

LODERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SCREENING REPORT

OCTOBER 2014 – UPDATED JANUARY 2015 – FINALISED JUNE 2016

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1 INTRODUCTION

Neighbourhood plans are not considered ‘Development Plan Documents’ according to advice from the Government’s Planning Advisory Service, and therefore there is no requirement through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal. However, depending on the extent of the proposals included in the Neighbourhood Plan, there may be the need to complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The purpose of this Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report is to determine whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan. This screening report also provides evidence as to whether the plan “contributes to the achievement of sustainable development” as required to be tested under Schedule 4B section 8(2)b of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

This SEA Screening Report considers the Loders Neighbourhood Plan. It explains the legislative background to SEA, and provides an account of the SEA screening exercise which was completed in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment.

LODERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Loders Neighbourhood Plan area, the extent of which is shown in Figure 1.1, is based on the Loders parish boundary.

Figure 1.1: the Loders Neighbourhood Plan area (within the dotted blue line)



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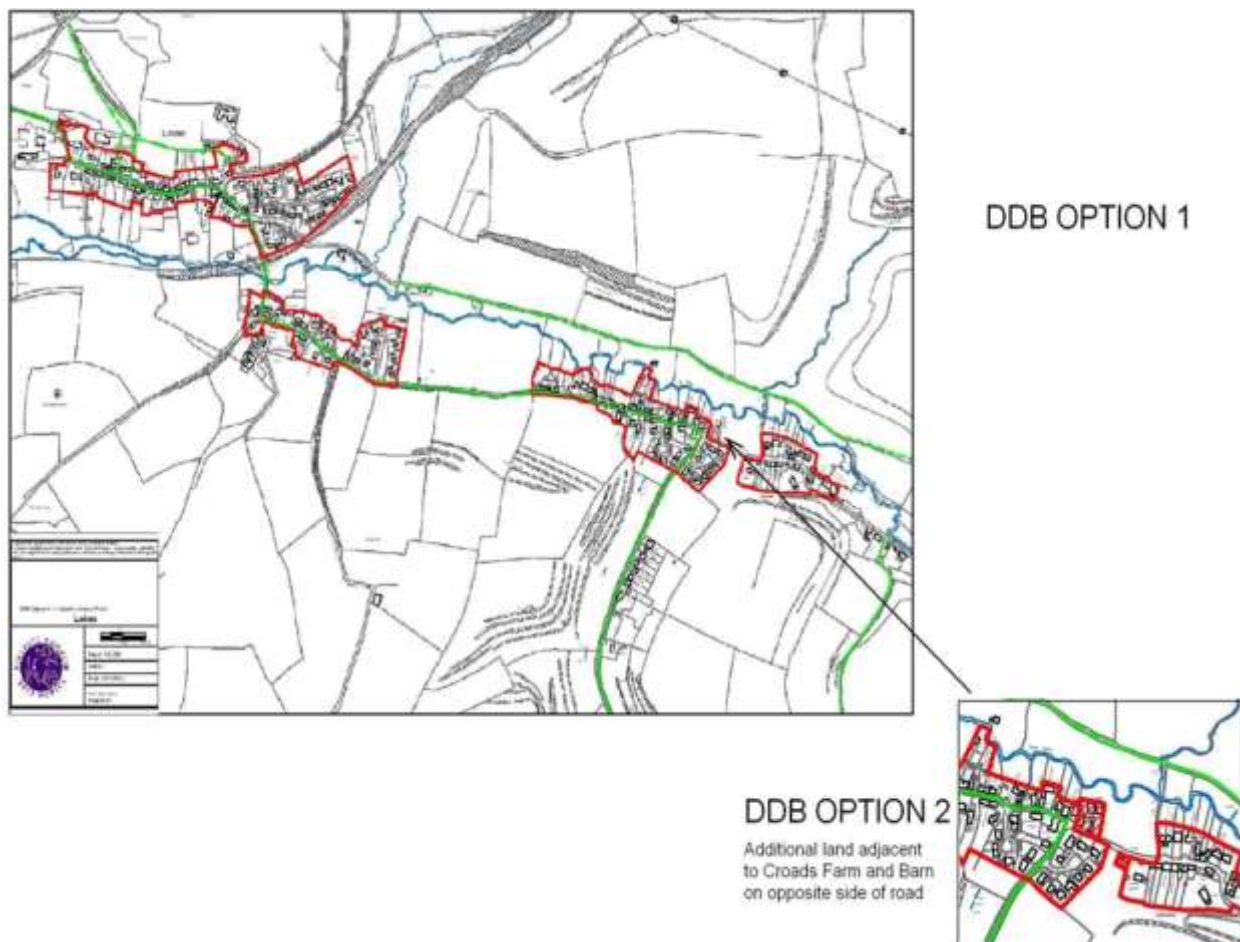
FOCUS AND SCOPE

The Loders Neighbourhood Plan intends to focus on preserving and enhancing the character of the neighbourhood plan area, which comprises its village settlements and surrounding countryside.

The scope of the Loders Neighbourhood Plan includes:

- The discouragement of urbanization (by proposing a development boundary and providing in the region of 10 new homes over the plan period up to 2027, so long as the development is acceptable in all other respects. Two options for the extent of the development boundary were subject to pre-draft consultation (which are shown in Figure 1.2);
- Guidance on the re-use of redundant farm buildings
- Guidance on what form development should take (to maintain and enhance the rural character of Loders Parish, and a good mix of housing, business and community uses);
- The identification of features and spaces within the area that are locally important because of their character, landscape, heritage or community value, which should be protected
- Guidance on what would constitute sustainable growth and expansion of new or existing local businesses.

Figure 1.2: The options identified for the defined development boundary.



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As a result of the consultation Option 2 was included in the draft plan

2 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment ('the SEA Directive') provides the legislative basis for strategic environmental assessment.

The main purpose of SEA, according to Article 1 of the SEA Directive, is:

“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

The SEA Directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), which introduced the requirement to complete the sustainability appraisal of local development plan documents. The sustainability appraisal extends the scope of the strategic environmental assessment to consider social and economic effects, in addition to the environmental impacts as required through the SEA Directive.

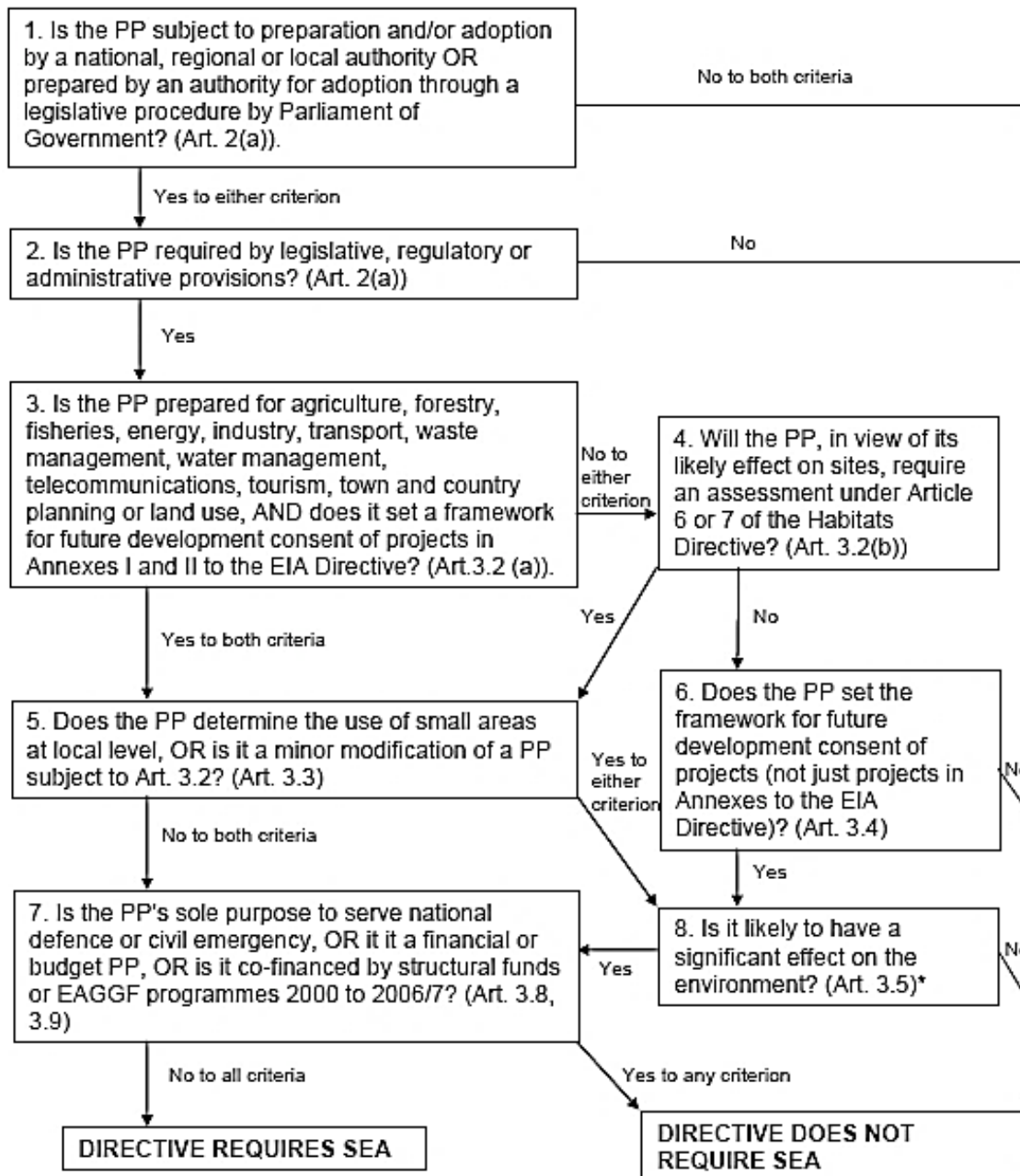
SCREENING FOR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive provides the legislative framework for defining the types of plan and programme that require SEA, which is summarised in diagrammatic form in Figure 2.1.

Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive lists the plans and programmes for which an SEA is required in all cases, on the assumption that significant environmental impacts are likely. Article 3(5) states that SEA is required for the plans and programmes listed in Articles 3(3) and 3(4), where it is considered likely that significant environmental effects would result from the plan. Some plans and programmes are considered exempt from the SEA Directive, and these are listed in Articles 3(8) and 3(9).

Before making a final decision, the environmental authorities of the Member States designated under Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, which are Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency in the U.K, need to be consulted. After the decision has been taken the conclusions of the screening must be made available to the public in accordance with Article 3(7).

Figure 2.1: A diagram summarising the SEA screening process (reproduced from the Government guidance on the Strategic Environmental Assessment regulations published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005, titled ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’).



3 SEA SCREENING OF THE LODERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This Chapter provides an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan.

THE SEA SCREENING PROCESS

The SEA screening process, which is explained in Chapter 2, is summarised in the flowchart shown in Figure 3.1 with justification for the decisions made at each stage in the SEA screening process provided in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

Figure 3.1 – a summary of the SEA screening for the Lodders Neighbourhood Plan, following the screening process outlined in orange.

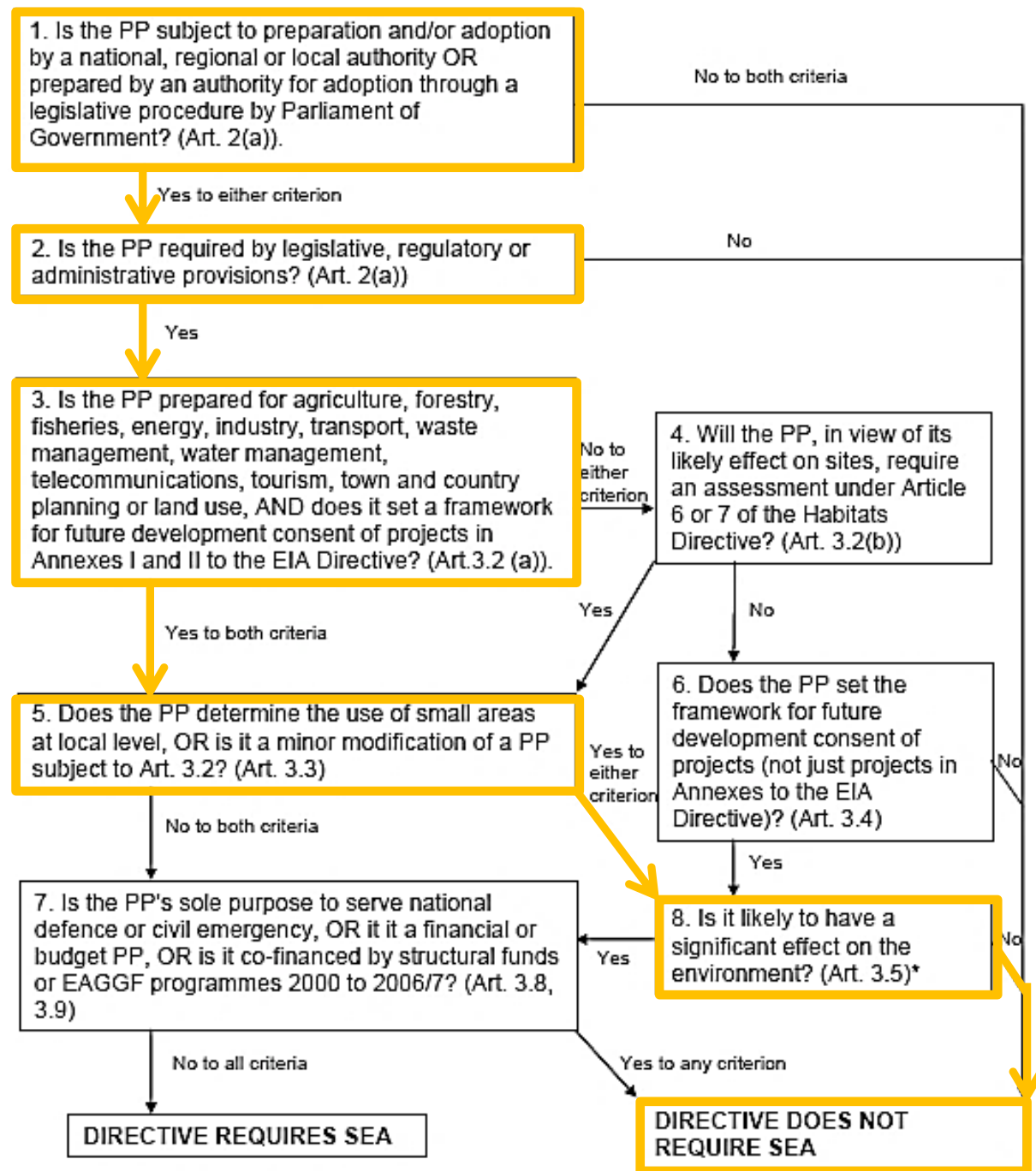


Figure 3.2 – a summary of the SEA screening process for the Lodders Neighbourhood Plan, following the procedure outlined in Figure 2.1.

Question in SEA screening flow chart (Figure 3.1)	Response
1. Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament of	YES The Lodders Neighbourhood Plan would be prepared by the Lodders Neighbourhood Plan working group, but adopted by West

Government?	Dorset District Council through a legislative procedure.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	YES The Loders Neighbourhood Plan would be a Statutory document, prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?	YES The Loders Valley Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes, and may allocate land for future development which falls under Annex II of the EIA Directive as an urban development project.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2?	YES The Loders Neighbourhood Plan would determine the use of small areas at a local level.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	NO Justification for this decision is given later in this chapter.

IS THE LODERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

The final question in the SEA screening process for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan, which determined whether SEA was required or not, was question 8 from figure 3.2: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

In order to determine whether the Loders Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, the likely environmental effects of the proposals in the draft Loders Neighbourhood Plan were assessed using a sustainability checklist. The sustainability checklist was based on the sustainability framework developed through the scoping exercise for the Sustainability Appraisal for the emerging West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan. These sustainability objectives were developed to focus upon the relevant sustainability issues in West Dorset, by considering the environmental baseline, relevant plans and policies at local, national, and international scale, and environmental problems within the plan area. These sustainability objectives therefore provide an effective means of assessing the possible sustainability implications of the Loders Neighbourhood Plan.

Where appropriate, the objectives have been modified (as set out in Figure 3.3)

These objectives were developed for a Sustainability Appraisal and therefore consider the wider social and economic issues, in addition to the environmental considerations which are required through the SEA Directive. As a result, the sustainability objectives used for the screening option are those that to address the environmental issues listed in Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive. The remaining sustainability objectives (8 and 9) are retained to show how the plan contributes to sustainable development (as required under Schedule 4B section 8(2)b of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

Figure 3.3 – sustainability objectives




West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan sustainability objectives	Relevance to Loders neighbourhood area	Proposed objective changes
1. To maintain or enhance features of historic and cultural importance	The Loders neighbourhood plan area includes many Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area of Loders and Uploders. This reflects the special architectural and historic interests of the village. There is a scheduled monument on the southern boundary of the area, and many non-designated monuments including the strip lynchets notable in the parish.	None
2. To maintain, protect and enhance the landscape, townscape and seascape	The Loders Neighbourhood Plan area is located wholly within the Dorset AONB in recognition of its landscape and scenic beauty. This includes the built quality of its settlements. However the neighbourhood area is not on the coast.	Reference to seascape removed
3. To reduce our contribution to climate change	Many forms of development potentially contribute to climate change through carbon emissions	None
4. To reduce vulnerability to climate change	The River Asker runs through the Loders neighbourhood plan area.	None
5. To maintain or enhance soil and water quality	The area comprises agricultural land which is predominantly of grade 3 (moderate to good) quality.	None
6. To protect or enhance biodiversity, geodiversity and the quality of natural habitats	The area includes the Sites of Nature Conservation Interest at Icen Farm, Peascombe, and Bell Hill. There is a small site of geological interest at Vinney Cross. In addition, records from the Dorset Environmental Records Centre show that the area contains European Protected Species, such as Otter, Bat, and Water Vole.	None
7. To encourage the development of sustainable, safe and vibrant communities to improve quality of life	The number of people living in the parish has remained relatively stable over the past four decades. More people are now in the 45 to retirement age bracket, with fewer numbers in the under 18 years, 18 to 44 years or above	None



West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan sustainability objectives	Relevance to Loders neighbourhood area	Proposed objective changes
8. To encourage sustainable economic growth	The majority of local businesses are in the service sector. Those in employment work tend to be employed in construction, retail and education. Unemployment is low at less than 2%.	None
9. To provide decent, affordable housing that meets the need of the local community	Housing in Loders tends to be larger than average, and average house prices are higher than in Bridport and West Dorset as a whole. There are currently nine households on the housing register with a 'local connection' to the area.	None








The sustainability checklist consists of a series of questions, or decision making criteria, to assist with determining the nature of the impacts upon a series of receptors (Figure 3.4), and justification for the decisions made.

The impacts included in the first screening (October 2014) have been updated to reflect the proposed policies in the draft plan, which were not available at that time.

Figure 3.4: The assessment of likely environmental (or sustainability) impact.

- Key:
-  Significant Adverse Impact
 -  Negligible Impact
 -  Significant Positive Impact

Decision-making criteria	Impact	Justification
1. TO MAINTAIN OR ENHANCE FEATURES OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE		
How will it impact upon archaeological sites, scheduled ancient monuments, conservation areas and listed buildings, in addition to other culturally important features?		Proposed policy LNP Policy E2: Protection of Special Landscape and Historic Features and LNP Policy E1: Protection of Important Gaps, Rural Views and Local Green Spaces seeks to identify and protect these heritage features and their settings.
2. TO MAINTAIN, PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE		
How will it impact upon the special character of the Dorset AONB?		Proposed policy LNP Policy E2: Protection of Special Landscape and Historic Features seeks to identify some of the key features, and specific areas are highlighted for protection in LNP Policy E1: Protection of Important Gaps, Rural Views and Local Green Spaces. The quality of new design is also specifically covered in LNP Policy E4: To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Development will be limited and focused within the defined development boundaries

Decision-making criteria	Impact	Justification
		(DDB). Opportunities for enhancement are also sought.
How will it impact upon the distinctive qualities and features of the area?		The quality of new design is specifically covered in proposed policy LNP Policy E4: To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, all development should be sympathetic with adjacent buildings and achieve a high quality of design, use of materials and appropriate detailing which reflect local distinctiveness and respects the rural character of Loders Parish.
3. TO REDUCE OUR CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE		
How will it impact upon air quality and produce greenhouse gases?		Although in a rural area there is higher reliance on trips by car, since the Loders Neighbourhood Plan will only deliver a small amount of infill development, it is considered unlikely to have a significant impact. The energy and water conservation standards will be as proposed in the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan.
How will it impact upon energy and water conservation and efficiency?		
4. TO REDUCE VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE		
How will it impact upon vulnerability to flooding? How will it impact upon resilience to climate change impacts?		There are high risk flood zones associated with this watercourse, some of which encroach into the proposed development boundary. However the plan does not over-ride the existing requirements in legislation and local and national policy. Due to the proposed scale of the development it is unlikely that the Loders Neighbourhood Plan will introduce a significant adverse affect upon resilience to climate change.
How will it impact upon productive agricultural land, which provides local food security?		The extensive areas of productive agricultural land which provide food security will not be threatened by the proposed small scale infill development proposed in the Loders Neighbourhood Plan.
5. TO MAINTAIN OR ENHANCE SOIL AND WATER QUALITY		
How will it impact upon soil quality, particularly with respect to productive agricultural land?		The Loders Neighbourhood Plan only proposes a small amount of infill development and will not result in the significant loss of productive agricultural land
How will it impact upon water quality?		The proposed small scale of infill residential development is unlikely to compromise water quality. Furthermore, any proposals will be required to accord with policies of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan, which prevents development from being permitted which is likely to result in a significant impact upon water sources.
6. TO PROTECT OR ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY, GEODIVERSITY AND THE QUALITY OF NATURAL HABITATS		
How will it impact upon		The proposed development boundary is some distance

Decision-making criteria	Impact	Justification
habitats, species and sites of wildlife interest, and designated areas on the basis of ecological importance?		from two of the SNCIs. The third (Peascombe) is also outside the development and managed by the Dorset Wildlife Trust. There are no proposals that would result in a direct loss of habitat. The consideration of potential biodiversity interests is covered in proposed policy LNP Policy E3: Protection of Wildlife Habitats, which also seeks opportunities to enhance biodiversity and contribute to wildlife and habitat connectivity in the wider area.
How will it impact upon the provision of new or improved wildlife habitats and corridors?	😊	The consideration of potential biodiversity interests is covered in proposed policy LNP Policy E3: Protection of Wildlife Habitats, which also seeks opportunities to enhance biodiversity and contribute to wildlife and habitat connectivity in the wider area.
How will it impact upon sites of geological interest?	😐	The proposed development boundary is some distance from Vinney Cross RIGS.
7. TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE, SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE		
How will it impact upon access to essential services (such as health facilities), leisure facilities, community facilities, and cultural activities by sustainable modes of transport?	😊	The Loders Neighbourhood Plan proposes the protection of the existing community facilities such as the village hall and school in proposed LNP Policy C1: Safeguarding Community Assets. This, and the focus of residential development within the existing settlement, will mean that the services and facilities will be largely accessible by the future users of the new development by sustainable transport modes, for example by walking or cycling.
How will it impact upon access to recreational facilities, such as green open spaces, by sustainable modes of transport, promoting healthy lifestyles?	😊	The Loders Neighbourhood Plan proposes the protection of its recreational facilities in proposed LNP Policy C1: Safeguarding Community Assets. This, and the focus of residential development within the existing settlement, will enable access to these existing recreational facilities by sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling.
How will it impact upon human health?	😐	It is considered unlikely that the Loders Neighbourhood Plan will result in impacts upon human health, since the proposals are for a small amount of infill development.
How will it impact upon the amount of criminal activity, the fear of crime, and anti-social activity to create a safer community?	😐	In light of the scale and type of the proposed residential development, there is not considered to be the need for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan to further develop the existing local plan policies which require development to be designed in such a way to reduce opportunities for crime.
8. TO ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH		
How will it impact upon economic activity or provide employment	😐	The intention of LNP Policy B1: Local Employment and Business is to support extensions to existing small businesses and the re-use of redundant agricultural

Decision-making criteria	Impact	Justification
opportunities?		buildings for business purposes.
How will it impact upon the provision of infrastructure necessary to support the growth of a sustainable economy?	☹️	There is unlikely to be significant investment in infrastructure as this is being focused at more strategic locations. As such employment uses which are likely to substantially increase vehicle activity or large lorry movements on the small country lanes is not supported
How will it impact upon accessibility to training and education facilities?	☹️	Proposed LNP Policy C1: Safeguarding Community Assets seeks to protect Loders Primary School. As at present, high education and training provision is provided in the larger towns.

9. TO PROVIDE DECENT, AFFORDABLE HOUSING THAT MEETS THE NEED OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

How will it impact upon availability of decent, affordable housing?	☺️	Proposed policy LNP Policy H1: Provision of New Homes looks to providing in the region of 10 new homes within the defined development boundary over the plan period. This enables more growth than the current local plan.
How will it impact upon providing the appropriate type and amount of housing to meet the needs of the local community?	☺️	Proposed policy LNP Policy H2: Type and Size of Housing refers to the need for small homes of two or three bedrooms suitable for couples and individuals looking to downsize or as starter homes suitable for individuals, couples and families, as this size housing (which is more affordable) is lacking in the area.
How will it impact upon the number of people that are homeless or in temporary accommodation?	☹️	Proposed policy LNP Policy E5: Location of development in relation to the Defined Development Boundary recognises that the provision of rural exception sites for affordable housing will still be possible outside the development boundary. Unfortunately the requirement for no affordable housing contributions to be sought from small sites will mean that no affordable housing contributions are likely to come forward as part of the small scale development within the defined boundary.

FINDINGS

The consideration of likely significant environmental effects presented in Figure 3.4 showed that there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Loders Neighbourhood Plan. In light of this, and following the SEA screening process prescribed by the SEA Directive, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that the SEA Directive does not require an SEA for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan.

The assessment also provides evidence that the plan “contributes to the achievement of sustainable development” as required to be tested under Schedule 4B section 8(2)b of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

4 CONSULTATION

Before making a final SEA screening decision, the environmental authorities of the Member States designated under Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, which are Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency in the U.K, need to be consulted.

Consultation on the initial assessment was carried out for a 6 week period from 24th October 2014 – 5th December 2014. One response was received (from Historic England / English Heritage) who confirmed that they had no objection to the conclusion that an SEA would not be required.

A further consultation was carried out alongside the draft plan, and the responses have been summarised below.

Environment Agency – no comment on SEA screening

Historic England – no further comments

Natural England – a SEA is not required for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan. We can confirm that the plan is unlikely to harm any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar Site and is not likely to significantly affect the interest features for which they are notified. Although within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) the plan as submitted is unlikely to have an impact upon the purposes for which the AONB is designated. We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which it is likely to affect to an extent sufficient to require an SEA.

West Dorset District Council also confirmed that it was satisfied that the SEA screening for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan is in conformity with Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (commonly known as the SEA Directive), and supports the conclusion that SEA is not required for the Loders Neighbourhood Plan.

No further changes to this SEA screening report were therefore proposed (other than the update to this consultation section), and the report is issued as the SEA screening decision (June 2015).