SPA encompasses the lower reaches of the River Avon and its floodplain on the south coast of England. The site extends for approximately 20 km between Bickton and Christchurch. The River Avon displays wide fluctuations in water level and parts of the valley are regularly flooded in winter. Consequently, the valley includes one of the largest expanses of unimproved floodplain grassland in Britain, including extensive areas managed as hay meadows and grazing marsh under low–intensity agricultural systems. These extensive floodplain grasslands support wintering Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* in numbers of European importance, and Blashford Lakes Gravel Pits within the SPA are particularly important for wintering Gadwall *Anas strepera*.

Conservation Objectives[11]

3.11 With regards to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblages of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as a appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- The population of each of the qualifying features; and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Qualifying Features[12][13]

3.12 The following features are reasons for designation as an SPA:

Over winter:

- Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, 135 individuals representing at least 1.9% of the wintering population in Great Britain *5 year peak mean 1991/2 – 1995/6)

This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

Over winter:

- Gadwall *Anas strepera*, 667 individuals representing at least 2.2% of the wintering North-western European population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 – 1995/6)

3.13 The following features are reasons for designation as a Ramsar:

Ramsar criterion 1

[11] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5741820348727296 [Accessed 14/11/18]
[12] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2038 [Accessed 14/11/18]
[13] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11005.pdf [Accessed 14/11/18]

The site shows a greater range of habitats than any other chalk river in Britain, including fen, mire, lowland wet grassland and small areas of woodland.

Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports a diverse assemblage of wetland flora and fauna including several nationally rare species.

Ramsar criterion 6

Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance. Qualifying species/populations as identified at designation:

Species with peak counts in the winter:

- Gadwall, *Anas strepera strepera*, NW Europe. 537 individuals, representing 3.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9 – 2002/3)

Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.

Species with peak counts in the winter:

- Northern pintail, *Anas acuta*, NW Europe. 715 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9 – 2002/3)

- Black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa islandica*, Iceland/W Europe. 1142 individuals, representing an average of 3.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9 – 2002/3).

Environmental Vulnerabilities Relevant to the Plan[14]

- Water pollution
- Changes in species distribution
- Public Access/disturbance
- Inappropriate weed control
- Change in land management
- Habitat fragmentation

River Avon SAC

Introduction

3.14 The Avon in southern England is a large, lowland river system that includes sections running through chalk and clay, with transitions between the two. Five aquatic *Ranunculus* species occur in the river system, but stream water-crowfoot *Ranunculus penicillatus* ssp. *pseudofluitans* and river water-crowfoot *R. fluitans* are the main dominants. Some winterbourne reaches, where *R. peltatus* is the dominant water-crowfoot species, are included in the SAC.

[14] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6133502894407680 [Accessed 14/11/18]

Conservation Objectives[15]

With regards to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely;
- The populations of qualifying species; and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Qualifying Features[16]

The following features are reasons for designation as an SAC:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*
- Sea lamprey Petromyzon marinus
- Brook lamprey Lampetra planeri
- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*

Environmental Vulnerabilities Relevant to the Plan[17]

- Physical modification
- Siltation
- Water pollution
- Water abstraction
- Changes in species distribution
- Invasive species
- Hydrological changes
- Inappropriate weed control
- Habitat fragmentation

[15] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6048472272732160 [Accessed 14/11/18]
[16] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0013016 [Accessed 14/11/18]
[17] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6133502894407680 [Accessed 14/11/18]

Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

3.15 The Dorset Heathlands cover an extensive complex of heathland sites at the western edge of the Hampshire Basin in southern England. The area is centred around the large estuary of Poole Harbour and lies in close proximity to the urban conurbation of Bournemouth and Poole. Past losses of the heathland (an estimated 75% during the twentieth century to development, agriculture and afforestation) have left the remaining heaths in a highly fragmented state. Despite this decline and fragmentation, the heaths show a high degree of ecological cohesion. They contain large areas of dry heath, wet heath and acid valley mire, all habitats that are restricted to the Atlantic fringe of Europe. The examples of the Dorset Heathlands are among the best of their type in the UK. There are also transitions to coastal wetlands and floodplain fen habitats. The whole complex has an outstanding fauna in a European context, covering many different taxa. Many species have a specialist ecology, strongly associated with, or restricted to, heathland. The area is ornithologically important for specialist breeding birds of lowland heathland, as well as for some wintering raptors.

Conservation Objectives[18]

With regards to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage is species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- The population of each of the qualifying features; and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Qualifying Features[19][20]

3.16 The following features are reasons for designation as an SPA:

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex 1 of the Directive:

During the breeding season:

- Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*, 418 pairs representing at least 26.1% of the breeding population on Great Britain (three count mean, 1991-2 & 1994
- Nighjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, 386 pairs representing at least11.4% of the breeding population in Great Britain (two year mean 1991-2992)
- Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, 60 pairs representing at least 4.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain (coun as at 1997)

[18] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5808199001178112 [Accessed 14/11/18]
[19] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2030-theme=default [Accessed 14/11/18]
[20] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11021.pdf [Accessed 14/11/18]

Over winter:

- Hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*, 20 individuals representing at least 2.7% of the wintering population in Great Britain (count as at 1991/2)
- Merlin *Falco columbarius*, 15 individuals representing at least 1.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain (count as at 1991/2)

The following features are reasons for designation as a Ramsar:

Ramsar criterion 1

Contains particularly good examples of (i) northern Atlantic wet heaths with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and (ii) acid mire with *Rhynchosporion*

Contains the largest example in Britain of southern Atlantic wet heaths with Dorset heath *Erica ciliaris* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*.

Ramsar criterion 2

Supports one nationally rare and 13 nationally scarce wetland plant species, and at least 28 nationally rare wetland invertebrate species.

Ramsar criterion 3

Has a high species richness and high ecological diversity of wetland habitat types and transitions, and lies in one of the most biologically-rich wetland areas of lowland Britain, being continuous with three other Ramsar sites: Pool Harbour, Avon Valley and The New Forest.

Environmental Vulnerabilities Relevant to the Plan[21]

- Inappropriate scrub control
- Public access/disturbance
- Forestry and woodland management
- Invasive species
- Habitat fragmentation
- Wildfire/arson

Dorset Heaths SAC

Introduction

3.17 This is a complex site which includes 37 SSSIs, most of which include fine transitions between European dry heaths and wet lowland heathland and mires, as well as other habitats such as woodland, grassland, pools, saltmarsh and reedswamp. The area of heathland has been reduced and fragmented, with about 86% lost since the mid-18th century. The two Dorset Heaths cSACs, together with the New Forest, support a large proportion of the resource of depressions on peat substrates within England. The habitat is widespread on the Dorset Heaths, both in bog pools of valley mires and in flushes. There are numerous valley mires within the Dorset Heaths, and the habitat type is most extensively represented here as part of a habitat mosaic.

[21] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5181909839642624 [Accessed 14/11/18]

Conservation Objectives[22]

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely;
- The populations of qualifying species; and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Qualifying Features[23]

3.18 The following features are reasons for designation as an SAC:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath
- Dry heaths
- Depressions on peat substrates

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not primary reason for selection of this site:

- Purple moor-grass meadows
- Calcium-rich fens dominated by great fen sedge (saw sedge).
- Calcium-rich spring-water-fed fens
- Dry oak dominated woodlands

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercurial*

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*

Environmental Vulnerabilities Relevant to the Plan

- Inappropriate scrub control
- Public access/disturbance
- Undergrazing
- Forestry and woodland management

[22] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5711678738006016 [Accessed 14/11/18]
[23] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0019857 [Accessed 14/11/18]

- Drainage
- Water pollution
- Invasive species
- Habitat fragmentation
- Conflicting conservation objectives
- Wildfire/arson
- Air pollution
- Deer

4. Test of Likely Significant Effects

Recreational Pressure and Disturbance

Introduction

4.1 Recreational use of a Habitat site has the potential to:

- Prevent appropriate management or exacerbate existing management difficulties;
- Cause damage through erosion and fragmentation;
- Cause eutrophication as a result of dog fouling; and,
- Cause disturbance to sensitive species, particularly ground-nesting birds and wintering wildfowl.

4.2 Different types of Habitat sites are subject to different types of recreational pressures and have different vulnerabilities. Studies across a range of species have shown that the effects from recreation can be complex.

4.3 It should be emphasised that recreational use is not inevitably a problem. Many Habitat sites also contain nature reserves managed for conservation and public appreciation of nature. At these sites, access is encouraged and resources are available to ensure that recreational use is managed appropriately.

Mechanical/Abrasive Damage and Nutrient Enrichment

4.4 Most types of terrestrial Habitat site can be affected by soil compaction and erosion, which can arise as a result of visits by walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and users of off-road vehicles. Walkers with dogs contribute to pressure on sites through nutrient enrichment via dog fouling and also have potential to cause greater disturbance to fauna as dogs are less likely to keep to marked footpaths and move more erratically. Motorcycle scrambling and off-road vehicle use can cause serious erosion, as well as disturbance to sensitive species.

Disturbance

4.5 Concern regarding the effects of disturbance on birds stems from the fact that they are expending energy unnecessarily and the time they spend responding to disturbance is time that is not spent feeding[24]. Disturbance therefore risks increasing energetic output while reducing energetic input, which can adversely affect the 'condition' and ultimately

[24] Riddington, R. *et al*. 1996. The impact of disturbance on the behaviour and energy budgets of Brent geese. *Bird Study* 43:269-279

survival of the birds. In addition, displacement of birds from one feeding site to others can increase the pressure on the resources available within the remaining sites, as they have to sustain a greater number of birds[25].

4.6 Human activity can affect birds either directly (e.g. through causing them to flee) or indirectly (e.g. through damaging their habitat). The most obvious direct effect is that of immediate mortality such as death by shooting, but human activity can also lead to behavioural changes (e.g. alterations in feeding behaviour, nest abandonment, avoidance of certain areas etc.) and physiological changes (e.g. an increase in heart rate) that, although less noticeable, may ultimately result in major population-level effects by altering the balance between immigration/birth and emigration/death.[26]

4.7 The following Habitat designated sites are vulnerable to recreational pressure and/or disturbance that could result from the Plan either alone or 'in-combination' with other plans and projects:

- The New Forest SAC/SPA and Ramsar site
- Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar
- Dorset Heaths SAC

4.8 Avon Valley SPA & Ramsar and River Avon SAC have relatively limited access and guidance from Natural England regarding the Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Local plan indicates that that there are no concerns or likely significant effects from Recreational Pressure at these sites. This guidance is assumed to hold true for the NP and therefore the impact of recreational pressure is not carried forward to appropriate assessment for these sites.

4.9 The following Habitat sites have been scoped out of due to low vulnerability to recreational pressure:

- River Avon SAC
- Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar

Increased Water Demand and Impacts on Water Quality

Water Quantity, Level and Flow

4.10 The water level, its flow rates and the mixing conditions are important determinants of the condition of Habitat sites and their qualifying features. Hydrological processes are critical in influencing habitat characteristics in coastal waters, including current velocity, water depth, dissolved oxygen levels, salinity and water temperature. In turn these parameters determine the short- and long-term viability of plant and animal species, as well as overall ecosystem composition. Changes to the water flow rate within an estuary can be associated with a multitude of further impact pathways, including substratum loss, smothering and changes in wave exposure.

4.11 Coastal environments rely on hydrological connections with freshwater bodies, such as rivers, streams and lakes. However, while the natural fluctuation of water levels within narrow limits is desirable, excess or too little water supply might cause water levels to be outside of the required range of qualifying birds and fish, or the invertebrate or plant

[25] Gill, J.A., Sutherland, W.J. & Norris, K. 1998. The consequences of human disturbance for estuarine birds. *RSPB Conservation Review* 12: 67-72

[26] Riley, J. 2003. Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage.

assemblages they depend upon. There are two mechanisms through which urban development might negatively affect the water level in Habitat sites:

- The supply of new housing with potable water will require increased abstraction of water from surface water and groundwater bodies. Depending on the level of water stress in the geographic region, this may impact the aquatic conditions in Habitat sites sharing the same catchment.

- The proliferation of impermeable surfaces in urban areas increases the volume and speed of surface runoff, particularly during intense rainfall events. Traditional drainage systems often cannot cope with the volume of stormwater and sewer overflows are designed to discharge untreated water directly into watercourses. Often this pluvial flooding results in downstream inundation of watercourses and larger volumes of water reaching designated sites.

4.12 Increases to the quantity and rate of water delivery can result in summer flooding and prolonged / deeper winter flooding. This in turn results in the reduction of feeding and roosting sites for birds. For example, in areas where water is too deep, most waders will be unable to reach their food sources close to the ground.

4.13 The following Habitat designated sites are vulnerable to changes in water quantity, level and flow that could result from the Plan either alone or 'in-combination' with other plans and projects:

- The River Avon SAC

Water Quality

4.14 Increased amounts of housing or business development can lead to reduced water quality of rivers and estuarine environments. Sewage and industrial effluent discharges can contribute to increased nutrients on European sites leading to unfavourable conditions. In addition, diffuse pollution, partly from urban run-off, has been identified during an Environment Agency Review of Consents process as being a major factor in causing unfavourable condition of European sites.

4.15 The quality of the water that feeds Habitat sites is an important determinant of the condition of the habitats and species they support. Poor water quality can have a range of environmental impacts:

- At high levels, toxic chemicals and metals can result in immediate death of aquatic life, and can have detrimental effects even at lower levels, including increased vulnerability to disease and changes in wildlife behaviour.

- Eutrophication, the enrichment of water with nutrients, increases plant growth and consequently results in oxygen depletion. Algal blooms, which commonly result from eutrophication, increase turbidity and decrease light penetration. The decomposition of organic wastes that often accompanies eutrophication deoxygenates water further, augmenting the oxygen-depleting effects of eutrophication. In the marine environment, nitrogen is the limiting plant nutrient and so eutrophication is associated with discharges containing bioavailable nitrogen.

- Some pesticides, industrial chemicals and components of sewage effluent are suspected to interfere with the functioning of the endocrine system, possibly having negative effects on the reproduction and development of aquatic life.

4.16 The following Habitat designated sites are vulnerable to changes in water quality that could result from the Plan either alone or 'in-combination' with other plans and projects:

- The New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar

- The New Forest SAC/SPA & Ramsar
- Avon Valley SPA & Ramsar
- River Avon SAC
- Dorset Heaths SAC

Atmospheric Pollution

4.17 The main pollutants of concern for Habitat sites are oxides of nitrogen (NOx), ammonia (NH_3) and sulphur dioxide (SO_2), and are summarised in Table 1. NH_3 can have a directly toxic effect upon vegetation, particularly at close distances to the source such as near road verges[27]. NOx can also be toxic at very high concentrations (far above the annual average Critical Level). However, NOx and NH_3 exert their main impacts on ecosystems via determining the total nitrogen (N) deposition to soils, potentially leading to deleterious knock-on effects. Increases in N deposition from the atmosphere is widely known to enhance soil fertility and leading to eutrophication. This often has adverse effects on community composition and the quality of semi-natural, nitrogen-limited terrestrial and aquatic habitats[28] [29].

Table 1: Main sources and effects of air pollutants on habitats and species[30].

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2)	The main sources of SO_2 are electricity generation, and industrial and domestic fuel combustion. However, total SO_2 emissions in the UK have decreased substantially since the 1980's. Another origin of sulphur dioxide is the shipping industry and high atmospheric concentrations of SO_2 have been documented in busy ports. In future years shipping is likely to become one of the most important contributors to SO_2 emissions in the UK.	Wet and dry deposition of SO_2 acidifies soils and freshwater and may alter the composition of plant and animal communities. The magnitude of effects depends on levels of deposition, the buffering capacity of soils and the sensitivity of impacted species. However, SO_2 background levels have fallen considerably since the 1970's and are now not regarded a threat to plant communities. For example, decreases in Sulphur dioxide concentrations have been linked to returning lichen species and improved tree health in London.
Acid deposition	Leads to acidification of soils and freshwater via atmospheric deposition of SO_2, NOx, ammonia and hydrochloric acid. Acid deposition from rain has declined by 85% in the last 20 years, which most of this contributed by lower sulphate levels. Although future trends in S emissions and subsequent deposition to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems will continue to decline, increased N emissions may cancel out any gains produced by reduced S levels.	Gaseous precursors (e.g. SO_2) can cause direct damage to sensitive vegetation, such as lichen, upon deposition. Can affect habitats and species through both wet (acid rain) and dry deposition. The effects of acidification include lowering of soil pH, leaf chlorosis, reduced decomposition rates, and compromised reproduction in birds / plants. Not all sites are equally susceptible to acidification. This varies depending on soil type, bed rock geology, weathering rate and buffering capacity. For example, sites with an underlying

[27] http://www.apis.ac.uk/overview/pollutants/overview_NOx.htm.
[28] Wolseley, P. A.; James, P. W.; Theobald, M. R.; Sutton, M. A. **2006.** Detecting changes in epiphytic lichen communities at sites affected by atmospheric ammonia from agricultural sources. *Lichenologist* **38**: 161-176
[29] Dijk, N. **2011.** Dry deposition of ammonia gas drives species change faster than wet deposition of ammonium ions: Evidence from a long-term field manipulation. *Global Change Biology* **17**: 3589-3607
[30] Information summarised from the Air Pollution Information System (http://www.apis.ac.uk/)

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
		geology of granite, gneiss and quartz rich rocks tend to be more susceptible.
Ammonia (NH_3)	Ammonia is a reactive, soluble alkaline gas that is released following decomposition and volatilisation of animal wastes. It is a naturally occurring trace gas, but ammonia concentrations are directly related to the distribution of livestock. Ammonia reacts with acid pollutants such as the products of SO_2 and NO_X emissions to produce fine ammonium (NH_4+) - containing aerosol. Due to its significantly longer lifetime, NH_4+ may be transferred much longer distances (and can therefore be a significant trans-boundary issue). While ammonia deposition may be estimated from its atmospheric concentration, the deposition rates are strongly influenced by meteorology and ecosystem type.	The negative effect of NH_4+ may occur via direct toxicity, when uptake exceeds detoxification capacity and via N accumulation. Its main adverse effect is eutrophication, leading to species assemblages that are dominated by fast-growing and tall species. For example, a shift in dominance from heath species (lichens, mosses) to grasses is often seen. As emissions mostly occur at ground level in the rural environment and NH_3 is rapidly deposited, some of the most acute problems of NH_3 deposition are for small relict nature reserves located in intensive agricultural landscapes.
Nitrogen oxides (NO_x)	Nitrogen oxides are mostly produced in combustion processes. Half of NO_X emissions in the UK derive from motor vehicles, one quarter from power stations and the rest from other industrial and domestic combustion processes. Nitrogen oxides have been consistently falling for decades due to a combination of coal fired power station closures, abatement of other combustion point sources and improved vehicle emissions technology. They are expected to continue to fall over the plan period.	Direct toxicity effects of gaseous nitrates are likely to be important in areas close to the source (e.g. roadside verges). A critical level of NOx for all vegetation types has been set to 30 ug/m3. Deposition of nitrogen compounds (nitrates (NO_3), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and nitric acid (HNO_3)) contributes to the total nitrogen deposition and may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification. In addition, NO_x contributes to the eutrophication of soils and water, altering the species composition of plant communities at the expense of sensitive species.
Nitrogen deposition	The pollutants that contribute to the total nitrogen deposition derive mainly from oxidized (e.g. NO_X) or reduced (e.g. NH_3) nitrogen emissions (described separately above). While oxidized nitrogen mainly originates from major conurbations or highways, reduced nitrogen mostly derives from farming practices. The N pollutants together are a large contributor to acidification (see above).	All plants require nitrogen compounds to grow, but too much overall N is regarded as the major driver of biodiversity change globally. Species-rich plant communities with high proportions of slow-growing perennial species and bryophytes are most at risk from N eutrophication. This is because many semi-natural plants cannot assimilate the surplus N as well as many graminoid (grass) species. N deposition can also increase the risk of damage from abiotic factors, e.g. drought and frost.
Ozone (O_3)	A secondary pollutant generated by photochemical reactions involving NOx, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and sunlight. These precursors are mainly released by the combustion of fossil fuels (as discussed above). Increasing anthropogenic emissions of ozone precursors in the UK have led to an increased number of days when ozone levels rise above 40ppb ('episodes' or 'smog'). Reducing ozone pollution is	Concentrations of O_3 above 40 ppb can be toxic to both humans and wildlife, and can affect buildings. High O_3 concentrations are widely documented to cause damage to vegetation, including visible leaf damage, reduction in floral biomass, reduction in crop yield (e.g. cereal grains, tomato, potato), reduction in the number of flowers, decrease in forest production and altered species composition in semi-natural plant communities.

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
	believed to require action at international level to reduce levels of the precursors that form ozone.	

4.18 SO_2 emissions overwhelmingly derive from power stations and industrial processes that require the combustion of coal and oil, as well as shipping (particularly on a local scale)[31]. NH_3 emissions primarily originate from agricultural practices[32], with some chemical processes and some vehicles (notably petrol cars) also making notable contributions.

4.19 In contrast, NOx emissions are dominated by the output of vehicle exhausts (more than half of all emissions). A 'typical' housing development will contribute by far the largest portion to its overall NOx footprint (92%) through its associated road traffic. Other sources, although relevant, are of minor importance (8%) in comparison[33]. Therefore, the emerging NP, which will increase the population of the Parish, can be reasonably expected to increase emissions of NOx and NH_3, and thus total N deposition through an increase in vehicular traffic.

4.20 According to the World Health Organisation, the critical NOx concentration (Critical Level) for the protection of vegetation is 30 μgm^{-3}; the threshold for sulphur dioxide is 20 μgm^{-3}. In addition, ecological studies have determined Critical Loads (CLs) [34] for atmospheric nitrogen deposition (that is, NOx combined with NH_3).

4.21 According to the Department of Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance, beyond 200m, the contribution of vehicle emissions from the roadside to local pollution levels is insignificant (Figure 1 and see reference [35]). Therefore, this is the distance that is used in this HRA to identify major commuter routes along Habitat Sites, which are likely to be significantly affected by development outlined in the NP.

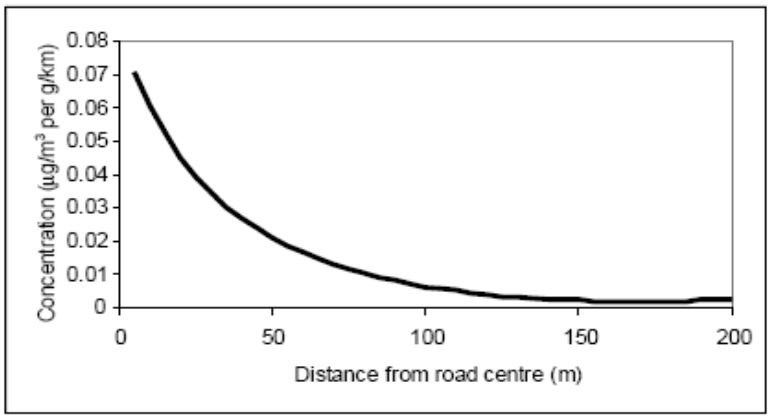


Figure 1: Traffic contribution to concentrations of pollutants at different distances from a road (Source: DfT[36]).

4.22 The following Habitat designated sites are vulnerable to atmospheric pollution arising from growth that could result from the Plan either alone or 'in-combination' with other plans and projects:

[31] http://www.apis.ac.uk/overview/pollutants/overview_SO2.htm.
[32] Pain, B.F.; Weerden, T.J.; Chambers, B.J.; Phillips, V.R.; Jarvis, S.C. 1998. A new inventory for ammonia emissions from U.K. agriculture. *Atmospheric Environment* **32**: 309-313
[33] Proportions calculated based upon data presented in Dore CJ et al. 2005. UK Emissions of Air Pollutants 1970 – 2003. UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. http://www.airquality.co.uk/archive/index.php
[34] The critical load is the rate of deposition beyond which research indicates that adverse effects can reasonably be expected to occur
[35] http://www.dft.gov.uk/webtag/documents/expert/unit3.3.3.php#013; accessed 12/05/2016
[36] http://www.dft.gov.uk/ha/standards/dmrb/vol11/section3/ha20707.pdf; accessed 13/07/2018

- The New Forest SAC/SPA and Ramsar
- Dorset Heaths SAC
- Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar

Screening of Local Plan Policies

4.23 A screening assessment of the NP policy areas and proposed site allocations is undertaken in Appendix A.

4.24 Policy Area SAN1 will consider redefining the settlement boundary and may set a housing target. Given that policies arising from this policy area are likely to direct development to certain areas it has been included in appropriate assessment.

4.25 Policy Area SAN5 allocates sites for development within Sandleheath Parish. Due to the impacts associated with development, particularly residential development, this policy area has been included in appropriate assessment.

4.26 The following potential site allocations are included for appropriate assessment:

- Land South of Main Road, Sandleheath – provision of 57 dwellings
- Land North of Main Road – provision of 40 dwellings

5. Appropriate Assessment

Recreational Pressure

5.1 Increased residential population within Sandleheath Parish is likely to result in increased recreational pressure on Habitat sites. The New Forest SAC/SPA & Ramsar, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar and Dorset Heaths SAC are identified as vulnerable to public access and disturbance.

New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar

5.2 The New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy 2010 - 2030[37] set out a long-term vision for how recreation will be managed and promoted in the New Forest National Park, which encompasses the New Forest Habitat sites, over the next 20 years. The strategy was updated in the Mitigating Recreational Impacts on New Forest Designated Sites SPD[38]. The New Forest District Council Mitigation for Recreational Impacts on New Forest European Sites Supplementary Planning Document (MRINFES) (May 2021)[39] Strategy (June 2014) was also created to address this issue.

5.3 The Strategy and the SPDs identify a series of actions for the National Park Authority and key partners. These are designed to improve and develop the way in which recreation contributes to the sustainability and well-being of the New Forest National Park and all those people who live and work here - as well as for those people who come to visit and enjoy its special qualities. Both documents have been developed through extensive consultation and discussion with partners and interested groups and has been shaped by the views of the public.

[37] Available at: https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/documents/recreation-management-strategy-steering-group/recreation-management-strategy-2/
[38] https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/app/uploads/2020/07/Revised-Habitat-Mitigation-Scheme-SPD-.pdf
[39] Available at: https://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/2237/Adopted-Mitigation-Strategy/pdf/Mitigation_for_Recreational_Impacts_SPD_May_2021_ADOPTED.pdf?m=1621259387820 Accessed on 28/01/2025

5.4 A series of priority actions are outlined which address some of the major challenges facing the National Park. These are grouped around the following key themes:

- **Active engagement** with users, land managers and providers of recreation to further the first and second purposes of the National Park.
- Appropriate communication structures and events will be set up, as required, to enable **active discussion** between user groups, land managers and recreation providers to address matters of conflict (actual or perceived) and mutual interest.
- **A programme of survey and research** will be implemented to inform future discussions and decisions about the management of recreation. The Strategy will be reviewed after five years in the light of this evidence.
- **The majority of recreational activity will be focussed on gateway locations**. The potential for enhancing facilities within the New Forest National Park will be explored at these sites and around a core network of sustainable access routes.
- **The provision of new areas of green infrastructure** will absorb the anticipated growth in levels of recreational demand from new housing and increased populations in adjacent urban areas. This will be achieved by working with neighbouring Authorities to improve the provision of new and enhanced facilities within or close to the growth areas.
- **Capacity for further growth in visitor numbers within the National Park will be managed** by having a maximum number of car park spaces and limiting the provision of new facilities outside villages.

5.5 Developments of 50 or more net additional dwellings will be required to provide full alternative natural recreational greenspace (ANRG) provision onsite or directly adjoining the site, based on a minimum standard of 8ha of ANRG per 1,000 population, and to fund the future management, maintenance and monitoring. Developments of under 50 dwellings where recreation mitigation is not provided on-site are required to make a contribution to identified offsite recreational mitigation projects identified by New Forest District Council. All residential developments are required to make a contribution towards access management for the New Forest European sites.

5.6 For actions within the Park Recreation Management Strategy that require additional funding, external contributions may be required. It was therefore recommended that the following policy wording be included in all relevant neighbourhood plan policies ***'All net new housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area may need to make a financial contribution to delivery of the New Forest Recreation Management Strategy, or appropriate mitigation measures as outlined in the New Forest National Park Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme.'*** This has been added to Policy SAN10.

5.7 With that wording in place, the Neighbourhood Plan contains a sufficient policy framework to protect the New Forest Habitat sites from recreational pressure such that no adverse effect on the integrity of the sites would arise either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

5.8 In addition, one of the allocations have the potential to deliver 57 dwellings and must therefore deliver 8ha of ANRG per 1000 population resulting in a need for approximately 1ha of ANRG (since the New Forest District SPD notes that one hectare of land is likely to be the minimum size land that can be designed to function independently as ANRG):

- Land South of Main Road, Sandleheath

5.9 The Neighbourhood Plan must therefore also be able to confirm that there is sufficient space on these three sites to deliver the necessary amount of ANRG.

Policy SAN5 identifies that Land South of the Main Road will provide a minimum 1ha ANRG.

5.10 Should there not be enough available space within Sandleheath for the appropriate level of SANG, developer contributions to the provision of strategic SANG in the wider New Forest District will be required. New Forest District Council has indicated that there is sufficient strategic SANG provision in the District for the growth from this Neighbourhood Plan, and that the funds collected from sites under 50 units (i.e. those allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan) that are brought forward could be attributed to existing SANG provision without the need to provide additional SANGs. This is because a number of sites expected in the New Forest District Local Plan have not in fact been delivered. Therefore, notwithstanding the site identified in the Neighbourhood Plan, there is sufficient SANG capacity in the District to accommodate the Neighbourhood Plan development. Therefore, it can be concluded no adverse effect on integrity will arise on European sites.

Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar and Dorset Heaths SAC

5.11 The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework sets out a long-term vision for how recreation will be managed and promoted in Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar and Dorset Heaths SAC.

5.12 The Strategy sets out a framework of contributions to be made to support the provision of SANGs. This strategy was produced by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) and Dorset Council with the advice of Natural England. New Forest Council did not produce or adopt this framework. However, based on the zones of influence detailed in this plan, it can be concluded that development within 5km of these sites is likely to lead to increased recreational pressure.

5.13 The approach to mitigate recreational pressure taken by the framework is the contribution of funds towards the provision of SANGs by development within 5km of the designated heathland. While the Sandleheath NP area does fall within this 5km area, the New Forest District Local Plan HRA notes that historically it has been accepted by Natural England that development within this area of New Forest District can instead contribute to mitigation of recreation pressure on the New Forest European sites.

5.14 The HRA of the New Forest District Local Plan concluded that although the New Forest Recreation Mitigation Strategy was designed to provide specific mitigation measures for the New Forest and Solent Habitat sites, the SANG provision required by that strategy serves to mitigate impacts on all Habitat sites and therefore provides adequate mitigation for recreational pressure on Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar, particularly given the greater draw on the New Forest or Coastal sites.

5.15 With the recommendations from the Recreational Pressure New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar section in place, the Neighbourhood Plan contains a sufficient policy framework to protect the Dorset Heaths and Dorset Heathlands Habitat sites from recreational pressure such that no adverse effect on the integrity of the sites would arise either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Water Quality

5.16 The New Forest SAC/SPA & Ramsar, Avon Valley SPA & Ramsar, River Avon SAC and Dorset Heaths SAC all highlight water pollution as an environmental vulnerability and therefore could be negatively impacted by a reduction in water quality. The theme of water quality encompasses a wide range of physico-chemical parameters, including temperature, salinity, oxygen, nutrient concentrations, pH and turbidity. Due to the distances between the parish and these designated sites, water quality changes due to surface water run off do not pose a likely factor and therefore development will only

impact water quality via wastewater. This parish is in the geographic area covered by Wessex Water and therefore wastewater from the Neighbourhood plan area is discharged into River Avon SAC.

5.17 On 16th March 2022 a letter was sent to Chief Planners by Natural England[40] which identified Habitat sites where a new requirement for nutrient neutrality had been identified. Natural England's advice to planners is that the affected Habitat sites are suffering from excessive nutrient enrichment (known as hypernutrification) and this is resulting in negative effects on the interest features of the sites, such as through smothering macroalgal growth, a process called eutrophication. In Table 1 of the River Avon SAC is identified to be suffering from excessive phosphorus levels.

5.18 In Natural England's view any further 'in combination' release of nutrients from development, through discharge of treated sewage effluent, will contribute to the continuing failure of the SPA/SAC to achieve its conservation objectives. This is an important consideration since a plan cannot legally be adopted, or a project consented, if it will have an adverse effect on the integrity of a Habitat site 'in combination' with other plans and projects. While the amount of growth in the Neighbourhood Plan is relatively small it is nonetheless captured by the new requirement to undertake calculations to determine if the growth it is allocating is likely to be nutrient neutral. Therefore, offsetting or mitigation for this net increase would be required.

5.19 It is also necessary for the Neighbourhood Plan to contain a sufficient policy framework is in place to ensure planning applications for the allocated sites can demonstrate they can achieve nutrient neutrality through mitigation, if necessary, in order to gain Neighbourhood Plan support. **Therefore, it was recommended that a policy requirement should be added to all appropriate policies stating that *'All developments will need to demonstrate nutrient neutrality for phosphorus in relation to the River Avon SAC. This should be done through using the Natural England River Avon nutrient budget calculator and securing the delivery of offsetting measures as necessary to achieve neutrality.'***

5.20 With that requirement in place in Policy SAN10, the Neighbourhood Plan contains a sufficient policy framework to protect the SAC/SPA from nutrient pollution and ensure no adverse effect on integrity either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

5.21 It is not the role of the Neighbourhood Plan or its HRA to secure mitigation for nutrient neutrality, but to confirm that a sufficient policy framework exists to ensure that when an application is submitted mechanisms are in place to ensure adverse effects on integrity can be avoided. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the developer (as applicant) and New Forest District Council (as local planning authority) to ensure that mitigation is identified and secured before planning consent is granted. The requirement placed on plans such as the Neighbourhood Plan is to assess '*adverse effects on areas of conservation … to the extent possible on the basis of the precision of the plan. This assessment is to be updated with increasing specificity in subsequent stages of the procedure'* [i.e. planning applications][41].

Water Quantity, Level and Flow

5.22 The River Avon SAC is vulnerable to changes based on water abstraction. Being a river ecosystem, the SAC is sensitive to changes in water flow rates. Changes to water flow rate may be lead to not only reduced water levels but also runs the risk of changes in

[40] Available at: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4792131352002560

[41] Opinion of Advocate General Kokott, 9th June 2005, Case C-6/04. Commission of the European Communities v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, paragraph 49.
http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=58359&doclang=EN

sedimentation which is also highlighted as a potential vulnerability to the SAC. While a degree of sediment deposition is needed for healthy habitats, a high reduction in water flow rates may lead to heavy sedimentation and subsequent smothering of qualifying communities.

5.23 Water within Sandleheath Parish is provided by Wessex Water. This parish falls within the Hampshire Avon catchment. In the Water Resources Management Plan[42] it is stated that Wessex Water intends on taking measures enabling them to meet growth within the Hampshire Avon Catchment without increasing the level of water abstraction from the River Avon.

5.24 Given that the Water Resources Management Plan anticipates meeting water supply requirements of the Hampshire Avon catchment through leakage control and demand side measures such as smart metering, it can therefore be concluded that the neighbourhood plan will not result in increased pressure due to water quantity, level and flow and there will be no adverse effect on integrity either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Atmospheric Pollution

5.25 Using the PPG methodology the indicative requirement for development in Sandleheath is up to 4.23 dwellings per annum during the neighbourhood plan period. While 8 sites are considered within the Draft Sites assessment report, policy area SAN5 aims to bring forwards an appropriate level of allocated sites to account for the development requirements within Sandleheath.

5.26 There are pre-existing exceedances of the NH_3 Critical Level at most of the Habitats sites considered, exceedance of the N Deposition Critical Load at all Habitats sites considered and potential baseline exceedances of the NOx Critical Level, however this is likely to be limited to locations nearest to the road and in areas of congestion, with the concentrations falling off as you move away from the road, into a Habitats site.

5.27 The amount of development delivered by the NP is relatively small (approximately 90 dwellings). Very small changes in 24hr Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) flows (e.g. 10 AADT or below) will not materially alter Local Plan air quality modelling results, and would thus be essentially nugatory, for two reasons:

- Firstly, daily traffic flows are not fixed numerals but fluctuate from day to day. The AADT for a given road is an annual average (specifically, the total volume of traffic for a year, divided by 365 days). It is this average number that is used in air quality modelling, but the 'true' flows on a given day will vary around this average figure. Small changes in average flow will lie well within the normal variation (known as the standard deviation or variance) and would not make a statistically significant difference in the total AADT.
- Secondly, when converted into NOx concentrations, NH_3 concentrations or N deposition rates, AECOM's experience is that very small changes in AADT (tens of AADT) would only affect the third decimal place. The third decimal place is never reported in air quality modelling to avoid false precision. For this reason, pollution is generally not reported to more than 2 decimal places (0.01). Anything smaller is simply reported as less than 0.01 (< 0.01) i.e. probably more than zero but too small to model with precision.

5.28 Furthermore, the imperceptible contribution of the NP to these deposition rates (too small to reliably model) likely means that LSEs can be excluded even in-combination. Based on such assessments in other areas of the UK, an individual plan or project with a very small contribution can be dismissed on the following basis:

[42] wrmp24-main-technical-plan.pdf

- In Advocate-General Sharpston's Opinion in European Court of Justice Case C-258/11, she specified in Paragraph 48 that 'the requirement for an effect to be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans and projects that have no appreciable effect on the site can therefore be excluded. If all plans and projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill.'; and
- In Wealden v SSCLG [2017] EWHC 351 (Admin) (2017), which specifically concerned the need for in combination assessment in air quality modelling for European sites, Mr. Justice Jay accepted that if the contribution of an individual plan or project to traffic growth or resulting air quality effects was '*very small indeed*' (quoting a notional 20 AADT), it could be legitimately and legally excluded from in combination assessment. This is in agreement with the opinion of Advocate-General Sharpston.'

5.29 The New Forest District Council undertook air quality modelling to inform their Local Plan HRA[43], which concluded that, this plan was unlikely to have significant impact on Dorset Heaths SAC or Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar, in part due to existing vegetation along roadsides mitigating the impact of increased traffic flows.

5.30 Additionally, development within Sandleheath will be bound by the NFDC Local Plan which includes policy 10 which requires that residential development contribute towards monitoring and, if necessary, mitigation of the impacts of air quality changes.

5.31 Given this, it is concluded that the NP will not result in increased pressure due to atmospheric pollution and there will be no adverse effect on integrity either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

[43] Habitats Regulations Assessment of New Forest District Local Plan Part 1

Appendix A Screening Tables

Table 5-1. Policy Area Screening Table

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
SAN1 - Spatial Strategy	The Neighbourhood Plan defi nes the settlement boundary at Sandleheath, as shown on the Policies Map. A) Development proposals within the defi ned settlement boundary will be supported, provided they accord with policies of the Development Plan, including this Neighbourhood Plan. B) Development proposals outside of the defi ned settlement boundary will only be supported where they are appropriate to a countryside setting or supports the rural economy, where they: (i)encourage agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises and farm diversification projects where this would be consistent with maintaining and enhancing the environment, and contribute to local distinctiveness; (ii) retain existing employment sites, and encourage improvements and redevelopments that will help maintain and enhance the environment, and contribute to local distinctiveness; (iii) support local business development through the conversion of existing buildings, with particular encouragement of enterprises that have little adverse environmental impacts (e.g. design/research activities); (iv) support the local delivery of services; C) 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.	Likely Significant Effects Present This policy area is intended to set the spatial strategy for the parish, defining where and how proposals in the main settlement and wider countryside will be judged. This policy area is likely to lead to additional development within the parish. Therefore, this policy area has likely significant effects.

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
SAN2 - Local Gap	The Neighbourhood Plan defines a Local Gap between Sandleheath and Fordingbridge as shown on the Proposals Map for the purpose of preventing the coalescence of the settlements. No development will be permitted in this area which would result in the joining of the two settlements, or where it would erode their separate identities by virtue of their closer proximity.	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is intended to maintain a gap between the settlements of Sandleheath and Fordingbridge. This intends to explore if a gap can be designated by policy with a limit on development within this gap to prevent coalescence between the two settlements. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.
SAN3 – Design Guidance and Codes	Development proposals must be well-designed and must respond positively to the character of the local area. To achieve this, development proposals must have full regard to the design strategy and coding as set out in the Sandleheath Design Guidance and Codes attached as Appendix A. The design, scale and appearance of development proposals must be relevant to their location and must preserve the setting and significance of designated and local heritage assets, locally important views and respect the rural character and discrete setting of the parish.	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is intended to protect important local landmarks and views from potential harm caused by development. This policy will ensure that development proposals preserve or enhance the local character of the landscape or views of significant buildings, in their design, demonstrating how they respond positively to the views and vista around the parish which the community value. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.
SAN4 – Housing Mix, Type and Tenure	A) Proposals for residential development will be expected 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, provision should be made for smaller dwellings (1	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is intended to set the housing mix of tenure and type. This includes provision of affordable housing and

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	bedroom - 3 bedroom) which 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 first time buyers, those looking to rent a home and downsizers. B) 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.	provision of specialist homes e.g. for elderly and disabled people. This mix in housing types and tenure is not considered to materially alter the impacts of housing development within the parish. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.
SAN5 - Site Allocations	1. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates 1.8 hectares of land to the north of Main Road, for a high-quality mixed use, residential led development of up to 40 dwellings, as shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals will be supported, provided they accord with the following site-specific requirements and with other relevant policies of the neighbourhood plan: i) The housing scheme will be located on parcel A in an area of approximately 1.25 hectares within the settlement boundary as defined in SAN1. Parcel B, an area of approximately 0.32 hectares, will be designated as F2 Community Use land, transferred to the Parish Council for the purpose of the creation of a car park for up to 25 cars to serve the Village Hall and the provision of public open space for community use. ii) The housing scheme shall comprise a tenure mix to include affordable housing, in conformity with the requirements of the local development plan. In accordance with SAN4, there should be an emphasis on smaller houses suitable as starter homes and for downsizers. As such, the scheme shall include a minimum of 12.5% First Homes within the affordable home tenure mix. iii) The scheme is accessed from Station Road using a single access point in a suitable location to the satisfaction of the	Likely Significant Effects Present This policy area is intended to meet demand for additional housing in Sandleheath parish. This need is to be met by understanding options for development including considering potential allocated sites with an appropriate number of these sites then being brough forward in the finalised neighbourhood plan. This policy area will lead to the allocation residential sites. Each of the potential sites is assessed in table 5-2 below. This policy has likely significant effects, with specifics detailed in table 5-2.

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	Highways Authority and creates a distinctive “gateway” to the village to mark a clear limit of settlement in support of the Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan (See Appendix B) iv) The layout shall 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. Bus stop infrastructure should also be installed to allow for public transport opportunities into Fordingbridge and beyond. v) The scheme delivers the appropriate financial contribution in compliance with the NFDC Recreational Mitigation Strategy. vi) The layout shall provide pedestrian links from the development to facilitate the creation of a circular walking route for the village as identified in SAN8, utilising Lady’s Walk where possible, subject to subject to permission from Forres Sandle Manor School. vii) The layout and landscape scheme delivers defensible boundaries between the site and the adjacent countryside at its eastern and northern boundaries to create a definitive settlement edge including a landscape buffer to strengthen the Local Gap as defined in SAN2 viii) All mature trees and hedgerows within the site are retained unless their removal is essential, and the minimum required to facilitate an efficient development layout. The existing tree belt along the boundaries shall be retained and reinforced. ix) The scheme maximises opportunities to produce and use renewable energy on-site. x) The scheme ensures that adjacent watercourse and ponds and their catchments are protected and enhanced.	

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	2. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates approximately 3.3 hectares of land to the south of Main Road, for a high-quality residential development of up to 57 dwellings, as shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals will be supported, provided they accord with the following site-specific requirements and with other relevant policies of the neighbourhood plan: i) The northern parcel, an area approximately 1 ha, shall comprise of up to 23 dwellings, a car park to serve the Alternative Natural Green Space and the village hall (for up to 30 cars,) two areas of public open space and community facilities. ii) The southern parcel, an area of approximately 2.3ha, shall comprise of up to 34 dwellings, surrounded to the east, south and west by an area of Alternative Natural Recreational Green Space (ARNG), minimum 1ha. The land will be transferred to a suitable body with a required long term management plan in line with the NFDC Recreational Mitigation Strategy (paragraphs 4.41 – 4.43). iii) The housing scheme shall comprise a tenure mix to include affordable housing, in conformity with the requirements of the local development plan. In accordance with SAN4, there should be an emphasis on smaller houses suitable as starter homes and for downsizers. As such, the scheme shall include a minimum of 12.5% First Homes within the affordable home tenure mix. iv) The housing scheme shall comprise a tenure mix to include affordable housing, in conformity with the requirements of the local development plan. In accordance with SAN4, there should be an emphasis on dwellings suitable as starter homes and also bungalows, suitable for downsizers. v) The scheme is accessed from Main Road using a single access point in a suitable location to the satisfaction of the Highways Authority. vi) The two areas designated as public open space on the northern parcel shall be secured by legal agreement for transfer to	

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	Sandleheath Parish Council for a nominal consideration (£1.00) The first parcel shall be located alongside the Main Road to the west of the site entrance and include the provision of a multiuse games area and single storey timber framed pavilion. The second, located on the eastern side of the site beyond the entrance, shall include a play area and visitor car park for up to 30 cars. vii) The layout shall provide a pedestrian crossing point from the development to provide a safe connection into the existing footway on the northern side of Station Road to enable pedestrian access to the village hall and beyond to local amenities. viii) The layout shall provide a pedestrian link through and around the development site to create new footpaths to facilitate the creation of a circular walking route for the village as identified in SAN8. ix) The layout and landscape scheme delivers strong defensible boundaries between the site and the adjacent countryside at its southern and western boundaries to create a definitive settlement edge. x) The development 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. xi) A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is undertaken to the satisfaction of the local planning authority xii) An ecological survey is undertaken to the satisfaction of the local planning authority xiii) An arboricultural survey to BS3837 is undertaken of all trees within the site and those adjoining likely to be affected by the development. All mature trees and hedgerows within the site are retained unless their removal is essential, and the minimum required to facilitate an efficient development layout. The existing tree belts along the boundaries shall be retained and reinforced.	

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	xiv) A sustainable drainage strategy is prepared for approval by the local planning authority to address the effects of surface water run-off within and adjoining the land; xv) The scheme maximises opportunities to produce and use renewable energy on-site. xvi) The developable area shall exclude existing priority habitats identified within the site, unless alternative mitigation sites for floodplain grazing marsh and deciduous woodland can be identified to the satisfaction of the local planning authority.	
SAN6 - Local Business & Employment	The Neighbourhood Plan identifies 4 sites in established employment use as shown on the Policies Map, that are of economic value to the parish and fundamental to provide local employment opportunities. 1. Sandleheath Village Shop 2. Sandleheath Industrial Estate 3. Forres Sandle Manor School & FSM Nursery 4. Rockbourne Road (Dean & Tranter) A. Proposals for the intensification or diversification of employment uses on these identified sites will be supported, provided they incorporate uses which will be compatible with existing uses in adjacent land and protect the setting of any heritage assets or landscape designations in close proximity to the site. B. Proposals should also be 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.	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is intended to safeguard existing, established employment locations in Sandleheath. This policy would seek to protect them from a change of use to non-employment uses. This policy area does not currently propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects. This policy area highlights that it could look to support expansion of these locations. If this policy does allocate any additional employment sites, this would probably result in likely significant effects.

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	C. Proposals that require planning permission for the change of use of land or premises which result in the loss of local employment will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the employment use will be re-provided elsewhere within the parish or the site has been actively marketed for employment uses for a minimum of 12 consecutive months and it is demonstrated that the location is no longer viable to refurbish or redevelop the site for an alternative employment use. D. Proposals for change of use of the Village Shop (Class E) should demonstrate that the loss of the facility would not harm the social cohesion or self-sufficiency of the village. Due to the potential harm to community well-being through the loss of the shop, increased reliance on cars, economic harm and incompatibility with rural sustainability aims, any application should demonstrate how these impacts are sought to be mitigated through the proposals.	
SAN7 - Green Infrastructure	The Neighbourhood Plan designates the Sandleheath Green Infrastructure Network, as shown on the map below. A. 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. Proposals for smaller infill schemes should also seek to realise any opportunities to connect their landscape schemes with adjoining green infrastructure assets. Where appropriate, developers will be expected to enter into a planning obligation to secure satisfactory arrangements for the long-term management of new open space.	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is intended to protect existing green and blue infrastructure withinin Sandleheath. It is recommended that this policy will reference the Hampshire Nature Recovery Strategy, and it may support the development of a community orchard. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	B. New development will also be required to retain trees and hedgerows and to secure opportunities to create connected habitats suitable for species adaption to climate change. Where they are unavoidably lost, replacement trees and hedgerows using indigenous species must be planted. All proposals for development in the Plan 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. C. 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. Proposals that will harm the functionality or connectivity of the Network, will not be supported. There is a presumption to retain, enhance and promote wider connections to Priority Habitats within the neighbourhood plan area and beyond. D. The following opportunities to enhance local habitats will be supported, where they conform with the other policies of the development plan: i) Connect Sandle Copse PHI to the woodland habitat to the west and south of Forres Sandle Manor. ii) Connect Brixeys and Reeve's Copse with wooded habitat, to the north of Hawk Mill Farm and Lower Court Wood (ancient woodland) and Lower Breach Copse (ancient woodland) that all sit within Cranborne Chase National Landscape. iii) Protection and enhancement of Ashford Water catchment and riparian corridor that flows into River Avon SAC through floodplain	

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	reconnection, in-channel enhancements, riparian planting and floodplain management. iv) Future management and enhancement of Common Land to the south of Court Hill.	
SAN8 - Connecting the Village	The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the existing Active Travel Network and opportunities for improvements, as shown on the Policies Map for the purpose of prioritising active travel in Sandleheath, encouraging the use of public transport and protecting and enhancing Public Rights of Ways. The Neighbourhood Plan also identifies the Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan, which prioritises pedestrian safety. This can be found in Appendix B. A. 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. B. The Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan (TMP), identifies opportunities where public realm improvements are required to improve highway safety. 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. C. The Active Travel Network identifies opportunities where public realm improvements are required to enhance the walking, wheeling and cycling environment, improve residential amenity and highway safety. Proposals which deliver opportunities for such improvement will be supported, as will proposals which support the priorities of the emerging New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is to map the existing active travel network and to use this to inform developers about the network to inform development proposals. This map may also be used to identify opportunities for improvements to encourage active travel. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	Plan, where proposals also accord with the other policies of the Development Plan. These opportunities are: 1) Those contained in the Sandleheath Traffic Management Plan (Phase Two and Three) 2) The creation of a circular walk around the village including: i) Securing public access to the existing Lady's Walk, (subject to approval from Forres Sandle Manor School) connecting to the existing bridleway in Marl Lane, or the creation of an adjacent footpath within site 8. ii) Creation of a new footpath/bridleway from Main Road, heading south across the stream to connect into the existing restricted byway to Alderholt Mill (outside parish boundary). 3) Widening the footway south of Main Road to the east of the village to connect to Ashford/Fordingbridge, with the introduction of a safe crossing point to connect to the footway to the north at the village entrance. 4) Widening the existing footway along to north of Main Road and Station Road to allow pedestrians to walk and pass safely. D. New developments should encourage the provision of conveniently located bus shelters, with seating and step-free access at boarding points. 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)	

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
SAN9 - Dark Skies	A. All development proposals must be designed to avoid the occurrence of light pollution. B. Streetlighting will be avoided unless a significant safety issue has been identified. C. New external lighting must comply with the current Cranborne Chase National Landscape Good Practice Note 7b(i). D. Safety and security lighting schemes should be kept to the minimum illumination necessary to achieve its purpose. Where required such schemes will be permitted where they employ energy-efficient forms of lighting that are fully shielded to eliminate emission above or near the horizontal, are on active controls such as motion detectors or timers to ensure that they are only on when they are needed, reduce light scatter and comply with the current guidelines established for Environmental Zone E1 by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP). The Correlated Colour Temperature (CCT) of this lighting must be 2700K or lower. E. Proposals for all development will be expected to demonstrate how they will prevent light pollution. Information on these measures must be submitted with applications, and where a development would potentially impact on light levels in the area, an appropriate lighting strategy will be secured by planning condition F. The design of new buildings must minimise light projected from windows and doors, particularly from skylights and large, unshielded expanses of windows. This can be achieved via brise-soleils, automatic dusk-to-dawn opaque blinds, or polymer-dispersed liquid crystal “smart” glass.	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is to be a development management policy that willprotects listed buildings and other local heritage assets including the Village Hall and Coronation Terrace. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.
SAN10 - Mitigating effects on European Sites	A) All net new housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area will need to make a financial contribution to delivery of the New Forest Recreation Management Strategy, or appropriate mitigation measures, as outlined in the NFDC New Forest National Park Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme.	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is to be a positive policy, designed to protect the International designated sites and National

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	B) All developments will need to demonstrate nutrient neutrality for phosphorus in relation to the River Avon SAC. This should be done through using the Natural England River Avon nutrient budget calculator and securing the delivery of offsetting measures as necessary to achieve neutrality.	SSSI sites from the impacts of recreational pressure due to development within this neighbourhood plan. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.
SAN11 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets	A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following buildings and structures as Local Heritage Assets, listed below and shown on the Policies Map: 1. Sandleheath Uniting Church 2. Sandleheath Village Hall, 3. The Ladies Walk Gates, near village hall 4. Coronation Terrace B. Proposals which would affect these non-designated local heritage assets and/or their settings will be permitted where they: i) Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the significance of the non-designated heritage asset affected by the proposal, including any contribution made to significance by setting, how this has informed the proposal, and how the proposal would impact on the significance of assets affected. Information submitted will be proportionate to the importance of the non-designated heritage asset(s) and the potential impact of the proposal; ii) Ensure that proposals including new buildings, external works, extensions, alterations and/or changes of use respect historic layout, scales, form, fabric (materials, finishes, design and detailing) and any other characteristics that contribute to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset(s)	No Likely Significant Effect This policy area is to be a development management policy that protects listed buildings and other local heritage assets including the Village Hall and Coronation Terrace. This policy area does not propose any allocation or quantum of additional development of employment or residential sites. Therefore, this policy has no likely significant effects.

Policy Area	Description	Likely Significant Effects
	iii) Achieve a high-quality design which is respectful of heritage significance and local character, and makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and; iv) Preserve and enhance the significance and character of historic buildings and places when considering alternative uses, make sensitive use of redundant historic assets, and promote the viable use of non-designated heritage assets consistent with their conservation.	

Table 5-2. Proposed Site Allocation Screening Table

Site	Area (ha)	Indicative Capacity	Likely Significant Effects
Land South of Main Road, Sandleheath	3.30	57	Likely Significant Effects Present The following impacts pathways could arise in combination with surrounding growth: • Recreational Pressure • Water Quality • Atmospheric Pollution
Land North of Main Road	1.81	40	Likely Significant Effects Present The following impacts pathways could arise in combination with surrounding growth: • Recreational Pressure • Water Quality • Atmospheric Pollution
Land East of Kerry Gardens	0.32	0	No Likely Significant Effects Land is being offered as community land to accompany land north of Main Road. Since there will be no housing or employment development on this parcel no likely significant effects will arise.

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