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Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment

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Summary

This report is the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan. This HRA report has been prepared by Footprint Ecology, on behalf of Purbeck District Council. A HRA considers the implications of a plan or project for European wildlife sites. Whilst the development of the Bere Regis Local Plan is community led, Purbeck District Council oversees the statutory assessments required for the plan, including the HRA. The District Council must ensure that the plan is presented for Examination with a conclusion of no likely significant effects, which is a specific requirement for Neighbourhood Plans brought in by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

This HRA assesses the European sites that could potentially be affected, the measures in place within the higher tier Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 to protect sites, the policy content and proposed growth within the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan and the measures being proposed within the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan to protect European sites.

HRA work in terms of assessments and evidence gathering has been undertaken over a number of years, both specifically within the Purbeck District for the preparation and adoption of the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1, but also across Dorset as a whole.

Development coming forward in accordance with the Local Plan, and its protective measures should therefore be capable of ensuring that European sites are protected. The strategic mitigation approaches that are of relevance to the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan are the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework Supplementary Planning Document 2015-2020 and the Nitrogen Reduction Poole Harbour Supplementary Planning Document, along with a currently developing approach to mitigating for recreation disturbance on Poole Harbour.

This HRA checks the individual site allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan, in terms of their location, size and nature of each proposed, therefore determining whether the allocations are in conformity with the higher tier measures to protect European sites, and whether there are any additional or bespoke requirements that need to be progressed.

Recommendations are made to improve clarity within the plan, and in order to ensure that the Dorset Heathlands Delivery Framework delivers targeted SAMM measures that will be of benefit in the locality of housing coming forward. Neither recommendation affects the growth proposed within the plan or adds any additional burden to the delivery of the plan. With these recommendations, this HRA is able to conclude that the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan is in accordance with the Habitats Regulations.

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1. Introduction

Context

- 1.1 This report is the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan. This HRA report has been prepared by Footprint Ecology, on behalf of Purbeck District Council. It has been written with the benefit of information and assistance provided by Purbeck District Council and Natural England.
- 1.2 A HRA considers the implications of a plan or project for European wildlife sites, in terms of any possible harm to the habitats and species that form an interest feature of the European sites in close proximity to the proposed plan or project, and which could occur as a result of the plan or project being put in place. In this instance, this HRA is undertaken at the Neighbourhood Plan level. HRA has already been undertaken for the higher tier Purbeck Local Plan Part 1, adopted in November 2012, for which Purbeck District Council has now commenced a plan review. The review is also the subject of an ongoing HRA.
- 1.3 HRA work undertaken at the plan level should ensure that projects coming forward are in conformity with plan level European site protection. The competent authority is still required to check individual development projects, to confirm that that the measures being applied at the project level adequately protect European sites, and accord with the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan and plan level protection measures. An explanation of the HRA assessment process is given below, and further detail can be found in Appendix 1.

Habitats Regulations Assessment process

- 1.4 A 'Habitats Regulations Assessment,' normally abbreviated to HRA, is the step by step process of ensuring that a plan or project being undertaken by, or permitted by a public body, will not adversely affect the ecological integrity of a European wildlife site. Where it is deemed that adverse effects cannot be ruled out, a plan or project must not proceed, unless exception tests are met. This is because European legislation, which is transposed into domestic legislation and policy, affords European sites the highest levels of protection in the hierarchy of sites designated to protect important features of the natural environment.

- 1.5 The relevant European legislation is the Habitats Directive 1992¹ and the Wild Birds Directive 2009², which are transposed into domestic legislation through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended. These Regulations are normally referred to as the ‘Habitats Regulations.’ Legislation sets out a clear step by step approach for decision makers considering any plan or project. In England, those duties are also supplemented by national planning policy through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This national planning policy also refers to Ramsar sites, which are listed in accordance with the international Ramsar Convention. The NPPF requires decision makers to apply the same protection and process to Ramsar sites as that set out in legislation for European sites. Formally proposed sites, i.e. sites proposed for European designation and going through the designation process, and those providing formal compensation for losses to European sites, are also given the same protection. This report refers to all the above sites as ‘European sites’ for assessment purposes, as the legislation is applied to all such sites, either directly or as a result of policy.
- 1.6 It should be noted that the European Directives operate on the basis that European sites are not isolated, but rather they are in place to serve as an ecologically functioning network, and ultimately it is the preservation of that network as a whole that is the overall aim of the European Directives. The network is often referred to as the Natura 2000 Network or ‘N2K Network.’ The Directives also promote a holistic approach to European site protection and long-term viability, with objectives relating to the supporting function of the wider landscape as well as the network of sites.
- 1.7 The Habitats Regulations provide the domestic legislation for the effective implementation of the parent Directives. The duties set out within the Habitats Regulations apply to any public body or individual holding public office with a statutory remit and function, referred to as ‘competent authorities.’ The requirements are applicable in situations where the competent authority is undertaking or implementing a plan or project, or authorising others to do so. The Habitats Regulations recognise that public bodies act as ‘competent authorities’ when they are preparing and adopting plans, when they are undertaking their own projects, and when they are permitting others to undertake projects. A competent authority is that which must have regard for provisions within the legislation as part of their public body duties.

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC

² Council Directive 2009/147/EC

- 1.8 As noted above, more detailed guide to the step by step process of HRA is provided in this report at Appendix 1.

The HRA requirements for Neighbourhood Plans

- 1.9 Plans produced by a public body set the direction and parameters for subsequent projects coming forward. Local Plans can include a number of documents that make up the Local Plan, including Neighbourhood Plans prepared by local communities for a specific location within a Local Plan area. All documents that make up a Local Plan work together to set the policies and development allocations necessary to consider development projects coming forward and enable sustainable growth to proceed. A Local Plan identifies the most appropriate parameters for such growth, considering local needs and circumstances, future projections, relevant legislation and policy, and co-ordination with adjoining authorities. Neighbourhood Plans, first introduced through the Localism Act 2011, contribute to this by enabling local communities to contribute towards the future shape of their local area.
- 1.10 Whilst the development of the Bere Regis Local Plan is community led, Purbeck District Council oversees the statutory assessments required for the plan, including the HRA. For the purposes of this assessment, Purbeck District Council is the competent authority. The District Council must ensure that the plan is presented for Examination with a conclusion of no likely significant effects, which is a specific requirement for Neighbourhood Plans brought in by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. It is therefore necessary to undertake all necessary assessment work, and embed all required measures to avoid and minimise impacts on European sites within the plan prior to Examination.

Approach to assessing the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.11 In assessing the implications of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan for European sites in close proximity, this HRA assesses the following:
- The European sites that could potentially be affected
 - The measures in place within the higher tier Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 to protect European sites
 - The policy content and proposed growth within the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan
 - The measures being proposed within the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan to protect European sites

2. European sites

- 2.1 There are numerous European sites within or near Purbeck District. The Purbeck District lies within Dorset, and is an area of renowned biodiversity and landscape value. The District is quite unique in the extent, range and number of different protected sites, with 20% of the Local Plan area being an internationally designated site. The coast and heathlands have an array of designations to protect these natural assets, and they provide a significant tourism draw. The HRA for the Purbeck Local Plan gives a detailed account of the European sites within and in close proximity to Dorset, which are relevant to the Purbeck Local Plan. The following information is a short summary of the more comprehensive information provided in the HRA for the adopted Purbeck Local Plan Part 1, and also in the draft HRA of the emerging plan review.
- 2.2 Every European site has a set of ‘interest features’ which are the ecological features for which the site is designated or classified, and the features for which Member States should ensure the site is maintained or, where necessary restored. Each European site also has a set of ‘conservation objectives’ for the site interest, i.e. what the site should be achieving in terms of restoring or maintaining the special ecological interest of European importance. Natural England is in the process of updating the conservation objectives for all European sites in England. This project has involved the preparation of generic conservation objectives that are to be applied to all European sites, as described in Appendix 2. This is now being followed up with the preparation of more detailed supplementary advice for each individual European site.
- 2.3 The site conservation objectives are relevant to any HRA, because they identify what should be achieved for the site, and a HRA may therefore consider whether any plan or project may compromise the achievement of those objectives. In addition to conservation objectives, Natural England produces Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) for each European site in England as part of a wider programme of work under the ‘Improvement Programme for England’s Natura 2000 sites.’ Each plan includes a set of actions for alleviating issues that are impeding the delivery of conservation objectives, with lead delivery bodies identified and indicative timescales. The SIPs can provide an additional useful reference for HRA work, identifying where there are site sensitivities.

Relevant European sites for the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1

- 2.4 Poole Harbour is a large shallow lagoon, classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and listed as a Ramsar site. The SPA classification reflects the international importance of the harbour for breeding, wintering and passage birds. The use

of the harbour by the various bird species is complex, with different species relying on different parts of the harbour at different times of year.

2.5 Dorset holds some 7500 ha of heathland, with much of this being designated as being of European importance. The European designated sites are the Dorset Heathlands SPA, the Dorset Heathlands SAC and the Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC. The sites are also underpinned by national level wildlife designations, as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The designations at the international and national levels reflect the conservation importance of the sites, which hold internationally important bird species (breeding nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler, wintering raptors such as merlin and hen harrier), all six species of native British reptiles and the southern damselfly, a rare dragonfly found at various sites including Norden, Hartland, Creech and Corfe Common. The various rare plants include the Dorset Heath, for which the heaths around Poole Harbour are the British stronghold. Within Purbeck there are famous heathland reserves such as Hartland Moor, Studland and Arne as well as less known sites such as Grange and Creech Heath. Virtually all the sites, apart from the tracts owned by the MOD have public access.

2.6 The Dorset coastline is a World Heritage Site and the two coastal SACs (St Alban's Head to Durlston Head with Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs) form a single unit of cliffed coastline some 40km in length. The hard limestone cliffs, with chalk at the eastern end (near Old Harry and near Lulworth) are interspersed with slumped sections of soft cliffs comprised of sands and clays. The cliffs support two internationally important habitats: namely the vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts and the semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland faces. A number of rare plant species are associated with the grassland habitats. The largest population of Early Spider Orchid within the UK occurs on the Purbeck coast between Durlston and St. Aldhelm's Head. Other notable plant species include wild cabbage, Nottingham catchfly and early gentian (the latter is a primary reason for the SAC designation).

2.7 The relevant European sites for the HRA of the higher tier plan, the Purbeck Local Plan are as follows, and it is these European sites that are similarly the sites that need to be considered for the HRA of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan:

- Dorset Heathlands SPA
- Dorset Heaths SAC
- Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site
- Poole Harbour SPA
- Poole Harbour Ramsar site
- The New Forest SAC
- The New Forest SPA
- The New Forest Ramsar site

- St Alban's Head to Durlston Head SAC
- Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC

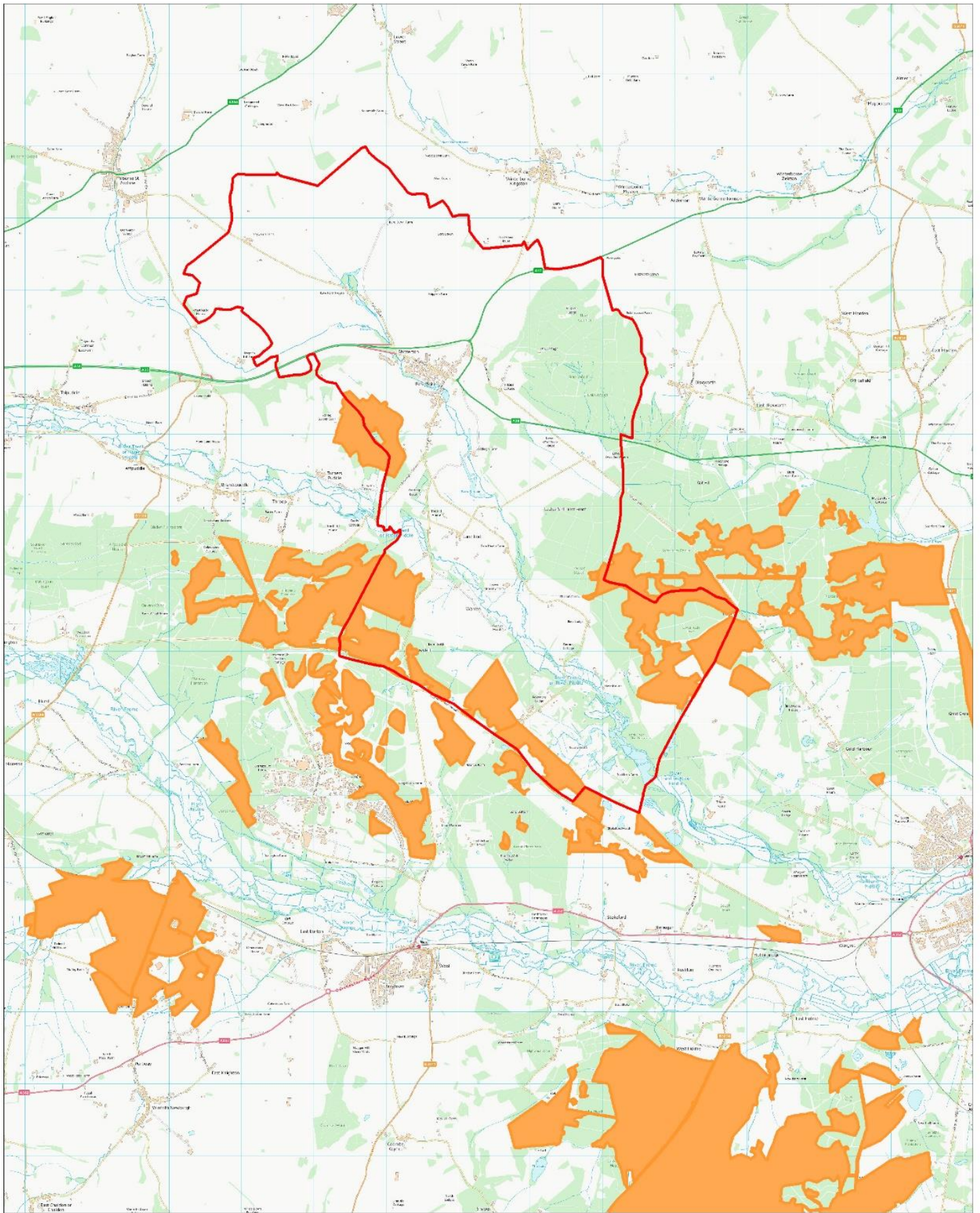
- 2.8 Relevant information on the European site designations and their interest features are provided in Appendix 3.
- 2.9 The Habitats Directive seeks to restore and maintain a coherent network of wildlife sites across Europe. The Directive includes provisions that relate to both the individual site, in terms of protecting its integrity, and also the wider favourable conservation status of habitats and species across their biogeographical range. Each designated area should contribute to achieving favourable conservation status for habitats and species of European importance, as listed within the Directive.
- 2.10 In assessing the implications of plans and projects for European sites, it is important to note that whilst each site has a site boundary, encompassing the most critical areas for the long-term maintenance of habitat extent or population numbers, habitats and species can be reliant upon areas outside the designated site boundary for a number of reasons, such as the provision of additional habitat that sustains species by providing feeding grounds, or commuting corridors, or supporting processes that enable a habitat to function, such as hydrological connections.
- 2.11 In Dorset, there are a number of sites that provide a vital supporting role for the designated sites. For example, there are forestry sites that hold high numbers of Annex I bird species (i.e. the species listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive as being those for which SPAs are classified), particularly nightjar and woodlark. These forest blocks are often contiguous with the Dorset Heathlands SPA and as such are deemed to be functionally linked. Key forest blocks in Purbeck include Wareham Forest, Rempstone, Hethfelton, Moreton and Puddletown.
- 2.12 For the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan area, the additional quantum of development as part of the overall delivery of sustainable growth in Purbeck has the potential to affect the European sites in ways that were fully assessed as part of the HRA for the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1, and now forming part of the HRA work for the plan review. The Local Plan Part 1 was able to be adopted with a conclusion that it was in conformity with the Habitats Regulations because of the suite of measures in place within the plan (and expanded in other supporting documents, as discussed below), that provide the necessary protection of European sites alongside the implementation of the plan in terms of the level of growth promoted.
- 2.13 Collaborative working with neighbouring planning authorities has enabled the development of now well-established measures for the ongoing protection of

European sites alongside sustainable growth. This is underpinned by comprehensive evidence, which is now being further informed by monitoring. The Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan will need to demonstrate compliance with the established frameworks in place. These are discussed further in Section 3.

Relevant European sites for the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.14 In addition to the consideration of the impact of growth per se, this HRA needs to check the individual site allocations in terms of their potential effects. This is a check that directly relates to the location, size and nature of each allocation proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan, therefore determining whether the allocations are in conformity with the higher tier measures to protect European sites, and whether there are any additional or bespoke requirements that need to be progressed because of the specific location, size and nature of an allocation. In other words, whether the higher tier measures in place provide adequate certainty of European site protection, or whether there is a need to add anything further so that measures are applicable to the local circumstances.
- 2.15 The European sites of relevance for this additional check are those in close proximity, where site allocation location may bring additional concerns over and above the delivery of a level of development across the District, for which the measures in the Local Plan Part 1 adequately mitigate for. The European sites of relevance are therefore the Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site. The locations and boundaries for these sites, alongside the plan areas for the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan are shown on Map1 for Dorset Heaths SAC, Map 2 for the Dorset Heathlands SPA and Map 3 for the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site. For much of the sites, their boundaries are in alignment, but there are areas where only one or two out of the three designations applies.
- 2.16 The site specific supplementary advice for the Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands SPA has not yet been prepared. HRAs must therefore use the generic conservation objectives in appendix 2 of this report, and the local application is made by gathering locally relevant information and evidence. Natural England has published a SIP covering the suite of Dorset Heathlands (Dorset Heathlands SPA, Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) & Studland Dunes SAC). This lists public access and disturbance as a threat for the sites, and identifies the strategic measures being undertaken by the partnership of local authorities, described in the following section below, as the action in place to alleviate this pressure.

Map 1: Plan boundary and SACs

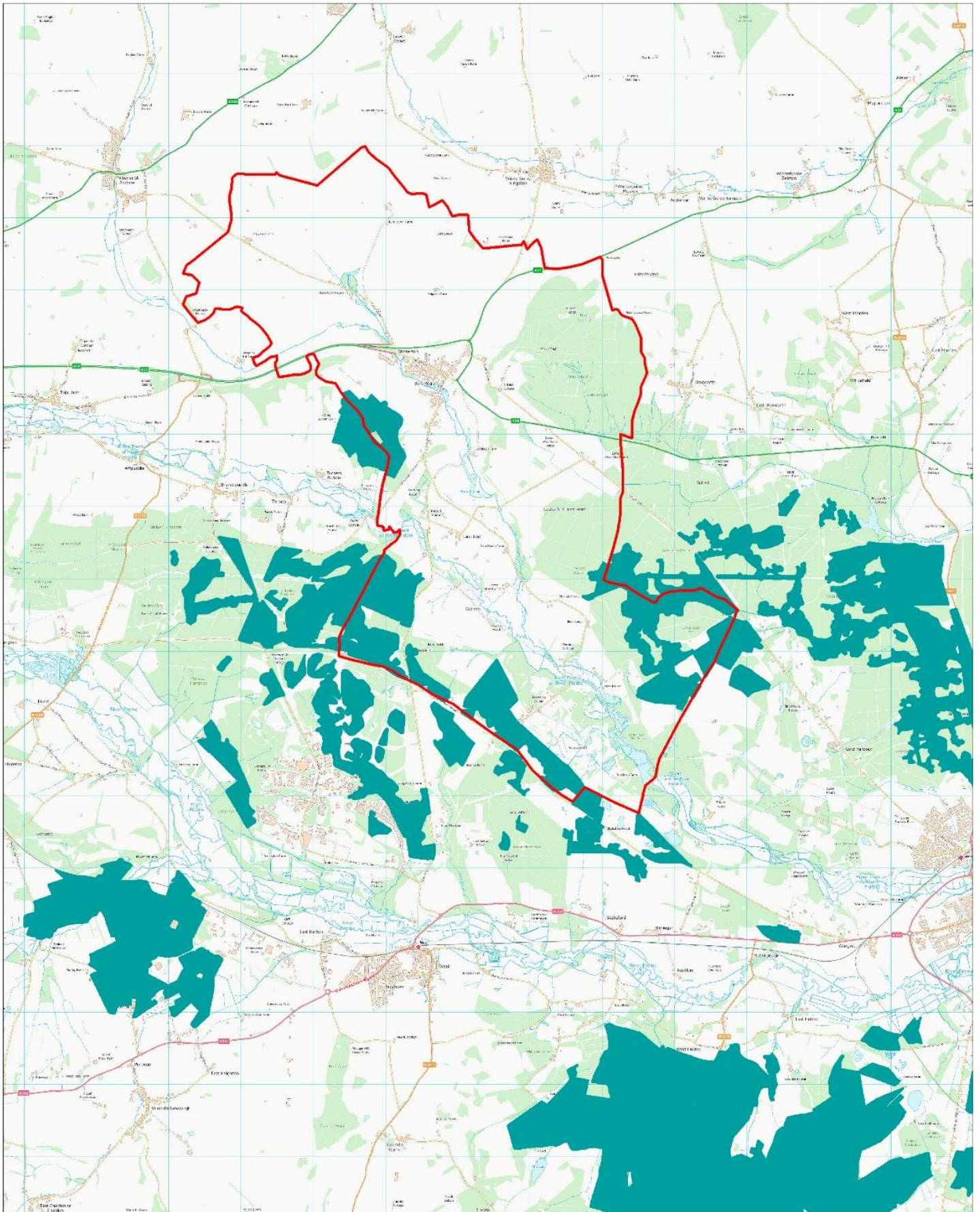


Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



Dorset Heaths SAC

Map 2: Plan boundary and SPAs

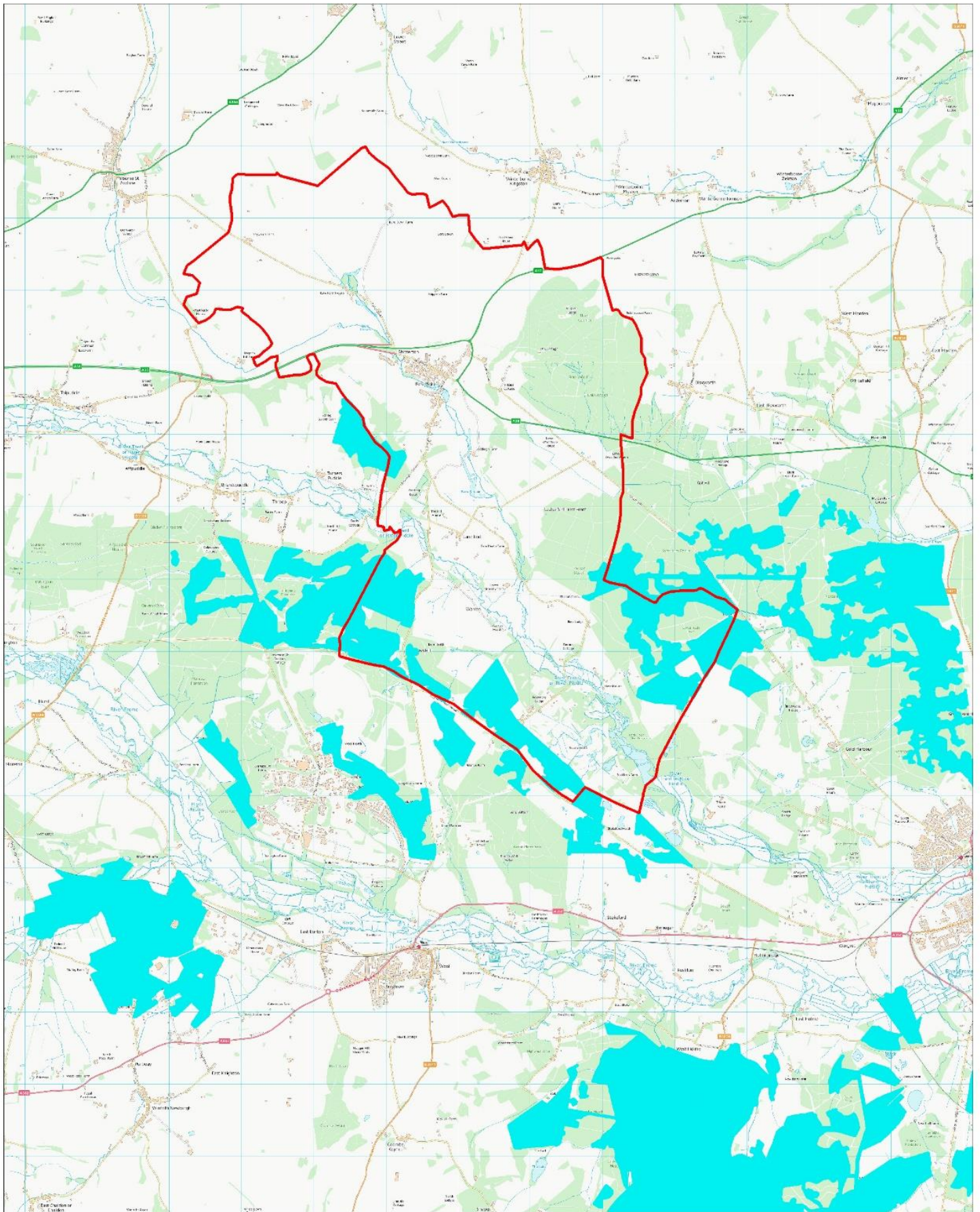


Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



Dorset Heathlands SPA

Map 3: Plan boundary and Ramsar Sites



Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



Dorset Heathlands Ramsar

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Designated site boundaries from Natural England website. © Natural England.

3. European site Protection Measures in the Purbeck Local Plan

- 3.1 The European sites described in the previous section and in detail in Appendix 3 have been the subject of considerable HRA work in recent years, both specifically within the Purbeck District for the preparation and adoption of the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1, but also across Dorset as a whole. Development coming forward in accordance with the Local Plan, and its protective measures should therefore be capable of ensuring that European sites are protected. This HRA therefore does not revisit earlier assessment work in relation to Purbeck wide matters such as air quality and water resources.
- 3.2 Collaborative working across authority boundaries has led to the development of agreed approaches to protecting European sites with specific regard for the potential impact of new housing on European sites. The strategic mitigation approaches that are of relevance to the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan are the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework Supplementary Planning Document 2015-2020 and the Nitrogen Reduction Poole Harbour Supplementary Planning Document, along with a currently developing approach to mitigating for recreation disturbance on Poole Harbour.
- 3.3 Strategic mitigation schemes are those which are established at a plan or strategy level, for implementation across multiple development projects. The research, evidence gathering and assessment necessary to develop a mitigation approach that has the necessary level of certainty, and confidence in successful delivery is all undertaken upfront in order to develop a scheme that is fit for purpose, and applicable across the spectrum of development coming forward.
- 3.4 At the project level, individual developments can then comply with the adopted strategic approach and have confidence that mitigation is being secured, proportionate to the development and potential impact. This reduces delay and removes the need for lengthy assessment at each project. HRA at the project level can then be a simple check for compliance with the strategic approach, along with a check for any other potential impacts, not covered by the strategic approach.
- 3.5 Both the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework Supplementary Planning Document 2015-2020 and the Nitrogen Reduction Poole Harbour Supplementary Planning Document are now established strategic approaches. A further mitigation need identified by the HRA for the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 relates to the effects of recreation pressure at Poole Harbour. Projects are now being co-ordinated and delivered through a number of mechanisms, but the approach is still in the early stages of establishment.

Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework

- 3.6 This document is a Supplementary Planning Document adopted by Purbeck District Council (and all other relevant Dorset authorities), and is applicable to the period 2015-2020.
- 3.7 For the suite of Dorset Heathland sites (SPA and a number of SACs across Dorset) the HRAs for Dorset local planning authorities have identified that disturbance to ground nesting heathland birds, trampling and erosion on heathland habitats, predation of nests by domestic cats, eutrophication from dog fouling, damaging anti-social behaviours such as fly-tipping and increased heathland fire risk are all potential risks that in the absence of measures to avoid and mitigate for, adverse effects on the European sites cannot be ruled out. There is a considerable evidence base relating to these impacts (Underhill-Day 2005; Liley *et al.* 2007)
- 3.8 Natural England has worked with the Dorset local authorities to identify, research and assess the adverse effects, which would occur in combination with any residential development in the area up to 5km from the protected heath boundary (and potentially beyond for large scale development). The result of a number of years of collaborative working is the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework, which sets out a strategic solution in the form of two main mitigation opportunities; provision of offsite measures, referred to as 'Heathland Infrastructure Projects' and which can include Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) to deflect recreation pressure away from European sites, and Site Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) to provide enhanced management of visitors on the European sites.

Nitrogen Reduction Poole Harbour

- 3.9 This Supplementary Planning Document adopted by Purbeck District Council ensures that the potential for increased nitrogen entering Poole Harbour as a result of new development is negated by projects that offset the additional nitrogen entering the European site via waste water discharges. Nutrient enrichment of the harbour results in a number of ecological concerns, most notable are the algal mats that form on the surface of the mudflats. These smother the surface of the mud, with implications for invertebrates living within the mud and the birds that feed on those invertebrates (Green, Sutula & Fong 2014). The availability of mudflat dwelling invertebrates is affected by the algal mats, reducing both the density and diversity of invertebrates, and therefore reducing quality and quantity of food available for the Annex 1 birds.

- 3.10 The strategic approach recognises that nitrogen can enter the harbour from a range of sources, and Natural England is working with a range of partners to improve both diffuse and point sources. The scheme requires development to be 'nitrogen neutral,' preferably through the use of new/alternative technologies. Offsetting the nitrogen increase through treated waste water from residential development can be done through projects that reduce nitrogen input. Projects could include for example, taking farmland permanently out of active production, or by demonstrably reducing nitrogen input through a permanent change from intensive to low level agricultural management.
- 3.11 Where a SANG is provided and part of the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework, there may be the opportunity to also allow it to count towards nitrogen neutrality, if the creation of the SANG takes farmland out of production or moves the management from more intensive to low level.

Projects to mitigate for Poole Harbour recreation pressure

- 3.12 Purbeck District Council and the Borough of Poole are working together to co-ordinate and deliver a number of projects in recognition of the assessment of recreation disturbance to Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar site in their relevant plan level HRAs. Whilst this is not yet as established as the schemes for nitrogen reduction and the heathlands access management, there are now a number of projects being funded to mitigate for Annex 1 bird disturbance as a result of recreation activities.
- 3.13 The Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan³ provides the delivery mechanism for much of the mitigation being taken forward to alleviate the impact of recreation, and is overseen by a steering group of local authorities, government agencies and relevant industry organisations including the Poole Harbour Commissioners and Southern Sea Fisheries District Committee. Projects include permitting schemes for water based activities, additional wardening resource and establishing monitoring.

Funding the strategic approaches in Purbeck

- 3.14 Purbeck District Council currently draws funding for the three strategic approaches described above from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is a mechanism for funding infrastructure within a local authority's administrative area, that is required in order to support new development. The Community Infrastructure Levy is governed by legislation and a local planning authority needs to adhere to the legislation and guidance provided by

³ <http://www.pooleharbouraqmp.co.uk/>

government in establishing, drawing funds from and implementing projects for the Levy.

- 3.15 In order to have certainty that this multifunctional funding source is appropriately used to fund European site mitigation, Purbeck District Council has committed to prioritising the three strategic approaches over and above any other infrastructure requirements. This commitment is made in the 'Regulation 123 list,' which is the list of funding requirements the Council has approved for using CIL funding in the Purbeck District. Most development is required to make a CIL payment. However, recognising that some residential development is exempt from making a CIL payment, such as types of affordable housing, the Council ensures that the correct 'per house contribution' is taken from the CIL budget to account for all houses approved for development.
- 3.16 Purbeck District Council keeps a detailed record of housing permissions and when development is commenced, the appropriate amount of CIL funding is taken from the CIL budget held by the Council, and allocated to the three strategic mitigation needs. Each of the three is run slightly differently, and the Council works with appropriate partners to develop projects. Natural England is asked to confirm that proposed schemes will provide appropriate mitigation before the Council approves expenditure. The schemes tend to have a rolling programme of projects that will collectively ensure that new growth is adequately mitigated for.

4. Screening the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan for Likely Significant Effects

- 4.1 As noted earlier, Neighbourhood Plans should only be approved where it can be demonstrated that the plan will not result in any likely significant effects to European sites. This means that the HRA needs to be able to demonstrate that all risks have been adequately avoided. Where a higher tier Local Plan is in place, the Neighbourhood Plan is usually heavily reliant upon the higher tier mitigation measures in place in order to demonstrate compliance and that likely significant effects have therefore been ruled out.
- 4.2 Screening a plan for likely significant effects involved checking every part of the plan and assessing potential risks to European sites. The screening exercise seeks to identify any impact pathways, i.e. ways in which the plan could affect European sites. Any risks will need to be checked to ensure that there is confidence that avoidance and mitigation measures are secured as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, and/or the higher tier Local Plan.
- 4.3 The following screening table checks all parts of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan. Where potential risks are highlighted, these are discussed in further detail after the table.

Table 1: Screening the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan for likely significant effects

Policy/Section of plan	Description	LSE screening	Potential risks	Recommendations
Introduction	Informative context setting	No LSE – does not promote development, sets context for the plan only	N/A	N/A
Vision and objectives	Sets 6 objectives for the plan	No LSE – Objective 6 focusses on the natural environment, therefore ensuring that this is integral to sustainable development in the plan area	N/A	N/A
Consultation	Chronology of consultation on the plan to date	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Legislative requirements	Explaining the legislative requirements that the plan has to meet	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Purbeck Local Plan Part 1	Explains the Local Plan level policy for North	No LSE – Local Plan policy refers to the need to contribute	N/A	N/A

Policy/Section of plan	Description	LSE screening	Potential risks	Recommendations
	West Purbeck, which the plan is in conformity with	towards measures to mitigate for potential effects on European sites		
Background				
Bere Regis location	Description of the plan area	No LSE – makes reference to wildlife value	N/A	N/A
Population profile	Data used to establish a population profile for the plan area	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Housing	Data used to establish the current housing profile for the plan area	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Access and connectivity	Data used to establish the current transport use for the plan area	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Economic activity	Data used to establish the current economic activity and socio-economic position of residents for the plan area	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Education	Data used to establish the current education profile for residents of the plan area	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
The village setting	Historic information about the plan area	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Housing	History of the progression of housing from the early establishment of houses to present	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Natural environment	Explanation of the natural environment assets of the plan area	No LSE – includes reference to European sites	N/A	N/A
Business and employment	Description of the main businesses of the plan area	No LSE – informative only	N/A	N/A
Community facilities and services	Description of the main community facilities provided within the plan area	No LSE – informative only. Includes reference to natural open spaces and wildlife sites	N/A	N/A
Safeguarding the southern bypass route	Reference to the potential for a future southern bypass between the A31 and C6 – a proposal initially investigated BY Dorset CC, but now not deemed a priority due to budget constraints. The plan	No LSE – does not promote the transport project, simply supports the safeguarding of the route in order for it to remain a future option.	N/A	N/A

Policy/Section of plan	Description	LSE screening	Potential risks	Recommendations
	notes this future potential and supports the safeguarding of the route in order to prevent any constraints on the future option			
Planning policies				
Policy HEA Development	Purbeck Local Plan allocated 50 dwellings at one site (former school) for Bere Regis. The policy proposes increasing this to 105 houses at 5 sites.	Potential for LSE – further scrutiny of housing numbers and location of housing sites required	Increased recreation pressure and disturbance to Dorset Heathlands sites – Black Hill	Look in more detail at the locations and potential implications for Black Hill (see below screening table)
Policy AH Affordable housing tenure	Affordable housing is exempt from making a CIL contribution, but still requires mitigating for in terms of all European sites	Potential for LSE if appropriate CIL funding is not provided to the strategic mitigation approaches	Inadequate funding of strategic mitigation approaches	Re-check current approach to securing adequate funding for CIL exempt development (see below screening table)
Policy SB Settlement boundaries	Refinement of the settlement boundaries	No LSE – policy does not bring forward development, it is an administrative requirement for the plan only	N/A	N/A
Policy BL SANG	Reference is made to the Purbeck Local Plan strategic mitigation approaches for residential development, including the need for SANG provision for 50 house + development	Potential for LSE – further scrutiny of SANG provision in order to confirm conformity with SANGs requirements. Reference to SAMM provision not made	Risks to Dorset Heathlands sites if SANG provision is not adequate	Check SANG proposal against requirements. Refine explanatory text to give clarity on all strategic mitigation approach requirements including SAMM (see below screening table)
Policy N Nitrogen mitigation	Requirement for conformity with the strategic approach for Poole Harbour Nitrogen Reduction	No LSE – Explains the requirements for the strategic approach	N/A	N/A
Policy BRGW Bere Regis groundwater	Sets criteria for managing flood risk	No LSE – an environmentally positive and protective policy	N/A	N/A
Policy NA Noise attenuation	Requirement for noise bunding at specified development sites	No LSE – relates to development site landscaping to minimise noise, no risks to European sites as no impact pathways	N/A	N/A
Housing sites				

Policy/Section of plan	Description	LSE screening	Potential risks	Recommendations
Policy BL Back Lane	55 dwellings, includes reference to SANG requirement and Poole Harbour Nitrogen Reduction	Potential for LSE – further scrutiny of housing numbers and location of housing sites required. Reference to the SANG being provided by this development, but not to SAMM	Increased recreation pressure and disturbance to Dorset Heathlands sites – Black Hill	Look in more detail at the locations and potential implications for Black Hill (see below screening table)
Policy NSH North Street housing	10 dwellings, includes reference to SANG requirement and Poole Harbour Nitrogen Reduction	Potential for LSE – further scrutiny of housing numbers and location of housing sites required. Reference to Back Lane SANG but not to SAMM	Increased recreation pressure and disturbance to Dorset Heathlands sites – Black Hill	Look in more detail at the locations and potential implications for Black Hill (see below screening table)
Policy TH Tower Hill	5 dwellings, includes reference to access to the SANG provided to the north, and Poole Harbour Nitrogen Reduction	Potential for LSE – further scrutiny of housing numbers and location of housing sites required. Reference to Back Lane SANG but not to SAMM	Increased recreation pressure and disturbance to Dorset Heathlands sites – Black Hill	Look in more detail at the locations and potential implications for Black Hill (see below screening table)
Policy WL White Lovington	12 dwellings, does not include reference to strategic mitigation approaches	Potential for LSE – further scrutiny of housing numbers and location of housing sites required.	Increased recreation pressure and disturbance to Dorset Heathlands sites – Black Hill	Look in more detail at the locations and potential implications for Black Hill (see below screening table)
Policy FS Former School	23 dwellings, does not include reference to strategic mitigation approaches	Potential for LSE – further scrutiny of housing numbers and location of housing sites required.	Increased recreation pressure and disturbance to Dorset Heathlands sites – Black Hill	Look in more detail at the locations and potential implications for Black Hill (see below screening table)
Business and employment				
Policy NSE North Street employment	Provision of an allocation for employment use. The site is partly that which is allocation within the Purbeck Local Plan, but is significantly extended in recognition of the additional housing being proposed, in order to provide additional employment opportunities.	No LSE – The Location and development type for this allocation does not pose any risks – no identified impact pathways.	N/A	N/A

Policy/Section of plan	Description	LSE screening	Potential risks	Recommendations
Policy CF Community facilities and services	Encourages new community facilities within the settlement boundary. Sets criteria for proposals outside the settlement boundary.	No LSE – Whilst project level HRSA may be required for proposals outside the settlement boundary. The policy includes a requirement for minimising environmental impacts	Depending on location, the Dorset Heathland sites may be affected, but the policy does not promote particular development.	Project level HRA may be required in some instances,
Policy CH Community Hall	Site allocation for a new community hall	No LSE – The Location and development type for this allocation does not pose any risks – no identified impact pathways.	N/A	N/A
Policy TA Tourism	Promotes touring caravan and campsite development, provided that it is in accordance with Purbeck Local Plan policy CO	No LSE – Policy CO in the Local Plan requires any such development to demonstrate that it will not adversely affect ecological aspects of the environment.	Additional tourism in the plan area could lead to more tourists visiting the Dorset Heathland sites, including Black Hill	Project level HRA will need to assess the impact of additional recreation pressure on the Dorset Heathland sites.
Policy IOS Important open spaces	Provides for the protection of open spaces within the plan area	No LSE – the protection of the existing open spaces adds to the recreation resources away from the European sites, therefore supporting the role of the SANG	N/A	N/A
Appendices	Various reports and statements to inform the plan	No LSE – provided for information purposes only	N/A	N/A

4.4 The risks highlighted in the screening table above are considered in more detail here, in order to confirm that likely significant effects can be ruled out, or are adequately avoided by Purbeck Local Plan measures.

Checking provision for securing contributions to strategic mitigation approaches

- 4.5 As explained in the previous section, the mechanism for securing contribution to the three strands of strategic approaches to mitigation, established at the Purbeck Local Plan level, is through CIL. Purbeck District Council manage this and each development is simply required to make the appropriate CIL contribution for their development. The proposals within the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan are therefore not affected by this, as each will make the necessary CIL payment and the council will ensure that a 'per house' contribution' is allocated to the three strategic approaches. This should include accounting for those houses that have not individually made a CIL contribution due to being a type of development that is except from CIL payment.
- 4.6 With this mechanism already in place and established, there is certainty that the housing proposals will be adequately mitigated for. However, at various points throughout the plan, the need to mitigate, and the mitigation secured via the strategic approaches is not clear, and in some instances only one or two of the three is mentioned. It is therefore recommended that at some point in the plan, a brief explanation is given to give clarity and certainty that the plan meets the requirements of the legislation and conforms with the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 on this matter. This would then enable the partial explanations in various parts of the plan to be removed, to aid the flow of the plan text.
- 4.7 For example, in some places reference is made to the provision of a SANG. However, Purbeck District Council will also need to make the necessary provision for SAMM funding, in order to comply with the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework.

Checking housing numbers and locations for likely significant effects

- 4.8 An important part of this HRA of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan is to check that the housing allocations and housing numbers are such that they confirm with the three strategic approaches. The locations of development do not have any influence over compliance with the approach for nitrogen reduction and Poole Harbour recreation. However, given the close proximity of Black Hill, part of the Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands SPA, to the immediate south of Bere Regis, some additional consideration needs to be given, in order to have confidence that the strategic approach in the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework is fit for purpose in these circumstances.
- 4.9 Map 4 shows the five housing allocations in relation to the Dorset Heathland sites, along with the 400m Local Plan buffer (within which residential development is to normally be excluded due to proximity to the European site). Map 5 provides an illustration of the footpath network in relation to the greenspaces and proposed SANG.

Housing numbers

4.10 The number of houses proposed by the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan is 105, which is an increase from the 50 houses proposed in the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1. However, whilst the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework was developed on the basis of housing numbers within each local planning authority's plan it has some flexibility in that it provides for a rolling programme of SAMM and SANG projects that continue in line with housing delivery. The Framework is regularly reviewed and the programme of projects updated accordingly. The magnitude of the increase is such that it should be accommodated, subject to the recommendations below in relation to allocation locations. The potential magnitude of housing increases for the Purbeck District as a whole does require more detailed assessment in terms of the ability of the Framework to accommodate such levels of additional growth, and that is being assessed through the HRA for the Local Plan review.

Housing locations

- 4.11 The five housing locations are spread around Bere Regis, with the largest allocation, Back Lane, being to the north and close to the proposed SANG that will be delivered by this development. There are two allocations to the south of Bere Regis; White Lovington and Former School, which together propose to deliver 35 houses. These two allocations have been made with full regard for the 400m buffer, and lie immediately outside that exclusion zone.
- 4.12 To the immediate south of Bere Regis is Black Hill, a privately owned but publicly accessible part of the Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands SPA. This is a popular site for walking and dog walking, particularly given the panoramic views that can be gained from the top of the hill. There is a good footpath network leading from Bere Regis to Black Hill. This footpath network is very easily accessible from the White Lovington and Former School sites.
- 4.13 Bere Regis benefits from an attractive network of open spaces, and there is a focus on open space along the Bere Stream. There are number of other accessible areas around the periphery of Bere Regis, and most of these open spaces have an attractive landscape, a natural feel and provide a range of wildlife habitats for people to enjoy. The addition of 5.5 ha of SANG, as discussed below, will complement the existing open space network and importantly will create a larger expanse of open space.
- 4.14 It is therefore concluded that having regard for all these points, the strategic approach provided for by the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework should provide adequate mitigation for the new housing. However, the concern that Black Hill is readily accessible, a popular location for dog walking and particularly close to the White Lovington and Former School sites leads to the recommendation that the Framework should include an access management project for Black Hill.

- 4.15 This does not affect the housing allocations, but rather it is a recommendation that Purbeck District Council and its partners overseeing the approval and delivery of SAMM projects as part of the Framework should secure a project that enhances access management at this location. It is suggested that such a project may include, for example, some focussed wardening time, school/local resident awareness raising events, provision of additional dog waste bins or provision of interpretation. The detail of such a project could be determined in response to local knowledge and understanding of what may deliver the most benefits.

Checking the SANG provision

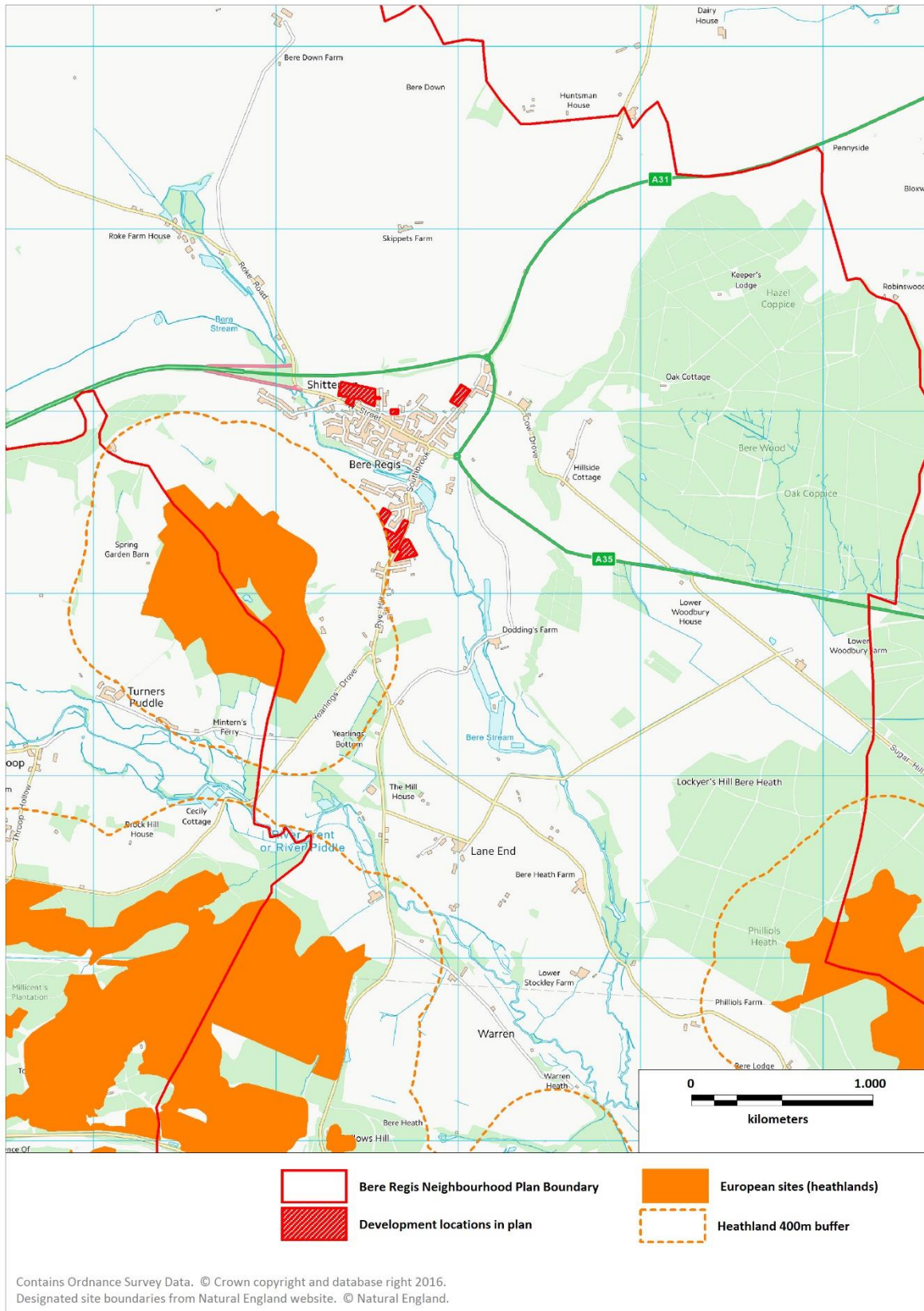
- 4.16 In accordance with the Framework, the Back Lane allocation is identified within the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan as needing to deliver a SANG (as the allocation is for 50 or more houses). This SANG is 5.5 hectares in size and located to the north of Bere Regis. This SANG has been identified for some time, and the Bere Regis Community, Purbeck District Council, the potential developer, landowner and Natural England have all been involved in discussion to some extent to date. A check of the SANG proposal for this HRA enables a conclusion that it conforms with the Framework, and this has also been confirmed with Natural England. The additional consideration given to future access from the SANG to the north is very positive, providing the potential for visitors to extend their walk by crossing the main road.
- 4.17 The SANG subject to an appropriate management plan being prepared; this will be developed when the Back Lane development is being taken forward as a planning proposal. Purbeck District Council will then follow agreed protocol of agreeing a detailed management plan (in-perpetuity, which is established as at least 80 years) that covers both SANG establishment, provision of all visitor infrastructure and long-term management. The necessary legal agreements will be made between the Council, developer and landowner as appropriate.
- 4.18 These procedures are an established means of securing SANG, and for this HRA it can therefore be concluded that implementation of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan will proceed in conformity with the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework.

Project level checks

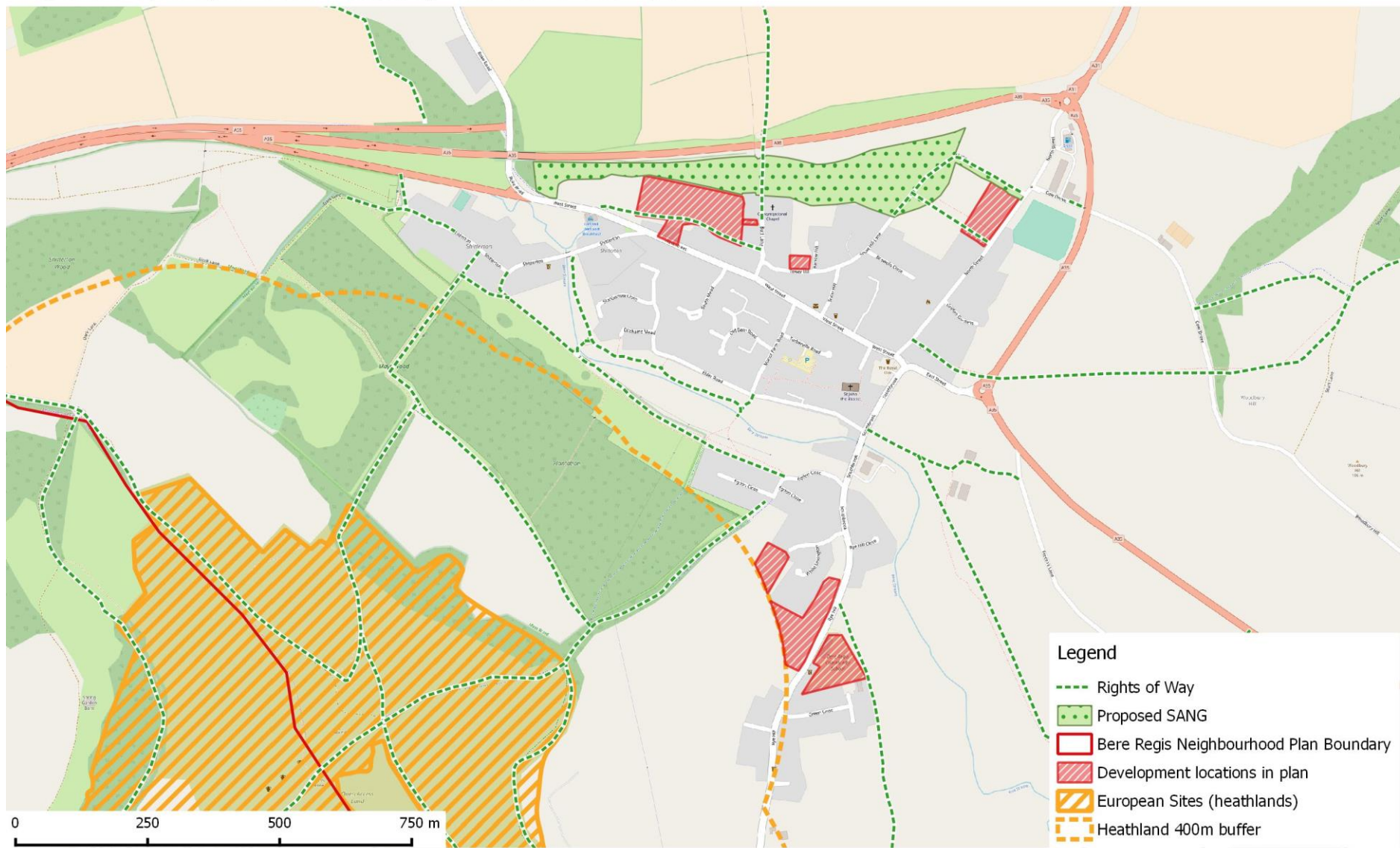
- 4.19 Plan level HRA, both at the higher tier Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 and at this Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan level, provides measures to protect European sites. However, there remains a requirement for Purbeck District Council, as competent authority, to be certain that each individual development project is meeting the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. The District Council needs to be sure that there aren't any additional risks that are not fully mitigated for by the plan level measures.

4.20 For a number of aspects of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan, the screening table above highlights matters that may be pertinent to a project level HRA. This is for information only, highlighting where the Council may need to make additional checks, and does not affect the outcome of this plan level assessment.

Map 4: European sites and development locations from plan



Map 5: SANG, European sites and development locations from plan.



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5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 This HRA has provided a full screening of the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan, in order to determine whether likely significant effects on European sites can be ruled out. The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 require that a Neighbourhood Plan is only agreed if it can demonstrate that likely significant effects are avoided. The Habitats Regulations include a screening stage, checking for likely significant effects, and then where required a more detailed appropriate assessment stage. This second stage is proceeded to where there are uncertainties, and the risks identified by the screening cannot be ruled out. For this HRA, it has been possible to rule out the identified risks.
- 5.2 Where this is not possible, a Neighbourhood Plan must undertake an appropriate assessment, and then seek to secure measures that comply with the requirement for likely significant effects to have been avoided. The modified plan would then need to be re-screened for likely significant effects to confirm this to be the case.
- 5.3 This HRA has made two recommendations, which are summarised as follows:
- At various points throughout the plan, the need to mitigate, and the mitigation secured via the strategic approaches are not clear, and in some instances only one or two of the three strategic approaches set out within the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 and its HRA are mentioned. It is recommended that a brief explanation is given to give clarity and certainty that the plan meets the requirements of the legislation and conforms with the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1. This would then enable the partial explanations in various parts of the plan to be removed.
 - It is recommended that Purbeck District Council and its partners overseeing the approval and delivery of SAMM projects as part of the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework should secure a project that enhances access management at Black Hill.
- 5.4 These recommendations are made in order to improve clarity within the plan, and in order to ensure that the Dorset Heathlands Delivery Framework delivers targeted SAMM measures that will be of benefit in the locality of housing coming forward. Neither recommendation affects the growth proposed within the plan or adds any additional burden to the delivery of the plan.
- 5.5 With these recommendations, this HRA is able to conclude that the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan accords with both the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations in that the plan is not likely to have significant effects on European sites.

6. References

Green, L., Sutula, M. & Fong, P. (2014) How much is too much? Identifying benchmarks of adverse effects of macroalgae on the macrofauna in intertidal flats. *Ecological Applications*, **24**, 300–314.

Liley, D., Clarke, R.T., Underhill-Day, J. & Tyldesley, D.T. (2007) *Evidence to Support the Appropriate Assessment of Development Plans and Projects in South-East Dorset*. Footprint Ecology / Dorset County Council.

Underhill-Day, J.C. (2005) *A Literature Review of Urban Effects on Lowland Heaths and Their Wildlife*. English Nature, Peterborough.

7. Appendix 1 - The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

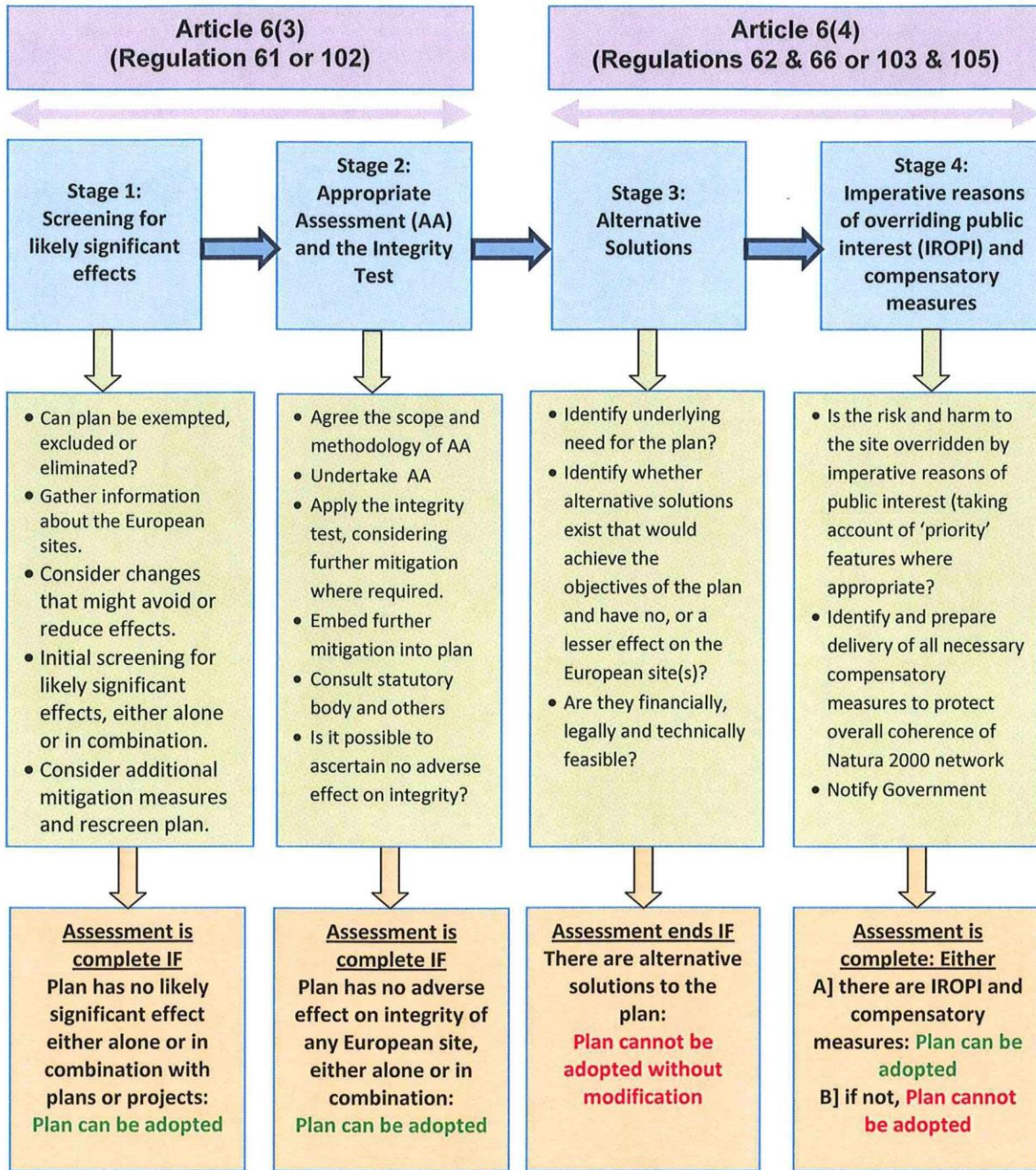
- 7.1 The designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites is embedded in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations.' Recent amendments to the Habitats Regulations were made in 2012. The recent amendments do not substantially affect the principles of European site assessment as defined by the 2010 Regulations, and which forms the focus of this report.
- 7.2 The Habitats Regulations are in place to transpose European legislation set out within the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC), which affords protection to plants, animals and habitats that are rare or vulnerable in a European context, and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC), which originally came into force in 1979, and which protects rare and vulnerable birds and their habitats. These key pieces of European legislation seek to protect, conserve and restore habitats and species that are of utmost conservation importance and concern across Europe. Although the Habitats Regulations transpose the European legislation into domestic legislation, the European legislation still directly applies, and in some instances, it is better to look to the parent Directives to clarify particular duties and re-affirm the overarching purpose of the legislation.
- 7.3 European sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the Birds Directive. The suite of European sites includes those in the marine environment as well as terrestrial, freshwater and coastal sites. European sites have the benefit of the highest level of legislative protection for biodiversity. Member states have specific duties in terms of avoiding deterioration of habitats and species for which sites are designated or classified, and stringent tests have to be met before plans and projects can be permitted, with a precautionary approach embedded in the legislation, i.e. it is necessary to demonstrate that impacts will not occur, rather than they will. The overarching objective is to maintain sites and their interest features in an ecologically robust and viable state, able to sustain and thrive into the long term, with adequate resilience against natural influences. Where sites are not achieving their potential, the focus should be on restoration.
- 7.4 The UK is also a contracting party to the Ramsar Convention, which is a global convention to protect wetlands of international importance, especially those wetlands utilised as waterfowl habitat. In order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Convention, the UK Government expects all competent authorities to treat listed Ramsar sites as if they are part of the suite of designated European sites, as a matter of government policy, as set out in Section 118 of the National Planning Policy

Framework. Most Ramsar sites are also a SPA or SAC, but the Ramsar features and boundary lines may vary from those for which the site is designated as a SPA or SAC.

- 7.5 It should be noted that in addition to Ramsar sites, the National Planning Policy Framework also requires the legislation to be applied to potential SPAs and possible SACs, and areas identified or required for compensatory measures where previous plans or projects have not been able to rule out adverse effects on site integrity, yet their implementation needs meet the exceptional tests of Regulation 62 of the Habitats Regulations, as described below.
- 7.6 The step by step process of HRA is summarised in the diagram below. Within the Habitats Regulations, local planning authorities, as public bodies, are given specific duties as ‘competent authorities’ with regard to the protection of sites designated or classified for their species and habitats of European importance. Competent authorities are any public body individual holding public office with a statutory remit and function, and the requirements of the legislation apply where the competent authority is undertaking or implementing a plan or project, or authorising others to do so. Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations sets out the HRA process for plans and projects, which includes development proposals for which planning permission is sought. Additionally, Regulation 102 specifically sets out the process for assessing emerging land use plans.
- 7.7 The step by step approach to HRA is the process by which a competent authority considers any potential impacts on European sites that may arise from a plan or project that they are either undertaking themselves, or permitting an applicant to undertake. The step by step process of assessment can be broken down into the following stages, which should be undertaken in sequence:
- Check that the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European site
 - Check whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European site, from the plan or project alone
 - Check whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European site, from the plan or project in-combination with other plans or projects
 - Carry out an Appropriate Assessment
 - Ascertain whether an adverse effect on site integrity can be ruled out
- 7.8 Throughout all stages, there is a continual consideration of the options available to avoid and mitigate any identified potential impacts. For projects, the project proposer may identify potential issues and incorporate particular avoidance measures to the project, which then enables the competent authority to rule out the likelihood of significant effects. A competent authority may however consider that there is a need to undertake further levels of evidence gathering and assessment in order to have certainty, and this is the Appropriate Assessment stage. At this point the competent

authority may identify the need to add to or modify the project in order to adequately protect the European site, and these mitigation measures may be added through the imposition of particular restrictions and conditions.

- 7.9 For plans, the stages of HRA are often quite fluid, with the plan normally being prepared by the competent authority itself. This gives the competent authority the opportunity to repeatedly explore options to prevent impacts, refine the plan and rescreen it to demonstrate that all potential risks to European sites have been successfully dealt with.
- 7.10 When preparing a plan, a competent authority may therefore go through a continued assessment as the plan develops, enabling the assessment to inform the development of the plan. For example, a competent authority may choose to pursue an amended or different option where impacts can be avoided, rather than continue to assess an option that has the potential to significantly affect European site interest features.
- 7.11 After completing an assessment, a competent authority should only approve a project or give effect to a plan where it can be ascertained that there will not be an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site(s) in question. In order to reach this conclusion, the competent authority may have made changes to the plan, or modified the project with restrictions or conditions, in light of their Appropriate Assessment findings.
- 7.12 Where adverse effects cannot be ruled out, there are further exceptional tests set out in Regulation 62 for plans and projects and in Regulation 103 specifically for land use plans. Exceptionally, a plan or project could be taken forward for imperative reasons of overriding public interest where adverse effects cannot be ruled out and there are no alternative solutions. It should be noted that meeting these tests is a rare occurrence and ordinarily, competent authorities seek to ensure that a plan or project is fully mitigated for, or it does not proceed.
- 7.13 In such circumstances where a competent authority considers that a plan or project should proceed under Regulations 62 or 103, they must notify the relevant Secretary of State. Normally, planning decisions and competent authority duties are then transferred, becoming the responsibility of the Secretary of State, unless on considering the information, the planning authority is directed by the Secretary of State to make their own decision on the plan or project at the local level. The decision maker, whether the Secretary of State or the planning authority, should give full consideration to any proposed 'overriding reasons' for which a plan or project should proceed despite being unable to rule out adverse effects on European site interest features, and ensure that those reasons are in the public interest and are such that they override the potential harm. The decision maker will also need to secure any necessary compensatory measures, to ensure the continued overall coherence of the European site network if such a plan or project is allowed to proceed.



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Figure 1: Outline of the assessment of plans under the Habitat Regulations

8. Appendix 2 – Consideration of European Site Conservation Objectives

- 8.1 As required by the Directives, 'Conservation Objectives' have been established by Natural England, which should define the required ecologically robust state for each European site interest feature. All sites should be meeting their conservation objectives. When being fully met, each site will be adequately contributing to the overall favourable conservation status of the species or habitat interest feature across its natural range. Where conservation objectives are not being met at a site level, and the interest feature is therefore not contributing to overall favourable conservation status of the species or habitat, plans should be in place for adequate restoration.
- 8.2 Natural England has embarked on a project to renew all European site Conservation Objectives, in order to ensure that they are up to date, comprehensive and easier for developers and consultants to use to inform project level HRAs in a consistent way. In 2012, Natural England issued now a set of generic European site Conservation Objectives, which should be applied to each interest feature of each European site. These generic objectives are the first stage in the project to renew conservation objectives, and the second stage, which is to provide more detailed and site-specific information for each site to support the generic objectives, is now underway.
- 8.3 The new list of generic Conservation Objectives for each European site includes an overarching objective, followed by a list of attributes that are essential for the achievement of the overarching objective. Whilst the generic objectives currently issued are standardised, they are to be applied to each interest feature of each European site, and the application and achievement of those objectives will therefore be site specific and dependant on the nature and characteristics of the site. The second stage, provision of the more supplementary information to underpin these generic objectives, will provide much more site-specific information, and this detail will play a fundamental role in informing HRAs, and importantly will give greater clarity to what might constitute an adverse effect on a site interest feature.
- 8.4 In the interim, Natural England advises that HRAs should use the generic objectives and apply them to the site-specific situation. This should be supported by comprehensive and up to date background information relating to the site.
- 8.5 For SPAs, the overarching objective is to:
- 8.6 'Avoid the deterioration of the habitats of qualifying features, and the significant disturbance of the qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving the aims of the Birds Directive.'
- 8.7 This is achieved by, subject to natural change, maintaining and 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 populations of the qualifying features.
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

8.8 For SACs, the overarching objective is to:

'Avoid the deterioration of the qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species, and the significant disturbance of those qualifying species, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving Favourable Conservation Status of each of the qualifying features.'

8.9 This is achieved by, subject to natural change, maintaining and restoring:

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

8.10 Conservation objectives inform any HRA of a plan or project, by identifying what the interest features for the site should be achieving, and what impacts may be significant for the site in terms of undermining the site's ability to meet its conservation objectives.

9. Appendix 3: Conservation Interest of European Sites

- Dorset Heathlands SPA
- Dorset Heaths SAC
- Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland dunes SAC
- Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site
- Poole Harbour SPA
- Poole Harbour Ramsar site
- The New Forest SAC
- The New Forest SPA
- The New Forest Ramsar site

Table 2: Reasons for designation of European sites within Purbeck District and 20km of the District boundary. + indicates a primary reason for designation as SAC, *,* indicate a priority SAC feature.

Site	Reason for designation/classification:		
	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> ⁺ , temperate Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and <i>Erica tetralix</i> ⁺ , European dry heaths ⁺ , depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> ⁺ , <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils, Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [*] , Alkaline fens, Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains Southern damselfly ⁺ ; great crested newt.	Breeding nightjar, Dartford warbler, woodlark. Wintering hen harrier, merlin.	Ramsar criterion 1: Contains particularly good examples of (i) northern Atlantic wet heaths with cross-leaved heath <i>Erica tetralix</i> and (ii) acid mire with <i>Rhynchosporion</i> , the largest example in Britain of southern Atlantic wet heaths with Dorset heath <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and cross-leaved heath <i>Erica tetralix</i> . Ramsar criterion 2: Supports 1 nationally rare and 13 nationally scarce wetland plant species, and at least 28 nationally rare wetland invertebrate species.

Site	Reason for designation/classification:		
	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
			<p>Ramsar criterion 3: high species richness and ecological diversity of wetland habitat types and transitions;</p> <p>lies in one of the most biologically-rich wetland areas of lowland Britain.</p>
<p>Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland dunes SAC</p>	<p>Embryonic shifting dunes⁺, shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes")⁺, Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes*, humid dunes slacks⁺, oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)⁺ Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>⁺, temperate Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and <i>Erica tetralix</i>*, European dry heaths⁺, depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>⁺, bog woodland*, <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils, Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>*, Alkaline fens, Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains.</p> <p>Southern damselfly⁺; great crested newt.</p>	<p>See above.</p> <p>Little Sea and Eastern Lake located within this SAC fall within Poole Harbour SPA.</p>	<p>See above</p>

Site	Reason for designation/classification:		
	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Poole Harbour SPA and Ramsar		<p>Breeding common tern, and Mediterranean gull.</p> <p>Passage aquatic warbler and little egret. Wintering avocet, little egret.</p> <p>Internationally important wintering populations of Icelandic population of black-tailed godwit and the North-western European population of wintering shelduck.</p> <p>A wetland of international importance by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl.</p>	<p>Ramsar criterion 1: best and largest example of a bar-built estuary with lagoonal characteristics in Britain.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2: 2 species of nationally rare plant, 1 nationally rare alga, at least 3 British Red data book invertebrate species.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 3: Mediterranean and thermo Atlantic halophilous scrubs, dominated by shrubby seablite <i>Suaeda vera</i>; calcareous fens with great fen sedge <i>Cladium mariscus</i>; transitions from saltmarsh through to peatland mires. Nationally important populations of breeding waterfowl including common tern, and Mediterranean gull, and of wintering. avocet.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 5: internationally important assemblages of waterfowl.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 6: Internationally important populations of common shelduck, black-tailed godwit.</p>
The New Forest	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [†] , Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with	Breeding Dartford warbler, nightjar, woodlark, honey buzzard, wood warbler <i>Phylloscopus</i>	Ramsar Criterion 1: Valley mires and wet heaths of outstanding scientific interest. The largest

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	<p>vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or of the <i>Isoëto-Nanojuncetea</i>⁺, Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>⁺, European dry heaths⁺, <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)⁺, Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>⁺, Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with <i>Ilex</i> and sometimes also <i>Taxus</i> in the shrub layer (<i>Quercion robori-petraeae</i> or <i>Illici-Fagenion</i>)⁺, <i>Asperulo-Fagetum</i> beech forests⁺, Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains⁺, Bog woodland⁺, Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)⁺, Transition mires, quaking bogs and Alkaline fens.</p> <p>Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>⁺, Stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i>⁺, Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>.</p>	<p><i>sibilatrix</i>, hobby. Wintering hen harrier</p>	<p>concentration of intact valley mires of their type in GB.</p> <p>Ramsar Criterion 2: Supports a diverse assemblage of wetland plants and animals.</p> <p>Ramsar Criterion 3: Mire habitats of high ecological quality and diversity. Invertebrate fauna important due to the concentration of rare and scarce wetland species. Whole site complex is essential to the genetic and ecological diversity of southern England.</p>
<p>St Alban's Head to Durlston SAC</p>	<p>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts, Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (important orchid sites)*.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC	<p>Early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i>⁺, Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i></p> <p>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts⁺, Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia⁺, annual vegetation of drift lines.</p> <p>Early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i>⁺</p>	N/A	N/A