



# Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Partial Review of the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1; Issues and Options



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## Summary

This report provides the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the plan review of the Purbeck Local Plan, being undertaken by Purbeck District Council. The current Local Plan (PLP1) was adopted in November 2012. It is Government policy that local planning documents are continually reviewed in order to remain up to date and informed by current evidence on local economic, social and environmental needs, and national legislation and planning policy. Purbeck District Council is undertaking a review relatively quickly after adoption of the current plan. This is because PLP1 followed a precautionary approach in planning for less housing than was forecasted as needed for the plan period.

Initial screening of the draft Partial Review Issues and Options document identified a range of likely significant effects including those options relating to the overall volume of housing, locations for development, meeting employment needs, managing internationally protected heathlands, Morden country park and tourist accommodation. A number of uncertainties and potential risks were identified in the screening table, but which cannot be assessed in detail at this stage. These issues should be noted by the Council to inform the development of the plan, but more detailed assessment will only be possible once further information is available with regard to the options proposed.

The preliminary appropriate assessment work has focussed in detail on the seven large housing sites put forward to Purbeck District Council by landowners and developers, and has also considered implications of the employment sites identified and the proposal for a country park and tourist accommodation at Morden.

The impacts of new housing will depend on the precise locations where development takes place and the scale of development in specific locations. At this issues and options stage of the review, there is a need for further clarity on the following issues to European sites and mitigation:

- How heathland mitigation will be delivered in the future (this will depend on the emerging heathland mitigation SPD) and the outcomes of the Partial Review Issues and Options consultation.
- Consideration of the options for heathland mitigation in Purbeck given the focus for on-site management measures in the CIL Reg 123 list and the varied land ownership/management within the District
- How impacts relating to recreation and Poole Harbour will be resolved. There is no mitigation for Poole Harbour recreation issues included in the CIL Reg 123 list. It is not currently clear whether the mitigation identified for the current plan has been established.
- How impacts relating to nutrient enrichment and Poole Harbour will be resolved. This will be dependent on the emerging strategy SPD, which has not yet gone out to consultation.

All large housing sites require further detailed assessment. The site proposed at Sandford has particular constraints and, at this stage in the assessment, is not considered possible to develop without adverse effects on the integrity of the Dorset Heathlands SPA and Dorset Heaths SAC. Of the remaining sites, those around Wareham and Lytchett Minster have particular challenges, mitigation will be difficult to secure and it may not be possible to rule out adverse effects on the integrity on nearby European sites. At Lytchett Minster the SANG options are not clear at this stage and to some extent the scale of green space provision there and effectiveness will depend on the proposal for a Country Park at Morden. The site West of Wareham is in a particularly vulnerable

location given the range of European sites and scale of sites surrounding it. Of the seven sites suggested for large housing, Langton Matravers, Wool and Moreton seem the least sensitive, but further detail and assessment are required as the plan develops.

At the two main employment sites (Dorset Green and Holton Heath) and some of the smaller sites there is a need for checks that the scale of delivery set out in the plan is possible without adverse effects on integrity. Issues relate to fragmentation, loss of supporting habitat and recreation.

Assessment of the tourist development and country park at Morden (Issue 16), indicates that the area suggested for the chalets is very close to designated heathland and potentially even abuts or includes designated heathland. Likely significant effects to the interest features of the adjacent sites would include disturbance to Annex I birds, increased fire incidence, trampling, dog fouling, water quality. The areas outside the designated site boundary are likely to be important for nightjar and woodlark, in terms of foraging and possibly even breeding sites, and therefore are functionally linked to the SPA. Careful, detailed design and discussion with Natural England will be essential to consider the constraints at this location and the potential for the chalets and country park to have no adverse effects on the integrity of the European site, we suggest design elements that need to be considered. The country park could have the potential to act as a strategic SANG, and we consider the design elements and likely issues with the location, drawing on recent visitor data. Whether the site is able to provide the dual role of a country park and location for tourist accommodation needs further consideration.

This Habitats Regulations Assessment will continue to be updated alongside the plan review, informing the development of the new plan.

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We have drawn on visitor survey data from the Wild Purbeck NIA and also on bird survey data provided by Natural England (see Liley & Fearnley 2014).

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the plan review of the Purbeck Local Plan, being undertaken by Purbeck District Council. The current Local Plan (PLP1) was adopted in November 2012. It is Government policy that local planning documents are continually reviewed in order to remain up to date and informed by current evidence on local economic, social and environmental needs, and national legislation and planning policy. Purbeck District Council is undertaking a review relatively quickly after adoption of the current plan. This is because PLP1 followed a precautionary approach in planning for less housing than was forecasted as needed for the plan period.
- 1.2 The Planning Inspector who examined the PLP1 concluded that the plan was sound and the Council was right to adopt the precautionary approach in the short term, with the intention of exploring the potential for higher housing growth through a separate partial review by 2017. The precautionary approach was taken because at the time that the plan was adopted, the available information did not provide enough evidence to demonstrate that a higher level of growth could proceed without impacts on European wildlife sites. Purbeck is exceptionally important for nature conservation and in the local area, the European wildlife sites, discussed in more detail below, host a range of habitats and species of European importance. The principal driver behind the partial review will therefore be to investigate the possibility for mitigation measures that will enable the potential delivery of higher housing growth.
- 1.3 This Habitats Regulations Assessment is currently a report presenting the assessment work to date, and will be updated alongside the local plan review, until finalisation of the assessment occurs at finalisation of the new plan ready for Examination and adoption.
- 1.4 At this point in time, the Council is preparing an 'Issues and Options' paper for public consultation, which is an early stage in plan making where the key issues for a district are stated, and opportunities and the range of options for new growth, and for social, economic and environmental improvements are presented. This allows local residents to comment on the key issues for their local area, and the proposals for rectifying those issues and bringing forward sustainable growth.
- 1.5 This report starts to draw together all available evidence relating to heathland impacts and possible opportunities to prevent those impacts from occurring, to enable the Council to start to explore the possibility of higher levels of growth than that currently supported by PLP1. This assessment will continue to be updated and expanded as the plan progresses.
- 1.6 This introductory section of the report provides the background and context for plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment process

- 1.7 A 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' 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 exceptional 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.
- 1.8 The relevant European legislation is the Habitats Directive 1992<sup>1</sup> and the Wild Birds Directive 2009<sup>2</sup>, 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, and those providing formal compensation for losses to European sites, are also given the same protection.
- 1.9 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. A more detailed guide to the step by step process of Habitats Regulations Assessment is provided in this report at Appendix 1.
- 1.10 In assessing the implications of any plan or project, in this case a local plan, for European sites in close proximity, it is essential to fully understand the sites in question, their interest features, current condition, sensitivities and any other on-going matters that are influencing each of the sites. 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 has a set of 'conservation objectives' that set out the 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.
- 1.11 The site conservation objectives are relevant to any Habitats Regulations Assessment, because they identify what should be achieved for the site, and a Habitats Regulations Assessment may therefore consider whether any plan or project may compromise the

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<sup>1</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC

<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 2009/147/EC



achievement of those objectives. Further information on European site conservation objectives can be found at Appendix 2 of this report.

### European sites

- 1.12 There are a range of European sites within or near Purbeck District. In fact the District is potentially unique in the extent, range and number of different protected sites. 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 (See Pickess & Underhill-Day 2002; Pickess 2007; Underhill-Day 2007; Liley et al. 2009 for further details).
- 1.13 Dorset holds some 7500 ha of heathland (see Rose et al., 2000), and much of this is designated as being of European importance. The 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.
- 1.14 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).
- 1.15 The relevant European sites for this assessment are those previously considered in the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Purbeck Core Strategy (see Liley & Tyldesley 2011; the HRA contains much detailed background relevant to this report), and are:
- 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

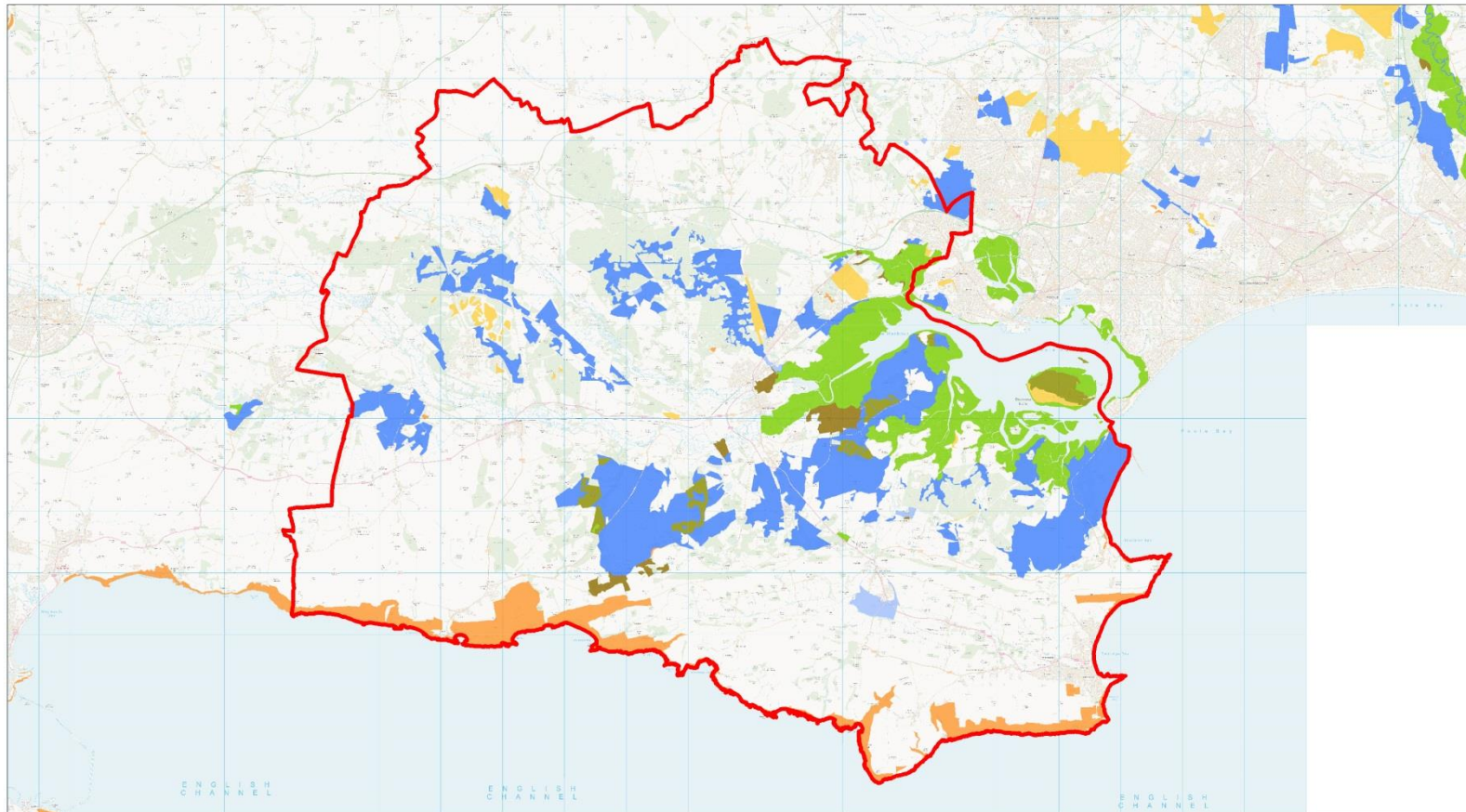
1.16 Relevant information on the European site designations and their interest features are provided in Appendix 3.

1.17 There are also a number of forestry sites that are not yet designated or classified as European sites but that hold very high numbers of Annex I bird species, particularly nightjar and woodlark. Where a site has been identified as hosting the required quality, extent or populations of species, they may proceed through the selection process and become a European site in future. In addition these forest blocks are often contiguous with the Dorset Heathlands SPA and as such as functionally linked. The NPPF requires competent authorities to treat potential sites as European sites for the purposes of assessing the impacts of plans or projects once they have been formally proposed by Government. Prior to that, the legislation need not be applied. However, where sites are in the early stages of consideration before being formally proposed, Natural England may suggest that it would be beneficial to have regard for such sites in decision making. This recommendation is made because there may be implications for a project if it is approved and then a formal designation is made later. In such instances a competent authority may be required to review the permission given. For these reasons, it can be beneficial to ‘future proof’ plans and projects by having regard for impacts on sites that may possibly come forward for designation.

1.18 Key forest blocks in Purbeck include:

- Wareham Forest
- Rempstone
- Hethfelton
- Moreton
- Puddletown

1.19 Natural England will give locally specific advice regarding when such an approach would be beneficial. In preparing and updating this Habitats Regulations Assessment, Natural England will be consulted to discuss how such sites should be treated.



**Map 1: SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites in & around Purbeck District**

- Ramsar
  - SAC
  - SAC & Ramsar
  - SPA
  - SPA & Ramsar
  - SPA & SAC
  - SPA, SAC & Ramsar
- Purbeck District

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## **2. Checking the Issues and Options for Likely Significant Effects**

- 2.1 In accordance with the Habitats Regulations, and as described in Appendix 1, a step by step process of Habitats Regulations Assessment needs to be undertaken for the plan review, because the reviewed plan will effectively be a new plan, in place to guide the sustainable growth Purbeck for 14 years (or similar timescale depending on consultation feedback on the proposed plan period).
- 2.2 This report is gathering evidence and making a preliminary assessment of the various options for growth proposed in the Issues and Options document. At this stage, the Habitats Regulations Assessment considers the options in light of currently available information in order to inform the refinement and narrowing of options. A screening exercise of all aspects of the plan at its current Issues and Options stage is undertaken in this section of the report. Areas of potential concern are then examined in more detail, in the following section, in order to inform the development of the plan to its next stage.
- 2.3 The check for likely significant effects provides a provisional screening of the plan. It is undertaken to enable the plan maker as competent authority to do two things; narrow down the elements of the plan that may pose a risk to European sites to highlight those options that are likely to be harmful and, where an option poses a risk but is a desired element of the plan, the screening exercise identifies where further assessment is necessary in order to determine the nature and magnitude of potential impacts on European sites and what could be done to eliminate those risks. Further assessment and evidence gathering after screening may include, for example, the commissioning of additional survey work, modelling, researching scientific literature or seeking expert opinion.
- 2.4 The Issues and Options document was in a near final form when it was provided for screening. It will undergo final editing before being published for public consultation. This Habitats Regulations Assessment will also be made available at the consultation. The document identifies 16 issues (with 21 questions) for consideration as the plan develops. These issues have been identified by the District Council and consultees as the key issues for the plan to resolve for the District. Each of the issues is considered in turn in the screening assessment.
- 2.5 Table 1 provides the screening assessment for the Issues and Options document. Where risks are highlighted and there is a possibility of significant effects on European sites, further more detailed assessment is required. Whilst a screening table has been prepared for this early document in the plan making process, it is important to bear in mind that it is difficult to screen options that have not been fully developed in detail. Inevitably there will be considerable precaution in screening elements of the plan in these early stages and where lack of detail presents uncertainties, it has to be assumed that there could be a potential risk to European sites.

2.6 As the plan develops and policies and allocations emerge, further screening will be undertaken so that the whole plan proposed for adoption has been checked for any possibility of significant effects on European sites. This ensures that the final Habitats Regulations Assessment is based on the final plan submitted for Examination and the assessment provides an accurate and up to date record of assessment for the plan in its final stages before adoption. Any changes recommended by the Examining Inspector will need to undergo a final Habitats Regulations Assessment check before the plan is formally adopted.

**Table 1: Screening the Issues and Options Document for the likelihood of significant effects ('LSE')**

Policy or Plan Section	Description	LSE	Justification for LSE Conclusion	Further considerations
Issue 1 – plan period	An explanation of the various options for the time period of the plan, to either align with neighbouring authority plan periods or to adhere to the NPPF	No LSE for all options	Any plan review will require a new Habitats Regulations Assessment, irrespective of timescales	None
Issue 2 – Meeting objectively assessed housing needs	This issues deals with the overall quantum of housing for the district for the plan period	LSE, the two options below do not yet have exact figures stated	The currently adopted plan provides European site mitigation based on the number of houses currently proposed. A higher figure does not yet have mitigation assured.	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 2a	Deliver around 2,244 additional homes between 2013 and 2031 (subject to additional testing, such as heathlands and highways)	LSE	No mitigation assured for the levels of housing proposed	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 2b	Deliver more than an additional 2,244 homes between 2013 and 2031	LSE	No mitigation assured for the levels of housing proposed	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Issue 3 – Where development could go	A range of options are presented with regard to the settlement hierarchy and whether it is appropriate to focus growth at the larger towns, or to allow growth at smaller settlements	LSE	Any of the general principles presented in the options would not automatically lead to LSE, rather there is the potential for impacts if a specific location for growth is chosen	Re-assess once the policy becomes more specific. Development of the policy should have regard for the initial assessment made of the site specific potential options.
Issue 4 – Potential Large Sites	Landowners have presented a number of sites for	LSE	All options presented have been initially screened and have the	It is advised that the Council begins to refine the list of

Policy or Plan Section	Description	LSE	Justification for LSE Conclusion	Further considerations
	residential development to the Council. Where the possible site is presented with an ability to accommodate 200 houses or more, these are listed		potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure and urbanisation impacts	large scale housing site options in light of the initial assessment made in the appropriate Assessment section below.
Option 4a	Consider new development to the north and west of North Wareham	LSE	Potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure and water quality	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 4b	Consider new development to the west of Wareham	LSE	Potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure, urbanisation and water quality	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 4c	Consider new development to the south-east of Sandford	LSE	Potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure, urbanisation and water quality	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 4d	Consider new development around Lytchett Minster	LSE	Potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure, urbanisation and water quality	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 4e	Consider new development around Moreton	LSE	Potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure, urbanisation and water quality	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 4f	Consider new development west of Wool	LSE	Potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure and water quality	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 4g	Consider new development to the north of Langton Matravers	LSE	Potential to affect European sites in terms of recreational pressure.	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Issue 5 – green belt	Options to make some amendments to green belt boundaries, with specific proposals listed.	No LSE	Options to change the green belt rather than any development. However, all locations mapped are within the 5km buffer for the heathlands and also within the Poole Harbour catchment.	Any future development at these locations will need to address impacts to European sites.
Issue 6 – Meeting employment needs	Considering the location and amount of employment land	LSE	Potential to affect European sites through fragmentation and disturbance	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis



Policy or Plan Section	Description	LSE	Justification for LSE Conclusion	Further considerations
Option 6a: focus employment development at Dorset Green Technology Park (DGTP)	Site specific description	LSE	Adjacent to heathland at Winfrith	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 6b: focus employment development at Holton Heath / Admiralty Park	Site specific description	LSE	Adjacent to heathland around Holton Heath, BlackHill and Sandford Heaths	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 6c: focus employment development at Bovington Middle School.	Site specific description	LSE	Close to heathland	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 6d: Provide around 3ha of additional employment land at Upton	Site specific description	LSE	Close to heathland and Poole Harbour	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 6e: provide around 1ha of additional employment land at Sandford Lane in North Wareham	Site specific description	LSE	Close to Poole Harbour Ramsar, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Poole Harbour SPA	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Option 6f: provide additional employment development at Sandford First School, Botany Bay Farm at Bloxworth and/or the the Dorset County Council-owned depot off the B3351 at Corfe Castle	Site specific description	LSE	Close to a range of European sites	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Issue 7 – Meeting retail needs	Options for the amount of additional retail floor space required	No LSE	There are no impact pathways arising from the delivery of additional retail	None, although project specific development should always be checked.
Issue 8: Managing internationally protected heathlands	Questions relating to the current mitigation and restrictions to protect European sites	LSE	The current mitigation was deemed necessary by the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the current adopted plan. Any changes to the measures has the potential to weaken the protection of European sites and will need to be fully assessed.	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis once consultations responses are received.
Issue 9 – Norden Park	Discussion regarding	No LSE	Policy could have a	None

Policy or Plan Section	Description	LSE	Justification for LSE Conclusion	Further considerations
and ride	whether to expand this park and ride or not		positive impact through reducing road traffic past Corfe Common	
Issue 10 - boundaries	Invites comments on boundary changes to settlements	No LSE	Changes to boundaries have not been seen as part of the assessment, but at this stage there is no policy simply requests for comments and changes are understood to be slight	Boundaries need checking at later stages
Issue 11 – Wareham town centre	Slight changes to town centre boundary mapped	No LSE	Relates to retail areas and changes are very slight	None
Issue 12 – Local centres	Options for different approaches to local centres	No LSE	No additional development, a refinement of boundaries to be more accurate only	None
Issue 13 – Affordable housing delivery	Options to increase percentage of affordable housing or allocate more settlement extensions	No LSE	Each new home has the potential to contribute to impacts, irrespective of the type of accommodation	None, but ensure that all new housing is mitigated for, even if exempt from making a financial contribution
Issue 14 – self/custom build housing	Relates to the promotion of self-build within the new plan	No LSE	Each new home has the potential to contribute to impacts, irrespective of the type of accommodation	None, but ensure that all new housing is mitigated for, even if exempt from making a financial contribution
Issue 15 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople	Relates to provision of settlement extensions or new sites.	No LSE	Each new home has the potential to contribute to impacts, irrespective of the type of accommodation.	None, but need to ensure that all new housing is mitigated for and should be considered as C3 development in terms of impacts.
Issue 16 – Morden country park and tourist accommodation	Proposal for public open space and holiday chalets	LSE	Adjacent heathland sites – potential for disturbance to Annex I birds, increased fire incidence, trampling, dog fouling, water quality	Take to appropriate assessment for further analysis
Issue 17 – Other open space	Questions relating to the way in which open space is delivered in new development	No LSE	No additional development, asking public opinion on open space	None
Issue 18 – Military needs	Provision of housing for military personnel and potential for MOD to provide housing for	No LSE	Each new home has the potential to contribute to impacts, irrespective of the type of accommodation	None, but ensure that all new housing is mitigated for, even if exempt from making a financial



H R A o f P u r b e c k P l a n R e v i e w

Policy or Plan Section	Description	LSE	Justification for LSE Conclusion	Further considerations
	non-military personnel			contribution
Issue 19 – policy amendments	Review of a number of planning policies within the current plan, in line with current planning policy, legislation and evidence	LSE	Proposed amendments not yet stated, therefore uncertainties	Rescreen once changes known, may not need to go to appropriate assessment
Issue 20 – additional policies	Asks whether any new policies should be included	No LSE	Nothing proposed or set out as an option	None
Issue 21 – any other issues	Inviting consultees to identify any other issues	No LSE	Does not promote development	None

### 3. **Appropriate Assessment – Background to the Potential Impacts of New Residential Development**

- 3.1 An appropriate assessment is made of all aspects of the plan where there are uncertainties with regard to impacts on European sites. This Habitats Regulations Assessment is in its early stages, in line with the early stage of plan preparation. As the plan develops, further screening and appropriate assessment will be undertaken. This section provides some background information relating to the consideration of impacts from new residential development in the Purbeck District in relation to potential impacts on European sites.

#### **Housing Levels in PLP 1 and Planning Context**

- 3.2 Purbeck District Council adopted the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 (PLP1) in November 2012. The plan sets out the provision of 2,520 dwellings (120 per annum) between 2006 and 2027. These dwellings are planned through infill development and settlement extensions to Bere Regis, Lytchett Matravers, Swanage, Upton and Wareham. The PLP1 allocates settlement extensions at Lytchett Matravers, Upton and Wareham, but the others will be allocated through neighbourhood plans and the Swanage Local Plan.
- 3.3 The range of European sites, their strict legal protection and the nature conservation importance of Purbeck brings particular constraints to development in the area. The HRA (Liley & Tyldesley 2011) that accompanies the PLP1 was produced iteratively alongside the plan, and cross-references to a considerable evidence base that (in particular) focuses on the Dorset Heaths and Poole Harbour.
- 3.4 Concern regarding development in Purbeck goes back many years - for example the increasing fragmentation of the Dorset Heaths was highlighted in the 1960s (Moore 1962). Studies in the 1990s of fire incidence on the Dorset Heaths showed links to the levels of development (Kirby & Tantram 1999) and reviews of urban impacts focussed on the Dorset Heaths raised widespread concerns (de Molenaar 1998; Haskins 2000). A previous Purbeck Local Plan (2004) was never statutorily adopted due to its failure to implement a strategic housing allocation at Holton Heath, following a public inquiry that focussed primarily on nature conservation issues.
- 3.5 The PLP1 contains a range of mitigation measures and draws on particular pieces of evidence that ensured confidence that the level of housing set out could be delivered. The evidence included a detailed consideration of the effects of development at Lytchett Minster (White *et al.* 2008), detailed considerations of the implications of different growth scenarios (Liley *et al.* 2010), evidence to support HRAs relating to SE Dorset (Liley *et al.* 2006) and a range of visitor studies (Clarke *et al.* 2006; Liley, Sharp & Clarke 2008). Mitigation measures have been carefully developed over a number of years through partnership working. With respect to the heaths, measures are now set out within the Heathland SPD and for Poole Harbour there is a Strategy for Managing Nitrogen in the Poole Harbour Catchment.

- 3.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires councils to meet their objectively assessed development needs. The PLP1 does not pursue a housing target higher than 2,520 dwellings over the plan period because of doubts cast by Natural England and in the HRA, which was unable to conclude that the impacts of growth above this level on European protected sites could be successfully mitigated.
- 3.7 The Planning Inspector who examined the PLP1 concluded that the plan was sound and the Council was right to adopt the precautionary approach in the short term with the intention of exploring higher housing growth through a separate partial review by 2017. The principal driver behind the partial review will be to investigate the possibility for heathland mitigation measures that will enable the potential delivery of higher housing growth. The Council will therefore need to test higher housing growth scenarios and mitigation.
- 3.8 Further HRA work is therefore clearly required to test these different scenarios and consider the implications for further development. European protected sites, and the blockages they are perceived to create in the planning system, have been the focus of Government and media attention in recent years. Defra undertook a review of the implementation of the Habitats Directive in 2012. Whilst the evidence clearly demonstrated that the European legislation precluded development in a very small percentage of cases, the review made it clear that a number of improvements needed to be made, most notably with regard to available evidence for assessment, and more positive and close working between Government, Local Planning Authorities, developers and nature conservation bodies to collectively seek solutions that enabled growth and protected European site interests at the same time, wherever possible. There is therefore a careful balancing act in Purbeck. It is necessary to have confidence that the nature conservation interests of the European sites are protected efficiently and ensure that all mitigation options have been carefully explored.
- 3.9 Previous HRA work (Liley & Tyldesley 2011) for the PLP1 identified the following likely significant effects relating to European sites in and around Purbeck:
- Impacts of new housing and recreational pressure on the Dorset Heaths (the Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA, Dorset Heathlands Ramsar).
  - Increased recreational pressure on Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar from shore-based and water based activities likely to increase as a result of new housing.
  - Increased recreational pressure to coastal sites as a result of enhanced transport links and housing (Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC, St Alban's to Durlston Head SAC).
  - Increased recreational pressure to the New Forest (New Forest SPA/SAC/Ramsar) as a result of increased population and enhanced transport links within Purbeck.
  - Water issues, including abstraction and water quality, affecting Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar and Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA, Dorset Heathlands Ramsar).

- Fragmentation and pressure on heathland sites (Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar) as a result of employment allocation (Holton Heath).
- Air quality issues as a result of increased traffic (Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar and Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar).

3.10 The HRA work for PLP1 considered that, without mitigation measures, adverse effects would be likely as a result of the Core Strategy alone, either as single elements or as a combination of elements within the plan for each of these issues. However, mitigation measures, which would eliminate these effects, were developed alongside the progression of the plan, and the mitigation measures were integrated into the plan, providing a robust mechanism to ensure that development would not adversely affect the European sites. This previous assessment work provides the foundation for this report, and we can focus on the same sites and issues, as summarised in Table 2.

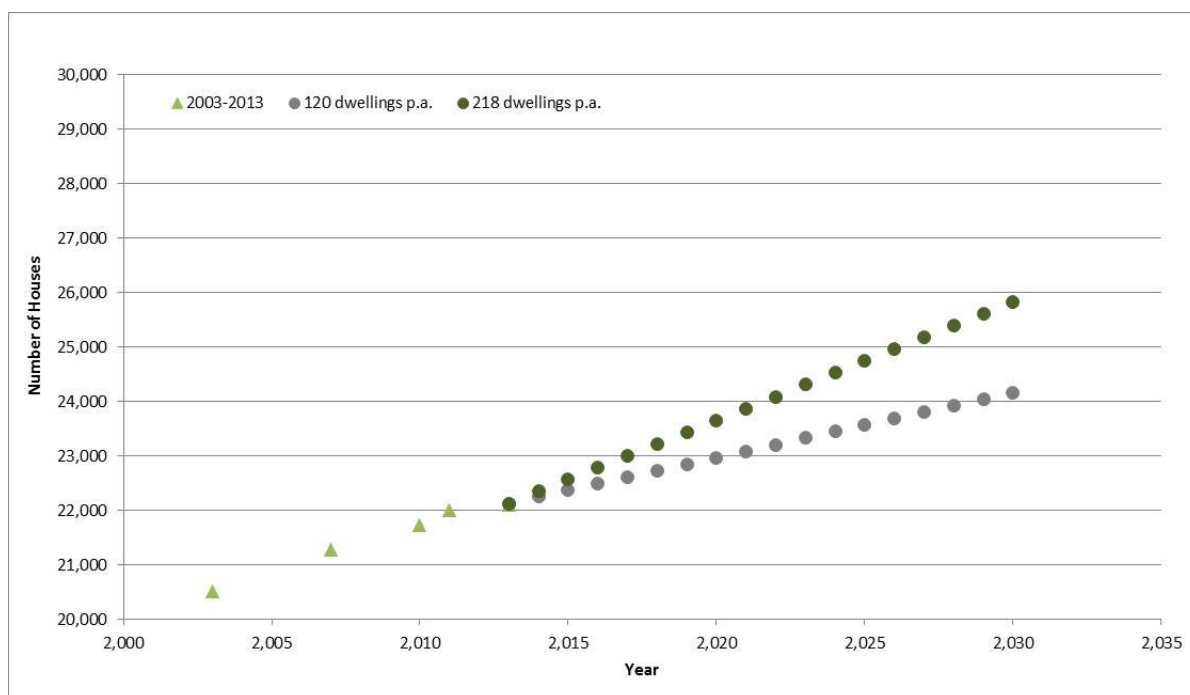
**Table 2: Summary table highlighting issues and Natura 2000 sites for which adverse effects on integrity were identified within HRA work for PLP1. Table adapted from Liley & Tyldesley (2011).**

Issue	Relevant policies in PLP 1	Natura 2000 sites					Mitigation / Notes
		Dorset Heaths <sup>3</sup>	Poole Harbour	St Albans Head to Durlston Head	Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs	New Forest	
SAC		✓		✓	✓	✓	
SPA		✓	✓			✓	
Ramsar		✓	✓			✓	
Increased recreational pressure and other urban effects	HS, TA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Increased recreational pressure from development across the District with the potential for an adverse effect on heathland, Poole Harbour and coastal sites. Mitigation through access management and SANGS provision.
Water abstraction	HS	✓					Strategic management of water supplies potentially resolves issue in long term.
Water quality	HS	✓	✓				Detail of mitigation measures relating to Poole Harbour needs to be finalised
Fragmentation	ELS, TA	✓					Employment land at Holton Heath and Winfrith has potential to impact nearby heaths. Detailed assessment required of each site to ensure level of development can go ahead.
Air quality	HS, ELS, TA, IAT	✓					Development in Swanage will have particular impacts for traffic (Stoborough Heath and Corfe Common SSSIs).

<sup>3</sup> By Dorset Heaths we mean the Dorset Heaths SAC, The Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, the Dorset Heathlands SPA and the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar

#### 4. Appropriate Assessment: Issue 2, Meeting Housing Needs

- 4.1 The issues and options document gives the option for 2,244 additional new dwellings (subject to additional testing on impacts such as heathlands) for the plan period (Option 2a) or to deliver more than 2,244 homes in the same period (option 2b). The total of 2,244 homes is based on initial draft findings of the Eastern Dorset SHMA, which indicate an annual assessed housing need for Purbeck of 218 homes per annum. This is a substantial increase on the current plan level of 120 per year.
- 4.2 GIS data on the number of residential dwellings assigned to postcodes in Purbeck indicates (as of start of 2014) around 22,127 dwellings. Looking back (Footprint Ecology hold similar data back to 2003) there were around 20,535 dwellings in the District in 2003. A level of growth of 218 dwellings per year 2014-2031 would represent an increase of 18% in the number of houses present in the district in 2014. In Figure 1 we summarise the development trajectory based on the levels of 120 p.a. and 218 p.a. in context with the number of dwellings back to 2003.



**Figure 1: Housing change by year for the period 2003-2031.** Data for the period 2003- to 2013 is drawn from GIS data held at Footprint Ecology (postcode data with number of residential postal delivery points, i.e. homes). The points beyond 2013 are based on an incremental year on year increase of 120 homes per year (PLP1), the grey dot; or 218 homes per year (upper green dots).

#### Dorset Heathlands

- 4.3 For the Dorset Heathlands SPA and the Dorset Heaths SACs, Natural England considers that local authorities undertaking appropriate assessment will identify a significant adverse effect in combination with other proposals, for any developments that lie in the area between 400m and 5 km from the protected heath boundary.

- 4.4 Increased development can have a range of impacts on heathland and these are well documented (for reviews see Haskins 2000; Underhill-Day 2005; Liley et al. 2006). Such impacts that are relevant to the Dorset heathland sites around Purbeck include:
- Increased numbers of pet cats and increased predation of ground-nesting birds (Dorset Heathlands SPA) and other wildlife (Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC)
  - Increased fire risk (Dorset Heathlands SPA, Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC)
  - Increased levels of recreation, with the potential for disturbance impacts to ground-nesting birds (Dorset Heathlands SPA); trampling and damage to the SAC interest (Dorset Heaths SAC; Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes); eutrophication from dog fouling (Dorset Heaths SAC; Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC).
  - Anti-social behaviour and contamination through vandalism, fly tipping, littering and the introduction of alien plants and animals (Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC).
- 4.5 Natural England advise in the current version of the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2012-2014 that avoidance or mitigation measures can allow development to be approved. Mitigation will encompass measures to divert recreational pressure away from heathland and access management measures.
- 4.6 Only around 3% (some 1500ha) of Purbeck District is beyond 5km from the Dorset Heathlands SPA or Dorset Heaths SACs, as such it is not really possible to develop anywhere in Purbeck without the location being within the 5km zone. The parts of the District that do fall outside the 5km are mostly along the coast, where other constraints on development occur. As such mitigation measures need to be set out in order for a detailed appropriate assessment.
- 4.7 Until recently, mitigation projects were approved by a Heathland Executive Group, consisting of a Councillor from each of the 6 local authorities together with representatives from Natural England, Home Builders Federation and the RSPB. The system has now changed in that each local authority has taken a greater role in delivering the mitigation within its own boundary. From 2014, the Urban Heaths Partnership has been restructured and reduced in size. Funding for the partnership has been agreed and set for the period 2014-2019, and 15% of heathland mitigation monies will be allocated towards the work of the partnership. The number of warden staff has been greatly reduced and now each local authority is responsible for the remaining 85% of the funds raised. One part-time warden with a heathland mitigation role is now employed by Purbeck District Council, and this role is provided for Purbeck District Council by than the Urban Heaths Partnership.
- 4.8 Developer contributions for heathland mitigation were originally collected by Purbeck District Council through individual S106 agreements. With the introduction of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) a change in the way in which planning authorities obtain developer money was introduced, with any funding required to provide infrastructure collected through CIL, in accordance with tariffs set for each administrative area based on their infrastructure needs and viability of payments, i.e.

tariffs are set at a level that is affordable and viable for the development of the local area.

- 4.9 After 4 June 2014, Heathland mitigation has been funded through CIL or by securing site specific mitigation through Section 106. The current Reg 123 list<sup>4</sup> commits to heathland mitigation, and the current proposed list (October 2014) contains no provision for strategic SANGs, with all heathland mitigation focussed on on-site management measures. The absence of strategic SANGs on the CIL Regulation 123 list does not mean that the Council does not intend to deliver them but it is yet to determine the best way to do so. CIL expenditure is not restricted to those projects on the Reg 123 list.

#### **Levels of funding and types of mitigation project funded**

- 4.10 It would seem, from informal discussions with the planning authorities and Natural England, the system for funding and delivering mitigation has to date become bedded in and is widely accepted. The current SPD sets a 'per dwelling' cost of around £1500 per house and £950 per flat. Since the introduction of CIL the tariffs are no longer collected in Purbeck and the current draft SPD is out for consultation.
- 4.11 As of February 2014, the cumulative amount of gross contributions received by the relevant local authorities (Poole, Bournemouth, East Dorset, Purbeck & Christchurch) was £6,479,495. This money has been spent on a wide range of projects, including:
- On-site wardening
  - Education programmes delivered by the Urban Heaths Partnership and Dorset Dogs
  - Improvements to existing sites outside the heaths which have the potential to absorb additional access (such as Delph Woods)
  - Creation of alternative sites away from heaths (including a BMX area in Christchurch and contribution towards a multi-use play area as well as new sites for more general recreation)
  - Purchase of land adjacent to heaths ('heath support areas') to provide increased space for recreation
  - Installation of fire-fighting infrastructure on the heaths (such as fire hydrants)
  - On-site management works, such as path work to minimise erosion
  - Monitoring, including purchase monitoring equipment and both bird and people monitoring.
- 4.12 A key component in the delivery of the mitigation has been the Urban Heaths Partnership, employed through Dorset County Council. The Urban Heaths Partnership has involved a team of wardens who have undertaken the on-site wardening work, and much of the monitoring and education work. The team of wardens have worked across all local authority areas.
- 4.13 The strategy remained in place as an 'interim framework' for some time until its final adoption in 2012 as the 'Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2012-2014

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/purbeck-community-infrastructure-levy>



Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD). The local authorities in South East Dorset are in the process of preparing an update to the SPD which should be available for public consultation in early January 2015. It is important that the SPD be continually reviewed and updated in light of monitoring and new information, and as mitigation projects come to fruition, new ones need to be identified to ensure mitigation alongside current growth. However, at the moment it is not clear how the mitigation in Purbeck will be delivered. Without the details in the forthcoming SPD it is not possible to complete the appropriate assessment. In later sections we consider the specific large housing sites that may help deliver the additional new houses. We consider the SANGs delivery proposed with these developments. Further work is required to identify how on-site mitigation will take place, how wardening effort will be directed and what measures are possible.

### Coastal SAC sites and recreation

- 4.14 The Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Local Plan (Liley & Tyldesley 2011) indicated that the new housing and potential for new tourist accommodation within the Core Strategy, if implemented without mitigation measures, could result in an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC and the St Alban's Head to Durlston Head SAC. It is development in Swanage that is likely to have the greatest impact, but development within much of the district may contribute to the numbers of people visiting the coast (Liley, Sharp & Clarke 2008).
- 4.15 The impacts from increased housing are potentially 'diluted' in that the coastal sites are heavily visited by tourists, and receive many more visitors than, for example, the heaths. Given that some of the impacts (such as trampling and eutrophication) are similar for coastal habitats and heathland ones, the impact of new housing on coastal sites is potentially less than that on the heaths. The assessment indicated that, without mitigation measures, adverse effects would be likely as a result of the Core Strategy alone, either as single elements or as a combination of elements within the plan. However, mitigation measures, which would eliminate these effects, were considered feasible and were referenced within the Strategy document. In particular monitoring and early warning mechanisms were proposed. In order to assess in detail the quantum of new development it would be necessary to review the monitoring to check the results and consider these in relation to the locations for development that become the focus for the plan.

### Poole Harbour and Recreation

- 4.16 Disturbance has been identified by Natural England as a generic issue across many European Marine Sites (see Coyle & Wiggins 2010), and can be an issue for a range of species.
- 4.17 Disturbance to wintering and passage waterfowl can result in:

- A reduction in the time spent feeding due to repeated flushing/increased vigilance (Fitzpatrick & Bouchez 1998; Stillman & Goss-Custard 2002; Bright *et al.* 2003; Thomas, Kvitek & Bretz 2003; Yasué 2005)
  - Increased energetic costs (Stock & Hofeditz 1997; Nolet *et al.* 2002)
  - Avoidance of areas of otherwise suitable habitat, potentially using poorer quality feeding/roosting sites instead (Cryer *et al.* 1987; Gill 1996; Burton *et al.* 2002; Burton, Rehfish & Clark 2002)
  - Increased stress (Regel & Putz 1997; Weimerskirch *et al.* 2002; Walker, Dee Boersma & Wingfield 2006; Thiel *et al.* 2011).
- 4.18 Disturbance can have additional impacts for breeding birds and for breeding gulls and terns, impacts of recreation can include reduced breeding success (Robert & Ralph 1975; Sandvik H & Barrett 2001; Medeiros *et al.* 2007).
- 4.19 Since the HRA of the Local Plan, additional evidence of the impacts of disturbance to Poole Harbour SPA has become available. A detailed disturbance study of the SPA (Liley & Fearnley 2012), commissioned by Natural England, involved detailed observation work on the response of birds at 15 survey points and also included paired counts of birds at particular locations during the day and during the night, to determine whether areas with low numbers of birds during the day may be utilised by the birds more at night (when levels of disturbance from recreational activity are potentially less).
- 4.20 Liley & Fearnley's report shows that disturbance had a significant, negative effect on the number of waders and the number of wildfowl present at the survey points, indicating that birds respond to disturbance levels and redistribute as a result of disturbance.
- 4.21 The Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Local Plan (Liley & Tyldesley 2011) recommended a range of mitigation measures that were necessary (see 6.16-6.26). To date there is no information on which of these have been established and how successful they have been. The mitigation measures are not listed in the CIL 123 list.
- 4.22 The Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan<sup>5</sup> was most recently updated (Drake 2011), and its production and implementation is overseen by the Poole Harbour Steering Group, which consists of Dorset County Council, Borough of Poole Council, Purbeck District Council, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Poole Harbour Commissioners, Southern Sea Fisheries District Committee and Wessex Water Services Ltd.
- 4.23 Whilst the Management Plan focuses primarily on managing recreational activities that may otherwise cause disturbance to SPA/Ramsar features, the plan also encompasses a range of other activities, such as dredging and the use of antifouling paints for boats.
- 4.24 Other relevant measures/changes that come into force recently (and are not directly set up as mitigation, but relevant to considering issues in the Harbour) include:

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pooleharbouragmp.co.uk/>

- There is a dedicated permit scheme now established, run by the Poole Harbour Commissioners and - for kite surfing at Studland - run by the National Trust with a dedicated zone created for kitesurfing. Reducing disturbance to birds is apparently one of the reasons the zone at Studland has been established.
- A recreation forum has been proposed for Poole Harbour<sup>6</sup>, providing a means for different user groups to communicate with each other. This could also have benefits in terms of reducing impacts from recreation, and a Purbeck-wide forum (which would therefore cover at least parts of Poole Harbour) was a recommendation made in visitor strategy work undertaken for the Purbeck Nature Improvement Area (Lake, Cruickshanks & Phillipson 2014).
- There is now a charity dedicated to the Birds of Poole Harbour. The Birds of Poole Harbour charity sees its role as the link to raising the profile of bird conservation and preservation in the harbour. It has been running a range of education events raising awareness about the bird interest of the Harbour.
- Bait harvesting has become more closely monitored and various measures<sup>7</sup> agreed with bait collectors

4.25 It seems there is also relatively little systematic monitoring data showing how access levels have changed over time. The need for strategic mitigation is evidenced by:

- Bramble Bush Bay is promoted as an area for Kite Surfing by Poole Harbour Commissioners in their recent kitesurfing leaflet<sup>8</sup>, which is aimed at reducing the impacts caused by Kitesurfing. Bramble Bush Bay is adjacent to some sensitive roost sites and this is an area where kitesurfing is likely to have a particular impact. This highlights the difficulty in ensuring relevant parties are aware of the issues and working together.
- The National Trust is promoting a potentially sensitive area along the shoreline of Poole Harbour at Studland<sup>9</sup> as an area for walking and has enhanced facilities on the beach at Studland (volley ball nets etc.) in areas previously used by roosting waders. Such promotion – on the National Trust’s own land – highlights the difficulty of ensuring effective mitigation for development where sites are owned and managed by a range of different parties.
- Initial results of the VALMER study<sup>10</sup> of recreation in Poole Harbour provide evidence of conflict between users (kitesurfers, windsurfers etc) around Whitley Lake, highlighting increasing popularity of the area and potential for pressure to grow on other areas of the Harbour.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/poole-harbour-surveys>

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/sitedata/files/MoA\\_PooleBaitDigging.pdf](http://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/sitedata/files/MoA_PooleBaitDigging.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.phc.co.uk/downloads/general/PHC-Kite-Surfing-Leaflet.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/studland-beach/things-to-see-and-do/view-page/item458798?intcmp=GBW:WalksTitle:Shell~Bay~to~Bramble~Bush~Bay~walk>

<sup>10</sup> See powerpoint download at <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/poole-harbour-surveys>

- Some new types of activity have appeared, for example paddleboarding is becoming increasingly common (Footprint Ecology, unpublished data) and a company doing events/tours with giant canoes has become established.
- The most recent WeBS alerts for Poole Harbour, published by the BTO<sup>11</sup> show that alerts (i.e. marked declines) have been triggered for eight of the 14 species which were assessed. For four species (shelduck, lapwing, curlew and redshank), comparison of site trend with broadscale trends suggests that the declines underpinning Alerts status may be driven by site-specific pressures. The four species with site-specific declines feed on intertidal mud at low tide.

4.26 It would therefore seem that there have been various changes that have implications for disturbance levels and that relatively little in terms of mitigation for new development has been implemented. It seems that the recommendations made in the original Habitats Regulations Assessment and have not come into place yet. The growing evidence base (such as the Poole Harbour Disturbance Study), if anything, strengthens the need to ensure effective mitigation is in place. The issues are relevant for other local authorities around Poole Harbour, and to date Poole Borough Council has only implemented one mitigation project, funded through a S106 agreement.

4.27 The progression of measures to mitigate for recreational impacts on Poole Harbour has been slow, and this is likely to be a consequence of the complexities of administration, particularly given the number of partners involved. It is therefore imperative that this progression continues and is prioritised for the new local plan, with clear reference and commitment as part of policy. It is recommended that a set of priority actions to progress the mitigation to implementation are identified and followed in order to inform the plan review. This will necessitate Purbeck District Council and the Borough of Poole Council to work together to draw up the action list.

4.28 There are now mitigation schemes in place for other coastal sites where there are concerns relating to development and impacts on the wintering bird interest (for example on the Solent and the Exe) and Natural England is currently working nationally to review mitigation measures on coastal sites in order to ensure mitigation can be targeted effectively at a local level. There is therefore plenty of new material that Purbeck District Council can draw on.

### Poole Harbour and Nutrients

4.29 There are existing issues relating to nutrient levels in treated waste water entering Poole Harbour. The issues were raised in the Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment (Liley & Tyldesley 2011).

4.30 Poole Harbour is classified as an SPA and listed as a Ramsar site for its bird interest, and the Ramsar listing also includes criteria relating to its estuarine habitats, coastal habitats and rare flora and invertebrates. Nutrient enrichment of the harbour causes a number

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<sup>11</sup> <http://blx1.bto.org/webs-reporting/?tab=alerts>

of ecological concerns, but most notably it is the resultant algal mats that form on the mudflats, fed by the high levels of nutrients, that have detrimental effects on the availability of mudflat dwelling invertebrates for the waterfowl that form interest features of the SPA and Ramsar site. The algal mats affect the density and diversity of invertebrates, and reduced quality and quantity of food will in turn affect the rigor of the SPA birds and therefore potentially affect the ecological integrity of SPA populations.

- 4.31 The Environment Agency and Natural England prepared in 2013 a nutrient management plan entitled “Strategy for Managing Nitrogen in the Poole Harbour Catchment To 2035” (Bryan & Kite 2013). The Strategy proposes two approaches to meeting the target of no net increase: firstly that the Environment Agency and Natural England work with the agriculture sector within the Poole Harbour catchment; and that the four councils within the catchment of Poole Harbour work together to create an Implementation Plan to mitigate the impact of additional development on Poole Harbour through additional nitrogen load. The aim of this Strategy is to ensure that the requirements of the Habitat Regulations are met such that overall a 25% reduction in Nitrogen entering Poole Harbour is achieved by 2035. This reduction will be achieved through land-use change in the agricultural area of the catchment. For development activity such as planned for Poole Borough, the Strategy aims to ensure that there is no net increase in Nitrogen load entering the Harbour from terrestrial sources.
- 4.32 In seeking a solution to the issue, the Council worked closely with Natural England and the Environment Agency to produce an SPD setting out a nitrogen neutrality approach to new growth. The ‘Implementation Plan to Achieve Nitrogen Neutrality from Future Residential and Commercial Development across Poole Harbour Catchment’ is, at the time of preparation of this report, currently in draft but not ready for consultation. It is essentially a strategy to ensure that new growth does not result in any increased discharge of nutrients into the harbour and demands nitrogen neutrality for every new development in order to achieve this.
- 4.33 The Nitrogen Neutrality concept is based on a recognition that nitrates entering the harbour have originated from a range of sources. According to Natural England and the Environment Agency research, waste water is a significant issue (15%), but run off from agricultural land is thought to be the biggest contributing factor (85%). Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) discharging into Poole Harbour are required to remove 75% of nitrate, under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. In practice treatment removes all but 7mg/l of nitrate using a nitrate stripping facility. This process is already relatively expensive; and would require additional and permanent investment to address increases in volume of effluent entering the STW, resulting from new development. In attempting to mitigate for the nitrates entering the harbour from the waste water sources, another option is to prevent the impact by removing an equivalent level of nitrates from other sources – so called Nitrogen Offsetting. Securing mitigation for nutrient enrichment within Purbeck

- 4.34 The emerging SPD sets out the required volume of nitrates for removal from the catchment, based on the predicted growth within the four local planning authority areas. It recognises that land will come out of agricultural production for a number of reasons over the plan period, and calculates the reduction in nitrates that will occur as a result. The remaining shortfall to offset predicted growth is therefore the volume that must be met with developer funding from housing developments. At present it is not clear how this mitigation will be achieved within Purbeck.
- 4.35 The SPD already notes an urgent need for significant areas of agricultural land to be taken out of production in order to mitigate for current growth. The Council will therefore need to progress the adoption and implementation of the SPD in advance of the local plan review in order to ensure that adequate mitigation is in place.
- 4.36 Whilst there has been considerable progress, the SPD to mitigate for nutrient enrichment is still in draft and yet to be consulted on and formally agreed. The new local plan needs to incorporate policy wording to cross-reference with the SPD once finalised, to ensure its effective and timely implementation alongside new growth and the SPD should therefore be progressed urgently in order to inform the plan review.

### The New Forest

- 4.37 The HRA for PLP1 (Liley & Tyldesley 2011) recognised that Purbeck was potentially just within a zone where new development might add to the recreational pressure within the New Forest SPA, SAC and Ramsar site. The New Forest National Park is a nationally promoted visitor attraction that draws day visitors and holiday makers from a wide radius. Visitor levels to the National Park are already high and additional development, was believed likely to result in increased visitor pressure. Given the draw of the National Park, visitors can travel from a wide radius. Mitigation measures, implemented strategically in conjunction with other local authorities, will eliminate any of the impacts. The previous HRA suggested that mitigation measures would likely be taken forward by the authorities in and immediately surrounding the National Park, and at the time that these are developed, the nature of any contribution necessary from the Purbeck District will become apparent.
- 4.38 Current checks suggest that a range of authorities (such as the Test Valley and New Forest Districts) have established such mitigation, and that they have been considering development within a 14km radius. Purbeck falls well beyond 14km from the National Park and it would therefore seem that, at this stage, no adverse effect on integrity can be assumed. Further checks as the plan develops will be necessary. It is only development in the very east of Purbeck District that New Forest issues may be relevant.

### Summary

- 4.39 The impacts of new housing will depend on the precise locations where development takes place and the scale of development in specific locations. More detailed consideration is given to large housing sites in a later section. At this issues and options

stage of the review, the following additional checks are required to clarify issues relating to European sites and the proposed scale of new development:

- How heathland mitigation will be delivered, which will depend on the emerging heathland mitigation SPD and the outcomes of the Partial Review Issues and Options consultation.
- Consideration of the options for mitigation and its delivery.
- How impacts relating to recreation and Poole Harbour will be resolved. There is no mitigation for Poole Harbour recreation issues included in the CIL Reg 123 list. It is not currently clear whether the mitigation identified for the current plan has been established.
- How impacts relating to nutrient enrichment and Poole Harbour will be resolved. This will be dependent on the emerging strategy SPD, which has not yet gone out to consultation.

## **5. Appropriate Assessment: Issue 3 - Where development could go**

- 5.1 Issue 3 addresses settlement extensions and small levels of development (sites with under 200 possible dwellings). Each settlement has different implications in terms of adverse effects alone or in-combination and we have attempted to summarise these in Table 3. At this point it is not possible to rule out adverse effects on integrity for any of the options and as the plan progresses it will be necessary to consider the issues at each settlement in more detail, giving consideration to the strategic mitigation issues discussed in section 4. We highlight that for many of the settlements at least part of the settlement is within 400m of heathland sites, and as such Natural England advise that mitigation measures will not be applicable and it will not be possible to rule out adverse effects on integrity.



**Table 3: Summary of settlements mentioned in issue 3 and relevant European site issues. The table is not comprehensive, but highlights particular sites and issues. Within heathland 5km – tick indicates at least part of settlement within 5km zone; Heathland 400m poss. constraint – tick indicates at least part of settlement within 400m or v. close to 400m zone; Poole Harbour recreation – tick indicates settlement within easy travel of Poole Harbour, ? indicates need for further checks; Coastal SAC sites and recreation – tick indicates settlement within easy travel, ? indicates need for further checks; Poole Harbour catchment – tick indicates settlement within Poole Harbour catchment and therefore nutrient issues.**

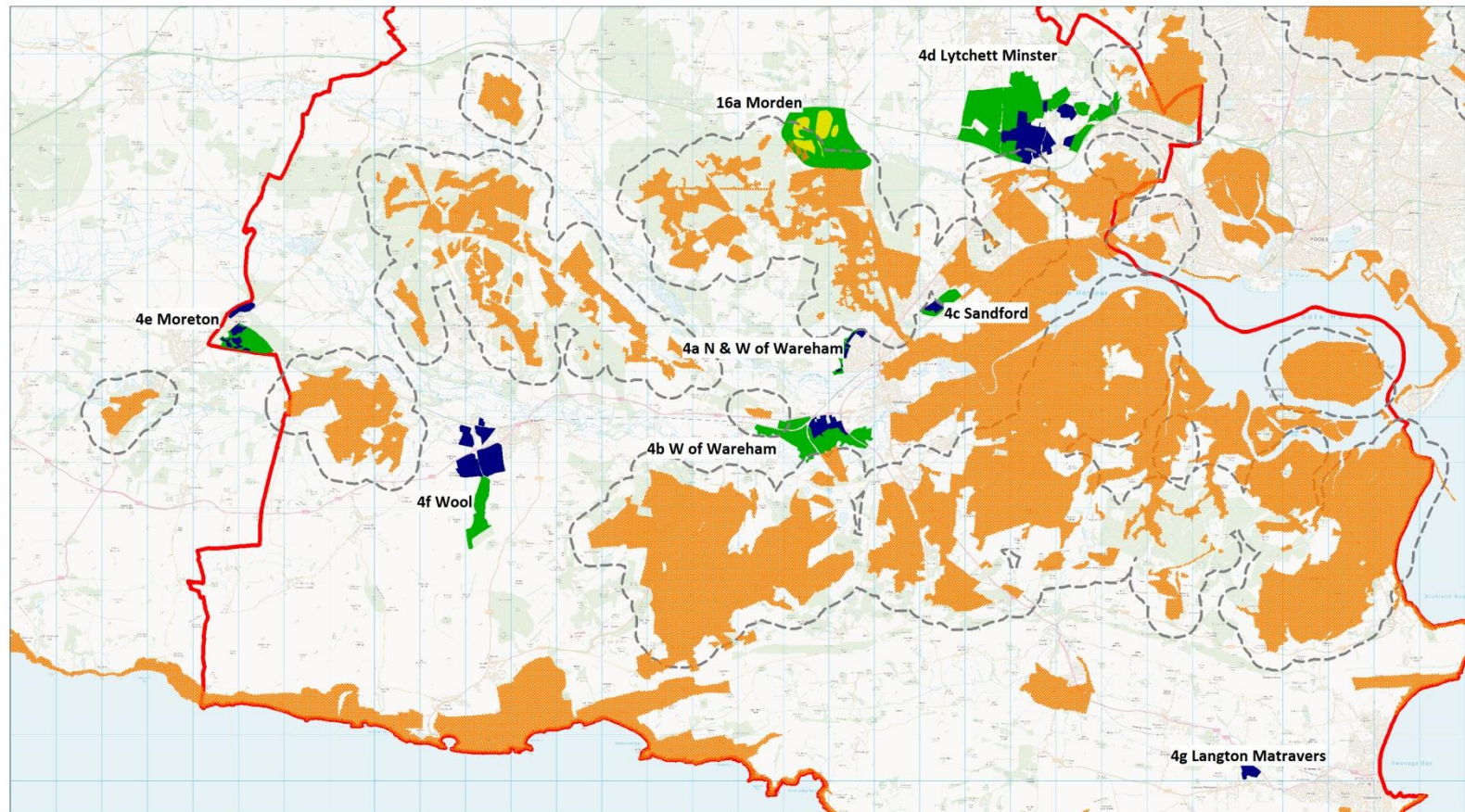
Settlement	Within heathland 5km	Heathland 400m poss. constraint	Poole Harbour recreation	Coastal SAC sites & recreation	Poole Harbour catchment	Notes
Swanage	✓		✓	✓	✓	Godlingston Heath, Studland (heath and dunes), Poole Harbour, Ballard Down and other coastal sites vulnerable to recreation pressure
Upton	✓	✓	✓		✓	Upton Heath, Poole Harbour, Ham Common vulnerable to recreation pressure
Wareham	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	Range of heathland sites and Wareham Forest easily accessible from the town. Need to assess effectiveness of SANG at Holme Lane. Also Poole Harbour within walking distance.
Bere Regis	✓	✓	?		✓	Black Hill adjacent to village. Wareham Forest a short drive
Bovington	✓	✓			✓	Much of nearby heathland within MOD training area. Hethfelton, Higher Hyde and Moreton easily accessible
Corfe Castle	✓		✓	✓	✓	Corfe Common on south of village
Lytchett Matravers	✓		✓	?	✓	Upton Heath and Wareham Forest within relatively short drive
Sandford	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	Sandford Heath, Holton Heath, Black Hill all nearby. Great Ovens, Morden Bog and Wareham Forest short drive
Wool	✓			✓	✓	Winfrith and Tadnoll to west. Hethfelton Plantation to east;
Langton Matravers	✓		✓	✓		Close to coastal SACs
Stoborough	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	Stoborough Heath adjacent to village and within easy walking. New SANG at Holme Lane may divert some access
West Lulworth	✓			✓	✓	Coastal SAC sites within easy access of village
Winfrith Newburgh	✓			✓	✓	Winfrith Heath to north and coastal sites (Lulworth) some distance to south
Briantspuddle	✓				✓	Black Hill (Bere Regis) and Bryants Puddle Heath nearby
Chaldon	✓			✓	✓	Winfrith Heath to north and coastal sites relatively close. Road

H R A o f P u r b e c k P l a n R e v i e w

Settlement	Within heathland 5km	Heathland 400m poss. constraint	Poole Harbour recreation	Coastal SAC sites & recreation	Poole Harbour catchment	Notes
Herring						links mean driving to coast/Winfrith Heath not direct.
Church Knowle	✓		?	?	✓	Corfe Common relatively close
East Burton	✓			?	✓	Winfrith Heath close
East Lulworth	✓			✓	✓	Coastal sites within easy access. Nearby heathland (e.g. Lulworth Ranges) mostly inaccessible
Harmans Cross	✓		✓	✓	✓	Corfe Common and Godlingston nearby. Poole Harbour and range of coastal sites relatively short drive
Kimmeridge	✓			✓		Coastal sites very close to village
Kingston	✓			✓		Coast within walking distance
Lytchett Minster	✓		✓		✓	Upton Heath, Wareham Forest and Poole Harbour relatively close
Moreton Station	✓			?	✓	Winfrith, Tadnoll and Warmwell nearby
Studland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Godlingston Heath next to village. Poole Harbour and Ballard Down very close.
Ridge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Directly adjacent to Stoborough Heath and Poole Harbour. Easy access to Arne, Hartland etc.
Worth Matravers	✓		✓	✓		Limestone grassland within SAC within walking distance of village
Affpuddle	✓				✓	Black Hill (Bere Regis) and Bryants Puddle Heath nearby
Bloxworth	✓				✓	Wareham Forest and Morden Bog within easy drive
Coombe Keynes	✓				✓	Short drive to coast
East Knighton	✓	✓		✓	✓	Walking distance to Winfrith Heath
East Stoke	✓			?	✓	Hethfelton within walking distance, other sites along Puddletown Road within short drive
Holton Heath	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	Holton Heath, Sandford Heath and Black Hill very close
Morden	✓		✓		✓	Wareham Forest nearby
Moreton	✓				✓	Winfrith Heath relatively close
Organford	✓	✓	✓		✓	Close to Sandford Heath and Wareham Forest
Worgret	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	Worgret Heath very close.

## **6. Issue 4: Potential Large Housing Sites**

- 6.1 Issue 4 relates to large housing sites (greater than 200 dwellings) and seven locations are mapped and considered in detail. At this stage the precise level of housing, distribution of housing within the area mapped and other details are uncertain, but it is possible to consider the Habitat Regulations issues for each location. This initial assessment of the large housing site options will be used alongside other evidence and consultation responses to refine the options the list of sites that will be taken forward in the plan. However, those sites will be assessed in more detail as further information is gathered for any sites that are retained in the plan at the next stage of plan development. Once the overall quantum of housing is proposed, this will also be considered as part of the appropriate assessment.
- 6.2 The seven locations are summarised in Map 2 and are considered in more detail in subsequent sections. The maps within this section show very approximate locations (based on maps in an early draft of the Issues and Options consultation document). At this initial stage, we focus on highlighting potential issues and mitigation requirements with each location and the maps are intended as an approximate guide only as to broad locations. Within Map 2 we have also shown the location of the green space and holiday chalets (Option 16) as the green space provision is relevant to the housing delivery.



**Map 2: Large Housing & Public Open Space**

Approximate locations for development & green space

- yellow square: holiday chalets
- blue square: housing/development
- green square: potential SANG/green space

 Purbeck District

 400m heathland buffer zone

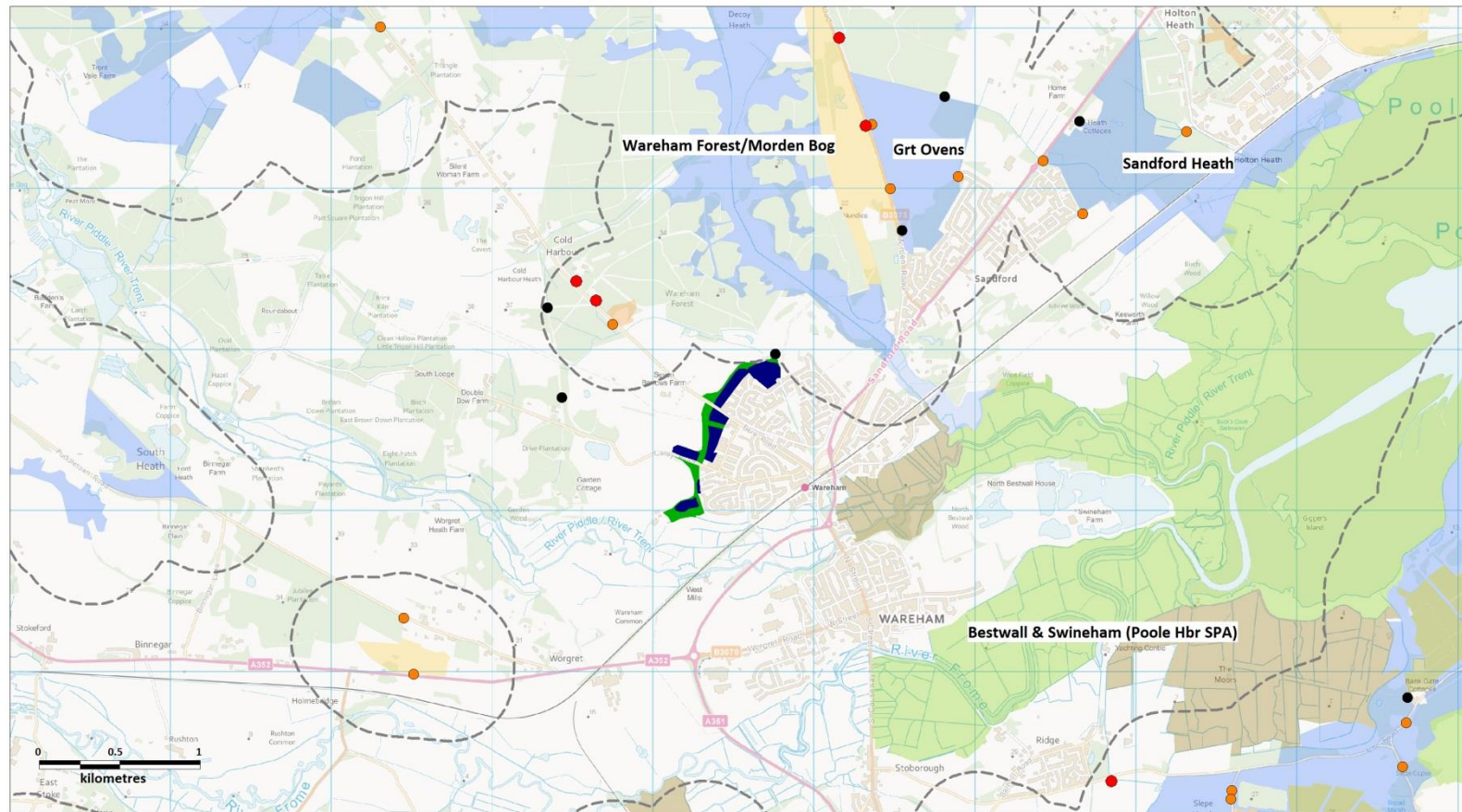
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#### 4a North and West of North Wareham

- 6.3 Up to 246 dwellings are suggested for this location.
- 6.4 The site is directly adjacent to Wareham Forest, with foot access points along the public right of way at Tantinoby Farm and parking in close proximity at the Sika Trail car-park and along Bere Road (see Map 3). Also within a short drive are access points on the B3075, providing access to Great Ovens and Morden Bog. Residents can potentially travel by car to other heathland areas near Wareham such as Stoborough Heath, Hartland and Arne. As such there are likely significant effects relating to increased recreational pressure on heathland. The site lies within the 5km zone and mitigation would need to target the above sites.
- 6.5 Green space associated with the development as SANGs is small, in a relatively thin strip and unlikely to offer a strong alternative to nearby heaths. It may even serve to funnel use onto the European sites (see Map 3).
- 6.6 Current recreational impacts, access provision, visitor management and opportunities for enhancing and better managing recreation within Wareham Forest (including the open heath areas, such as Great Ovens) are considered in detail within Lake, Phillipson and Cruickshanks (2014). They highlight that that the Forest offers significant opportunities for visitors, particularly dog-walkers, walkers, runners and cyclists, with miles of surfaced tracks, a choice of locations, and the opportunity to exercise dogs off the lead. The Forestry Commission has established informal working relationships with some user groups such as mountain bikers and has a functional permit system in place for other activities. However, recreational activities are likely to be currently impacting on wildlife, particularly disturbance to birds caused by dogs running off tracks, as the dogs under control requirement is often ignored, with dogs running off tracks and out of sight of dog walkers. Anecdotal evidence suggests there is also a degree of conflict between users (e.g. small children (and adults) troubled by out of control dogs, issues with cyclists); and that first time visitors struggle to find their way around. Key issues with recreation management in the Forest are the comparative lack of information and the public perception of the site. It can be hard to find out about routes and what activities are permitted where. This is partly because some activities take place informally, but the freeholders are unwilling to designate permitted routes. Locally based visitors are likely to obtain information by word of mouth, but other sources are limited. There is also only very limited interpretation about why the site is important to wildlife, how visitors might experience it, and so visitors are not particularly motivated to change their preferred behaviour. The perception of Wareham Forest is thought to be of a robust woodland site where many activities are permitted (or at least tolerated).
- 6.7 Development on the outskirts of Wareham, towards Wareham Forest, would therefore need to secure mitigation to resolve the above, and solutions are likely to require significant on-site green space and access management measures within Wareham Forest. Looking further afield, on-site measures will also be necessary within the Arne/Hartland/Stoborough block of heathland (again see Lake, Phillipson, P. & Cruickshanks 2014 for detailed discussion).

- 6.8 The area mapped for development is within the River Frome catchment, and as such there would be likely significant effects relating to water quality issues and Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar site. Any development in the area would have to ensure 'nitrogen neutrality' (see Bryan & Kite 2013).





**Map 3: N & W of Wareham**

**Approximate locations for development & green space**

- housing
- potential SANG
- 400m heathland buffer zone
- Purbeck District

**European Sites**

- Ramsar
- SAC
- SAC & Ramsar
- SPA
- SPA & Ramsar
- SPA & SAC
- SPA, SAC & Ramsar

**Access points onto heaths**

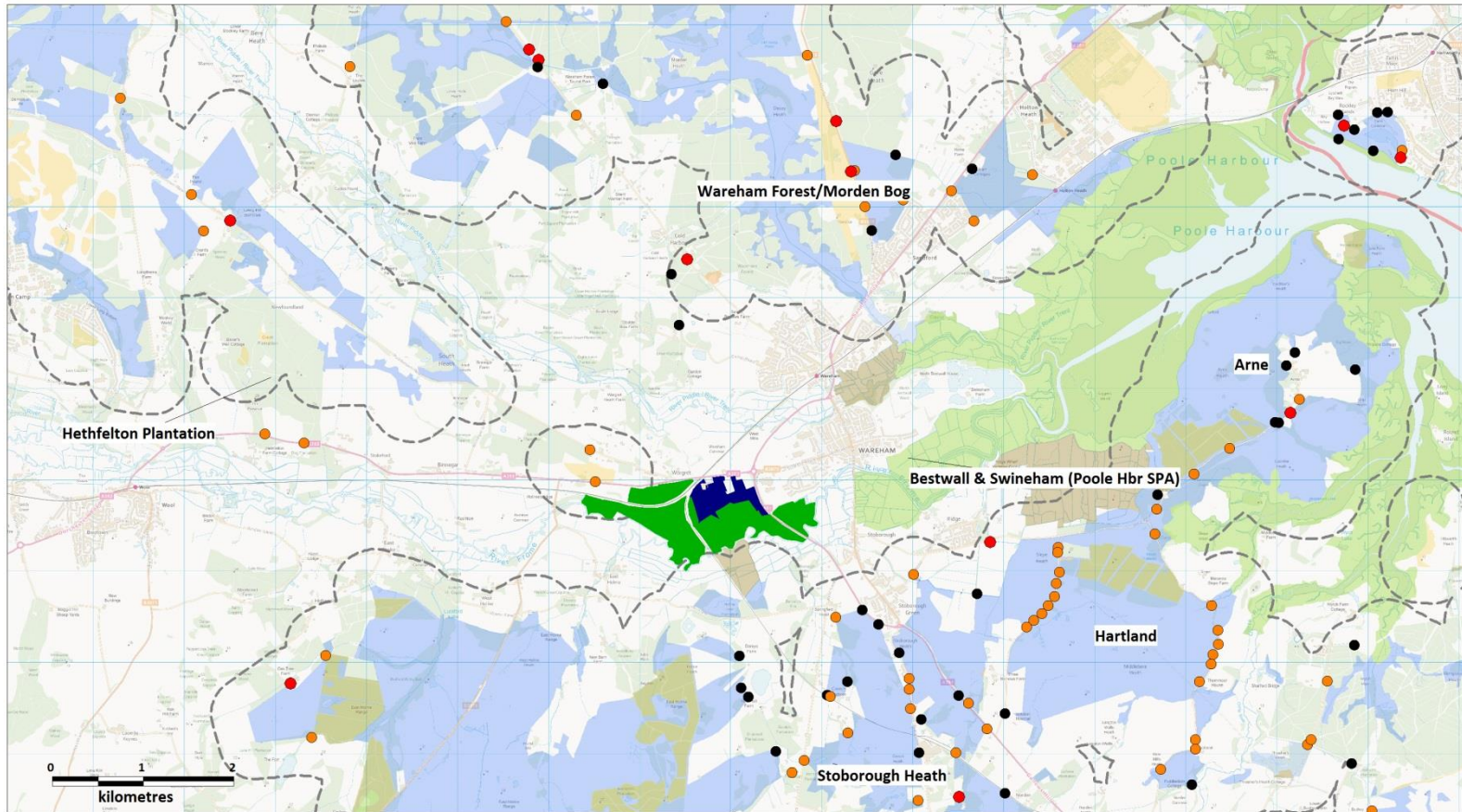
- Foot
- Formal parking
- Informal parking

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#### 4b West of Wareham

- 6.9 Around 500 new dwellings have been suggested by developers for this location.
- 6.10 The location is outside the Wareham bypass, to the west of Wareham. Residents would have foot access to Worgret Heath which is within a kilometre, to the west (see Map 4) and the location (adjacent to Wareham bypass and the A352) would provide very easy road access to a wide range of sites, in particular Wareham Forest (including Great Ovens), Hethfelton, Stoborough Heath, Hartland Moor and Arne. Access to parts of Poole Harbour SPA is also possible nearby, on the eastern edge of Wareham.
- 6.11 There is a considerable area of green space mapped around the development, providing potential SANGs, however such green space is still unlikely to be able to absorb the likely increase in recreation pressure arising from the development. The greenspace as mapped (Map 4) includes areas within the floodplain and likely to be impassable at many times of year (not just winter as summer flooding can occur). In addition, the railway line cuts the SANGs area into different pieces and the SANGs are alongside two busy roads. With the new development alongside, the SANGs are unlikely to be able to replicate the experience of visiting the heaths and will be urban in feel. For the same reasons, the SANGs are unlikely to draw residents from Wareham, who would have to visit the SANGs by car, and once in their vehicles, Wareham Forest or the open heathland around Hartland is likely to draw them instead. As such net increase in recreation is likely on the heaths and possibly Poole Harbour. Considerable on-site mitigation would need to be secured across the heathland sites mentioned above in order to ensure no adverse effect on integrity, and given the varied ownership and management this is likely to prove difficult to secure in perpetuity. Visitor infrastructure, current management of recreation and issues for Wareham Forest and Arne/Hartland/Stoborough Heaths are summarised Lake, Phillipson & Cruickshanks (Lake, Phillipson, P. & Cruickshanks 2014).
- 6.12 The SANGs include areas of nature conservation interest in their own right, including the Frome Valley SSSI. The land proposed for development and the greenspace are adjacent (or in the case of the SANGs) within the floodplain. As such there is potential for impacts on the Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar as these floodplain often holds important numbers of birds associated with Poole Harbour. In particular the wet grassland can occasionally hold large numbers of Black-tailed Godwit (interest feature of Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar) and as such is functionally linked to the SPA (see Durell et al. 2006).
- 6.13 The area mapped for development is within the River Frome catchment, and as such there would be likely significant effects relating to water quality issues and Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar site. Any development in the area would have to ensure 'nitrogen neutrality' (see Bryan & Kite 2013).





**Map 4: West of Wareham**

**Approximate locations for development & green space**

- housing
- potential SANG
- 400m heathland buffer zone
- Purbeck District

**European Sites**

- Ramsar
- SAC
- SAC & Ramsar
- SPA
- SPA & Ramsar
- SPA & SAC
- SPA, SAC & Ramsar

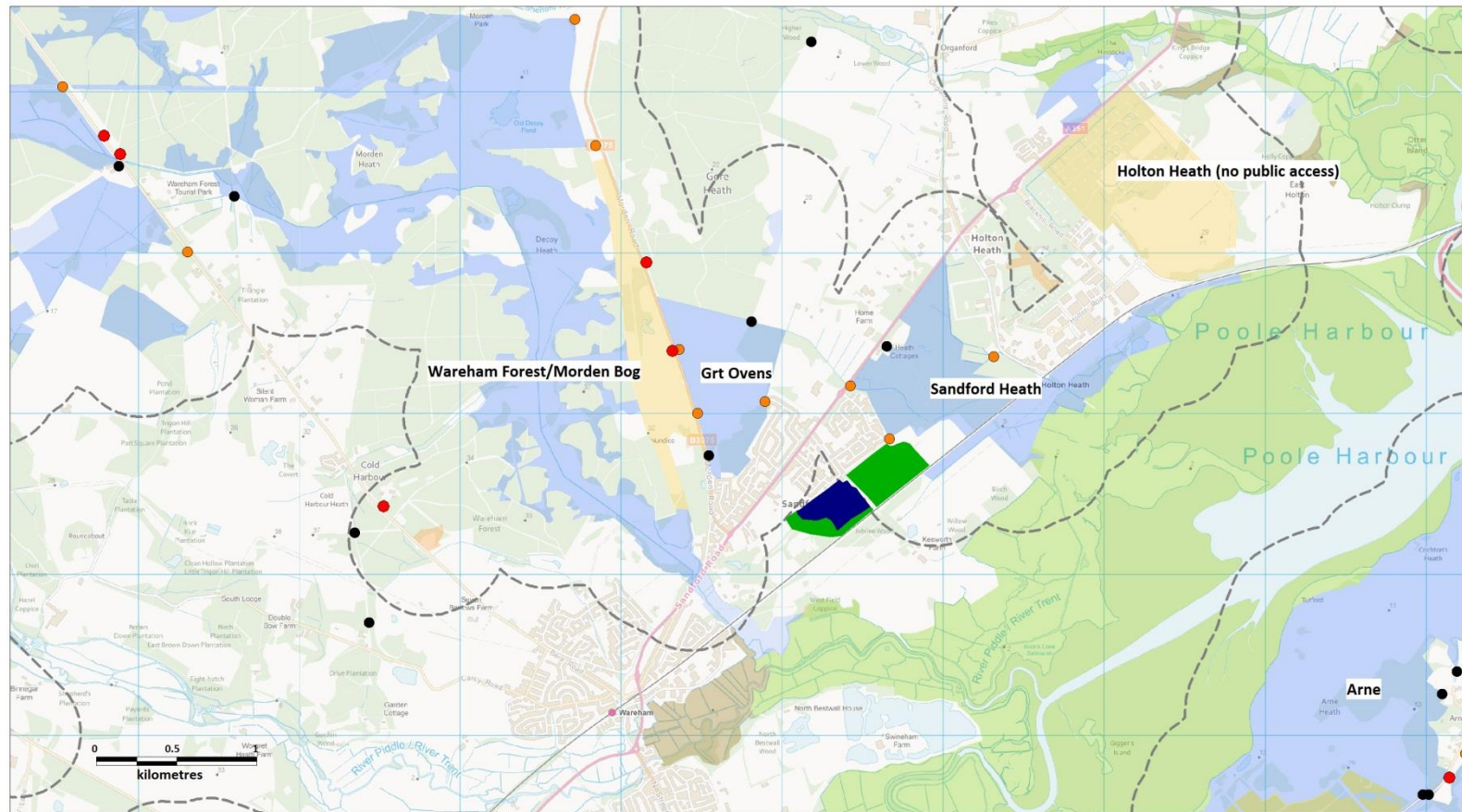
**Access points onto heaths**

- Foot
- Formal parking
- Informal parking

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#### 4c South-east of Sandford

- 6.14 The area to the South-east of Sandford has been suggested to hold around 275 homes.
- 6.15 The site is directly adjacent to 400m zone (Map 5) and has direct footpath links to Sandford Heath SSSI (within the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Dorset Heaths SAC). Great Ovens and other sites along the B3075 are easily accessible by car to the north. It will therefore be very difficult to direct recreational use away from local heathland sites.
- 6.16 Urban effects such as increased fire incidence are possible impacts on the adjacent heaths such as Sandford Heath.
- 6.17 Other constraints are that the land proposed for development is functionally linked to the SPA, with records of foraging nightjar (pers. obs.) and the potential to support woodlark. In addition the area outlined for a SANG includes a strip of heathland that is part of Holton Heath and Sandford Heath SSSI, and while outside the SPA/SAC is likely to be vulnerable to recreation impacts and functionally linked to the SAC, supporting Sand Lizard and other notable species.
- 6.18 The acid grassland proposed for development and within the SANG is likely to support a range of notable species and again functionally linked to the SSSI/SAC.
- 6.19 The SANG area suggested is also relatively small, and will not be able to provide the length of walk and range of routes that the nearby heaths provide.
- 6.20 The area mapped for development is within the River Frome catchment, and as such there would be likely significant effects relating to water quality issues and Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar site. Any development in the area would have to ensure 'nitrogen neutrality' (see Bryan & Kite 2013).
- 6.21 As such the constraints associated with this site are considerable. Further detailed ecological assessment could be undertaken, but at this stage it is thought likely that it will be impossible to rule out adverse effects on the Dorset Heathlands SPA and Dorset Heaths SAC.



**Map 5: Sandford**

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**Approximate locations for development & green space**

- housing
- potential SANG
- 400m heathland buffer zone
- Purbeck District

**European Sites**

- Ramsar
- SAC
- SAC & Ramsar
- SPA
- SPA & Ramsar
- SPA & SAC
- SPA, SAC & Ramsar

**Access points onto heaths**

- Foot
- Formal parking
- Informal parking

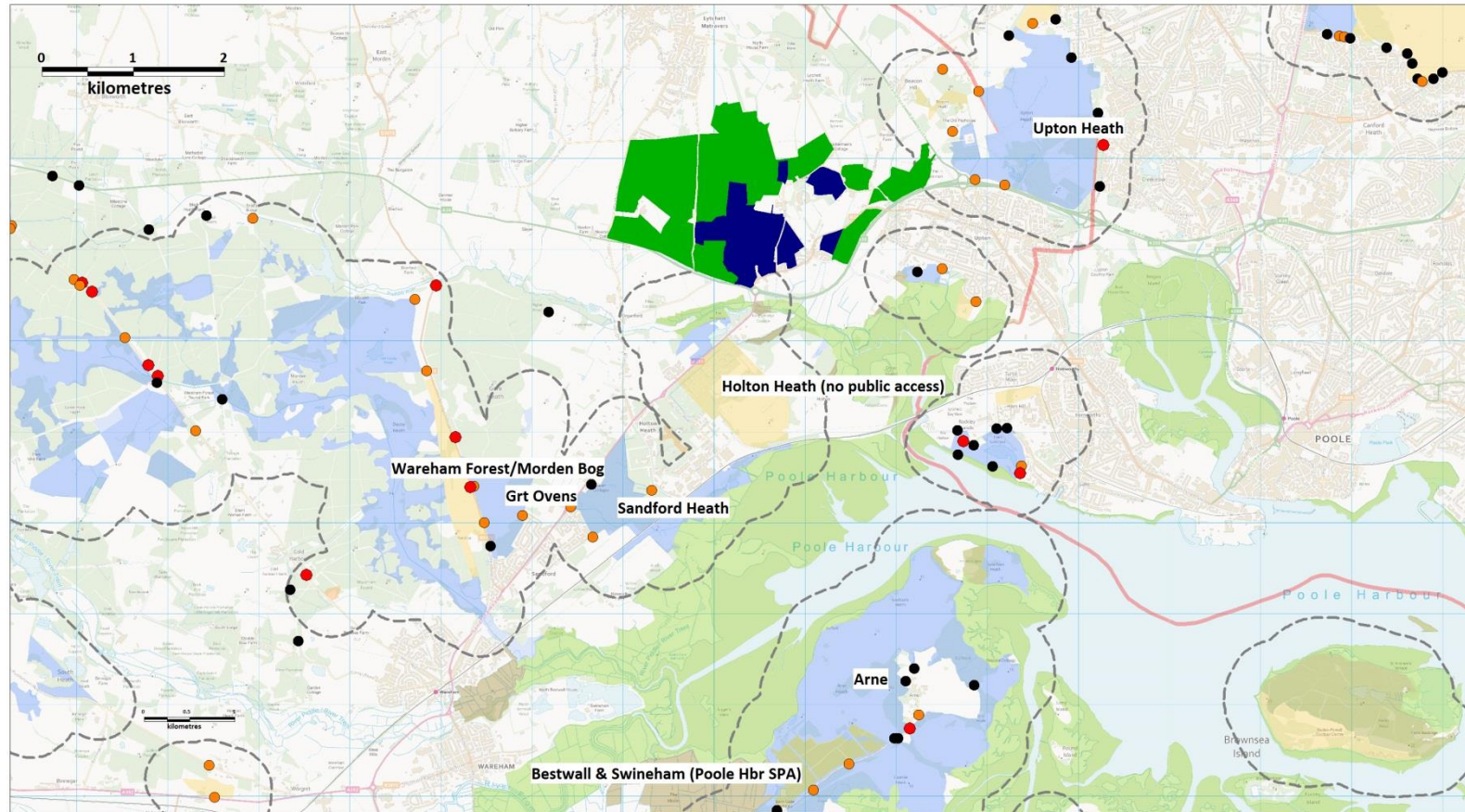


#### 4d Lytchett Minster

- 6.22 The land is suggested to accommodate around 500 or more new dwellings.
- 6.23 The land proposed for development is shown in Map 6 and lies close to Upton Heath, Holton Heath and Sandford Heath (all part of the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Dorset Heaths SAC/Dorset Heaths Ramsar). Upton Heath and Sandford Heath both have open public access.
- 6.24 There are risks of ‘urban effects’, such as increased fire occurrence, at nearby heathland sites such as Upton Heath.
- 6.25 There are potential impacts of disturbance to breeding Annex I birds to sites within a short journey, particularly Wareham Forest, Upton Heath and Ham Common (see Appendix 2 in White *et al.* 2008 for details of locations and travel times from Lytchett Minster). There are also potential for impacts from recreation to the SAC interest of the heaths at nearby sites with impacts such as trampling and dog fouling.
- 6.26 The areas proposed for development are likely to provide foraging habitat for nightjars, an interest feature of the Dorset Heathlands SPA (see White *et al.* 2008 for discussion).
- 6.27 The land lies close to Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar, with access at sites such as Lytchett Bay and Ham Common. Lytchett Bay is particularly close and there is a risk of increased recreational disturbance to the SPA in the area around Policeman’s Lane. HRA work associated with PLP1 considered a SANG at Policeman’s Lane and measures to reduce disturbance at Lytchett Bay. Monitoring data will be necessary to test how well this SANG will work and how well the measures set up to reduce disturbance to Poole Harbour SPA in this area will work.
- 6.28 There are also slipways providing access for watersports at Rockley, Baiter and Holes Bay, and the proposed development location may result in increased watersports use within Poole Harbour.
- 6.29 The lower lying parts of the area are already prone to flooding and lie close to Poole Harbour. The increased rapid run-off together with a corresponding loss in land currently available to soak up water, may mean that flooding risk is enhanced. This will have unknown effects on the Poole Harbour SPA and the lower part of Sherford River valley that is within the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Dorset Heaths SAC. There may also be an increased risk of water-borne pollution from road run-off.
- 6.30 There are a range of options for SANGs within the area mapped by developers – some 250ha are mapped as possible locations, but which areas and how they might function is not clear at this stage. Any SANG at Lytchett Minster would need to provide a realistic alternative to the wild and expansive character of the nearby large heaths. Given the surrounding landscape is predominantly agricultural or pastoral grassland with hedges and woods this may be difficult to achieve. The landscape around Lytchett Minster is one of modest and unremarkable farmland with a feeling of enclosure and tameness. It is perhaps not surprising that visitor surveys show visitors to the Purbeck

Heaths travel from locations such as the western edge of Poole (see Map 9 in Cruickshanks & Floyd 2014).

- 6.31 If the Country Park at Morden (Option 16) is established, then this has the potential to function as a strategic SANG and draw access from residents at Lytchett Minster. The SANG will need to be established and monitoring in place to show how well it works prior to any development at Lytchett Minster. The effectiveness of such a SANG is discussed in paragraph 8.5.
- 6.32 The area mapped for development is within the River Frome catchment, and as such there would be likely significant effects relating to water quality issues and Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar site. Any development in the area would have to ensure 'nitrogen neutrality' (see Bryan & Kite 2013).



**Map 6: Lytchett Minster**

**Approximate locations for development & green space**

- housing
- potential SANG
- 400m heathland buffer zone
- Purbeck District

**European Sites**

- Ramsar
- SAC
- SAC & Ramsar
- SPA
- SPA & Ramsar
- SPA & SAC
- SPA, SAC & Ramsar

**Access points onto heaths**

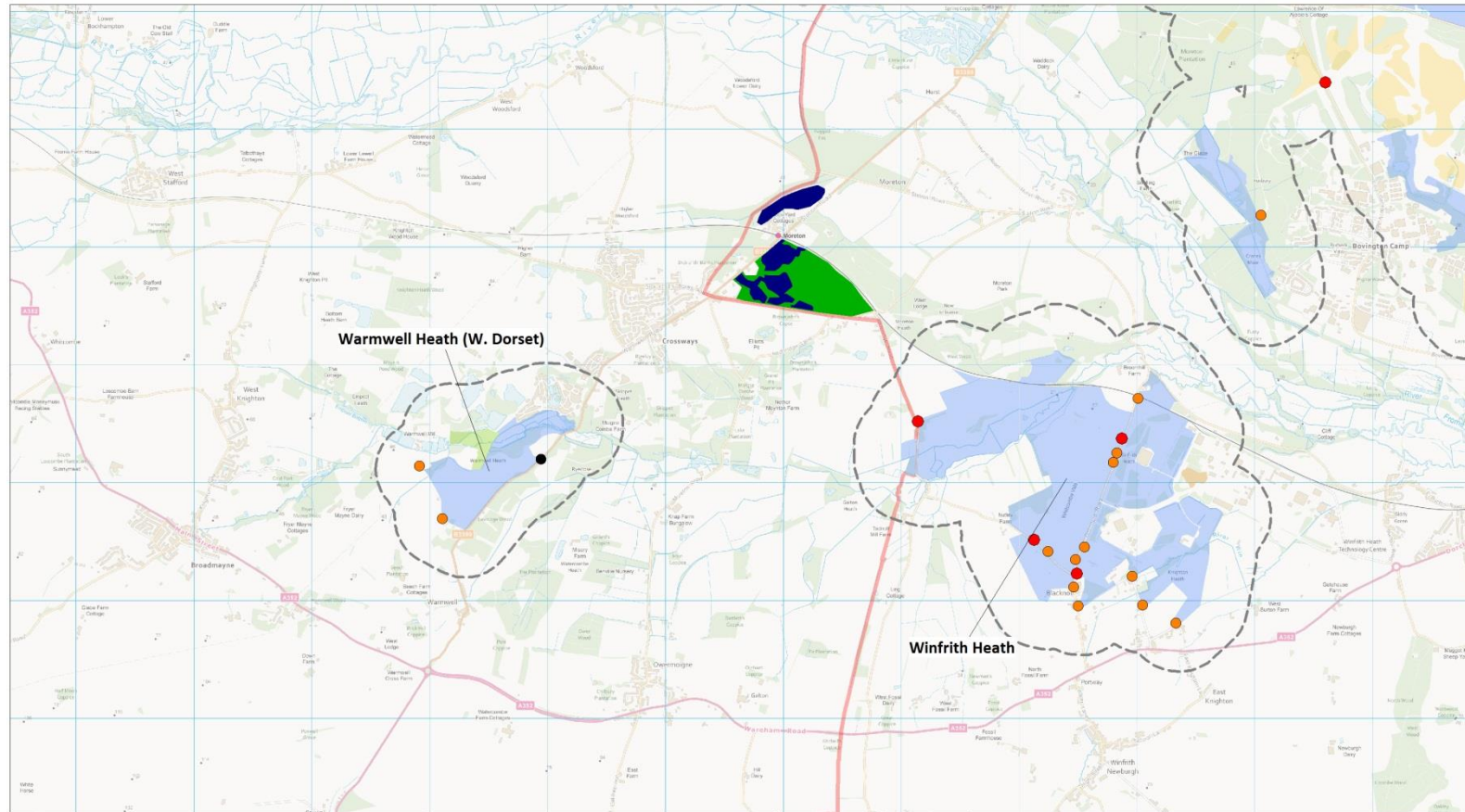
- Foot
- Formal parking
- Informal parking

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#### 4e Moreton

- 6.33 The land is suggested to potentially accommodate between 200 and 900 new homes and is shown in Map 6.
- 6.34 Compared to some of the other locations proposed by developers, the site at Moreton is not as close to heathland sites. The nearest heathlands are Warmwell Heath and Winfrith/Tadnoll Heath (Map 6). There is roadside parking and direct access on to Tadnoll Heath to the south of the development location. Likely significant effects to the heathland SPA/SAC interest at Winfrith/Tadnoll and Warmwell relate to increased recreational use and include trampling, dog fouling, disturbance to ground nesting birds, increased fire risk and other urban effects.
- 6.35 Green space is suggested around one of the areas outlined for development, at Redbridge Pit where a SANG is proposed. The SANG is reasonably large but the challenge will be to create a suitable alternative to the heaths given that the site is an open pit. It may take many years before any SANG could develop into a suitable and appealing visitor destination, and the SANG would need to be functioning prior to development being occupied. Additional land, outside the pit, is likely to be necessary to ensure a functioning SANG can be delivered within a reasonable timescale.
- 6.36 The area mapped for development is within the River Frome catchment, and as such there would be likely significant effects relating to water quality issues and Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar site. Any development in the area would have to ensure 'nitrogen neutrality' (see Bryan & Kite 2013).





**Map 7: Moreton**

**Approximate locations for development & green space**

- housing
- potential SANG

  400m heathland buffer zone

  Purbeck District

**European Sites**

- Ramsar
- SAC
- SAC & Ramsar
- SPA
- SPA & Ramsar
- SPA & SAC
- SPA, SAC & Ramsar

**Access points onto heaths**

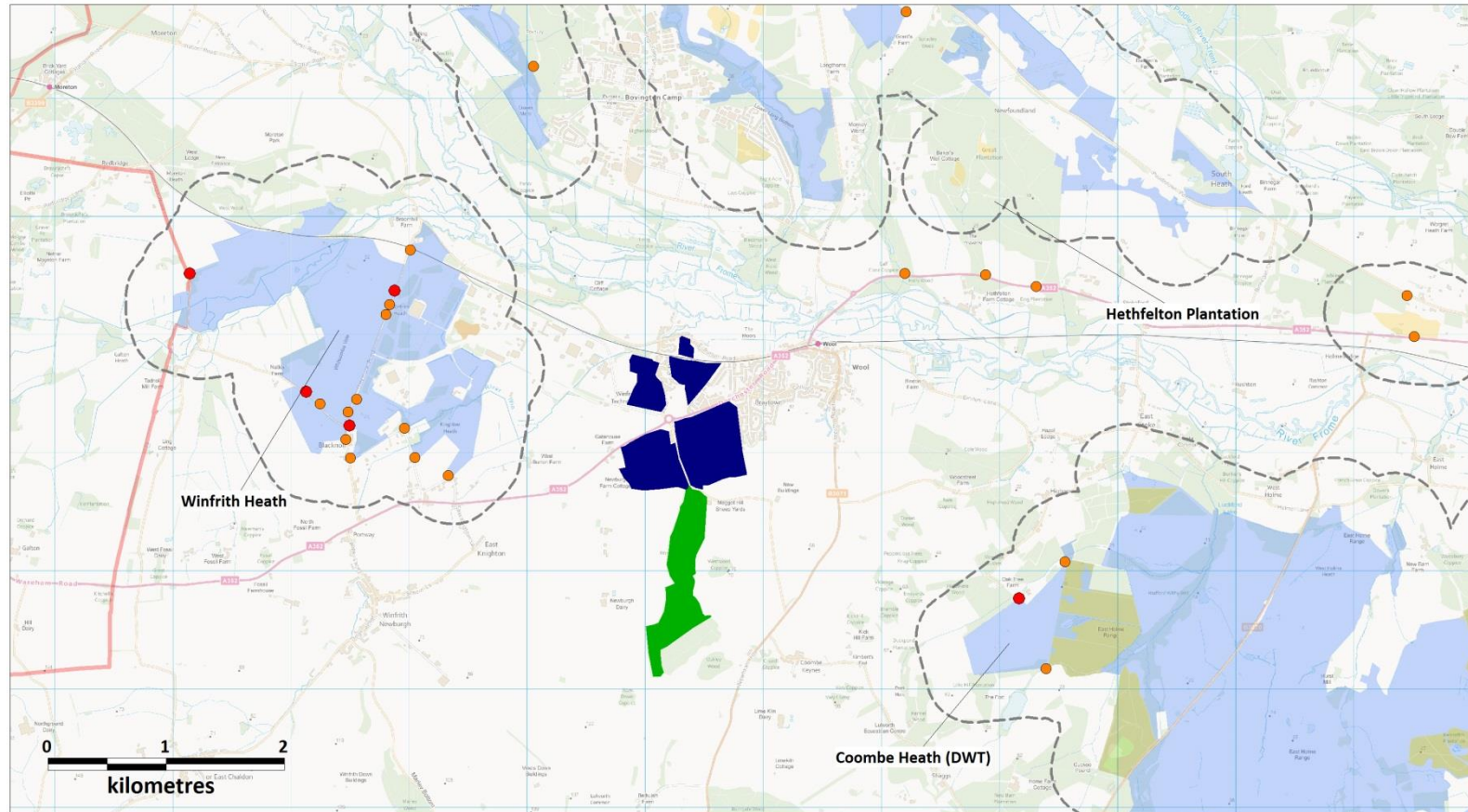
- Foot
- Formal parking
- Informal parking

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#### 4f West of Wool

- 6.37 The land is suggested to potentially accommodate a phased development of up to 1000 new homes.
- 6.38 Compared to some of the other sites proposed by developers the sites to the west of Wool are relatively far from the Dorset Heaths (see Map 2). The key nearby heathland is Winfrith Heath (Map 8), Hethfelton Plantation is also readily accessible to the east of Wool, with parking on the A352.
- 6.39 Potential impacts of development at Wool relate to increased recreation at the nearby heathland sites. The proposed SANG, at Coombe Wood, is large and has the potential to provide a visitor destination to rival Winfrith. The site is discussed in some detail within Liley *et al.* (2010).
- 6.40 Coombe Wood is elevated, with expansive views and, with appropriate management could provide an appealing site for dog walking and other recreation. Opening the site up to give a more open feel will be important and the SANG is relatively narrow in parts (see Map 8) so careful design and/or the inclusion of additional land will be necessary to ensure it does not feel constrained. It will need to be targeted towards local residents and there may need to be some consideration of ensuring easy access to the SANG from developed areas. The SANG is likely to function much more effectively for residents living south of the A352 rather than the north.
- 6.41 The area mapped for development is within the River Frome catchment, and as such there would be likely significant effects relating to water quality issues and Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar site. Any development in the area would have to ensure 'nitrogen neutrality' (see Bryan & Kite 2013).



**Map 8: West of Wool**

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**Approximate locations for development & green space**

- housing
- potential SANG
- 400m heathland buffer zone
- Purbeck District

**European Sites**

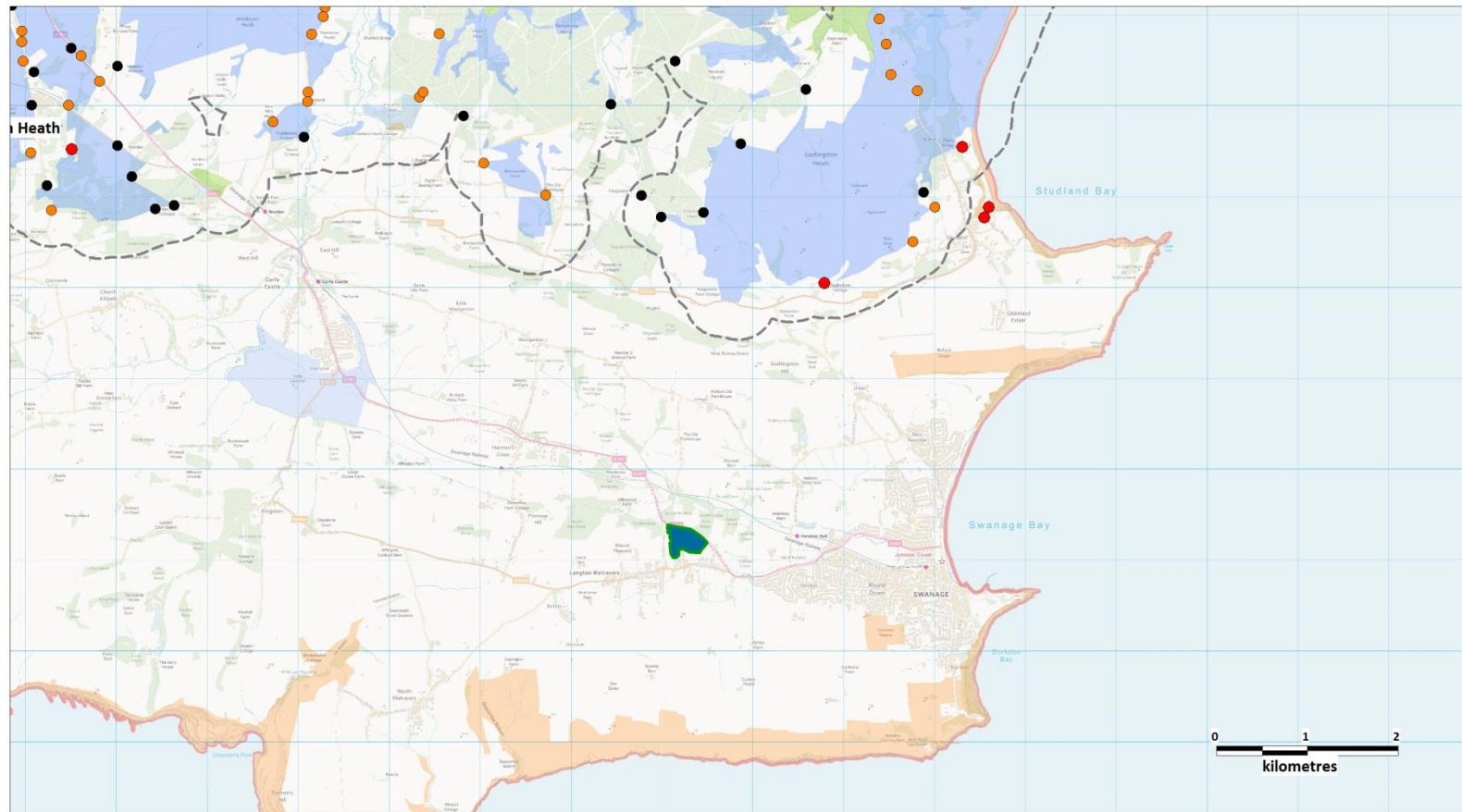
- Ramsar
- SAC
- SAC & Ramsar
- SPA
- SPA & Ramsar
- SPA & SAC
- SPA, SAC & Ramsar

**Access points onto heaths**

- Foot
- Formal parking
- Informal parking

#### 4g Langton Matravers

- 6.42 The site may be able to support around 200 dwellings.
- 6.43 It is relatively far from most heathland sites (as the crow flies, Godlingston is around 2.6km away and Corfe Common 3.6km away) and closer to the coast (see Map 9). Likely significant effects may arise from increased recreation to the heaths and the coast.
- 6.44 The site is far enough from European sites for impacts from recreation to be limited and certainly mitigation would be possible. Green space within the site should include options for walking and dog walking close to the development, but options are limited given the small land area available.
- 6.45 The site is outside the Frome catchment and therefore impacts to Poole Harbour from nutrient enrichment are avoided. There may be issues relating to air quality given the road access from Corfe cuts through Corfe Common, which is part of the Dorset Heaths SAC.










**Map 9: Langton Matravers**

 Langton Matravers:  
housing/greenspace




 400m heathland buffer zone

 Purbeck District

**European Sites**

-  Ramsar
-  SAC
-  SAC & Ramsar
-  SPA
-  SPA & Ramsar
-  SPA & SAC
-  SPA, SAC & Ramsar

**Access points onto heaths**

-  Foot
-  Formal parking
-  Informal parking

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## Summary

- 6.46 All sites require further detailed assessment. The site proposed at Sandford has particular constraints and, at this stage in the assessment, is not considered possible to develop without adverse effects on the integrity of the Dorset Heathlands SPA and Dorset Heaths SAC. Of the remaining sites, those around Wareham and Lytchett Minster have particular challenges, mitigation will be difficult to secure and it may not be possible to rule out adverse effects on the integrity on nearby European sites. At Lytchett Minster the SANG options are not clear at this stage and to some extent the scale of green space provision there and effectiveness will depend on the proposal for a Country Park at Morden. The site West of Wareham is in a particularly vulnerable location given the range of European sites and scale of sites surrounding it. Of the seven sites suggested for large housing, Langton Matravers, Wool and Moreton seem the least sensitive, but further detail and assessment are required as the plan develops.
- 6.47 In Table 4 we summarise the large housing sites identified in the review, using a range of measures to compare sites. The grey shading indicates the higher values (i.e. more sensitive) sites. It can be seen that the sites around Wareham, at Sandford and at Lytchett Minster are the most sensitive.

**Table 4: Summary table of potential large housing sites and a range of variables relating to European site interest and vulnerability. The approximate area of green space is an estimate (rounded) based on the areas mapped as green in Map 2. Grey shading indicates the highest three cells in each row (darker grey shading the highest value). Nightjar is the number of nightjars from the 2004 national survey; woodlark is the number of woodlark from the 2006 national survey; D. warbler is the number of Dartford warblers from the 2006 national survey. Ramsar, SPA and SAC rows give total area of each designation. Heath access pnts is the number of access points onto the heaths and heath car-park spaces the number of parking spaces at those access points.**

		4a N & W of Wareham	4b W of Wareham	4c Sandford	4d Lytchett Minster	4e Moreton	4f Wool	4g Langton Matravers
Possible Dwellings (max)		246	500	275	500	900	1000	200
Approx. area green space (ha)		<10	95	15	250	30	40	?
500m radius	Nightjar	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
	Woodlark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D. warbler	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
	Ramsar (ha)	7	24	35	31	0	0	0
	SPA (ha)	7	17	35	32	0	0	0
	SAC (ha)	7	14	33	16	0	0	0
	Heath Access Pnts	1	2	2	2	0	0	0
	Heath CP spaces	0	2	8	8	0	0	0
2km radius	Nightjar	30	19	24	31	13	6	0
	Woodlark	10	15	9	10	0	1	0
	D. warbler	17	16	14	39	2	3	3
	Ramsar (ha)	287	442	699	451	100	103	0
	SPA (ha)	277	445	713	537	100	107	0
	SAC (ha)	200	287	291	333	100	110	21
	Heath Access Pnts	14	18	11	19	1	4	0
	Heath CP spaces	89	34	39	65	6	12	0
5km radius	Nightjar	204	187	154	138	74	133	42
	Woodlark	65	58	45	33	5	27	0
	D. warbler	170	162	153	146	23	64	49
	Ramsar (ha)	2923	3380	2947	2215	479	1268	508
	SPA (ha)	3031	3452	2997	2433	516	1383	421
	SAC (ha)	2149	2559	1697	1329	512	1834	950
	Heath Access Pnts	74	88	80	79	43	31	13
	Heath CP spaces	302	294	446	366	143	97	491



## 7. Appropriate Assessment: Issue 6 – Meeting Employment Needs

- 7.1 The impacts of development for employment is, in many ways, easier to assess than for residential development. Natural England concluded that new businesses would not be required to make a contribution to offsetting nitrogen, as there was deemed to be no additional input over and above that already calculated for new residents. Employment land is unlikely to result in an increase in pet cats and recreation pressures are likely to be less than for residential development.
- 7.2 Quantifying the impacts of employment development has however still proved challenging on occasion. In the case of a proposal for employment development in Poole, on land south of Magna Road, Bearwood<sup>12</sup>, Natural England objected to the development and Poole Borough Council refused planning permission, partly on the basis on nature conservation impacts to the nearby heathlands. Following appeal, planning permission was granted and in the Inspector's report (Pope 2014) he highlights the lack of published research or documented evidence to demonstrate specific adverse effects of business/employment development.
- 7.3 The risk from cat predation is likely to be much lower for employment development compared to residential. Employment development near heathlands will however potentially involve people commuting across heaths, using heathland areas in their breaks and the development itself may have implications in terms of fragmentation and loss of supporting habitats (for example nightjar foraging habitat).
- 7.4 We summarise areas of concern for the employment sites listed in Issue 6 in Table 5. The table highlights sites where further evidence gathering and assessment work will be necessary after the issues and options stage. Checks will need to be made that the scale of employment land stated in the plan can be delivered without adverse effects on integrity of the European sites.

**Table 5: Summary of potential areas of concern relating to impacts at the employment sites listed in Issue 6.**

Site	Suggested area	Possible areas of concern
6a Dorset Green Technology Park	43ha	Adjacent to heathland and development may have implications for foraging nightjar and woodlark, impacts from lighting and recreation on nearby heath.
6b Holton Heath	45ha	Heathland blocks lie to east (Holton Heath), west (Sandford Heath) and Black Hill potentially in the middle of the employment land. Need to check for issues relating to heaths: access, fragmentation, lighting, noise disturbance. Careful design required.
6c Bovington Middle School	7.1ha	Within 400m of Dorset Heaths, but access restricted by MOD. Probably no fragmentation issues. Need to check for foraging nightjar.
6d Upton	3ha	Foot access onto adjacent heathland and edge of Poole Harbour.

<sup>12</sup> Appeal Ref: App/Q1255/A/13/2204098

Site	Suggested area	Possible areas of concern
		Checks needed on levels of recreation and possible impacts. SANG associated with Policeman’s Lane may absorb some impact when in place.
6e North Wareham	1ha	Adjacent to Dorset Heaths SAC and Poole Harbour Ramsar site, very close to Poole Harbour SPA. Recreational access impacts unlikely given wet terrain, noise and pollution possible risks and need checking.
6f Sandford First School	0.8ha	Possible recreation impacts relating to Sandford Heath and Great Ovens?
6f Bloxworth	0.44ha	Probably far enough from European sites for there to be no impacts
6f Corfe Castle Depot	0.62	Probably far enough from European sites for there to be no impacts



## 8. Appropriate Assessment - Country Park and Tourist Accommodation at Morden

- 8.1 Issue 14 relates to land at Morden being developed to provide a large area of public open space and around 80-100 holiday chalets.
- 8.2 The location is sensitive as it is very close (and even overlaps) with the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar and the Dorset Heaths SAC. While the locations for chalets are at this stage only approximate, the chalets are directly adjacent to the designated heathland and certainly well within 400m of the European site boundary. Current advice from Natural England<sup>13</sup> relating applications concerning self-catering, touring and holiday accommodation around the Dorset Heaths is that:
- “Applications within 400m of the heathlands are considered to have a likely significant effect on the sites arising from effects relating to the increased residential occupancy and recreational pressure from development. These effects are broadly similar to those arising from residential development and therefore would act in combination with these.”*
- 8.3 In Map 10 we show the approximate locations of the holiday chalets and proposed country park, based on the map in the Issues and Options document. We also show the designated site boundaries and distributions of key bird territories. The bird data are taken from the most recent national surveys and are a snapshot for each species from a single year. The sensitivity of the location is clear. Likely significant effects to the interest features of the designated sites would include disturbance to Annex I birds, increased fire incidence, trampling, dog fouling, water quality. The areas outside the designated site boundary are likely to be important for nightjar and woodlark, in terms of foraging and possibly even breeding sites, and therefore are functionally linked to the SPA and areas of Wareham Forest (outside the SPA) support internationally important numbers of both woodlark and nightjar in their own right (see para 1.17).
- 8.4 Careful, detailed design and discussion with Natural England will be essential to consider the constraints at this location and the whether the chalets and country park can be designed so as to have no adverse effects on the integrity of the European site. Possible design elements to minimise impacts to the European sites might include:
- The chalets being only on the eastern side of the lake, and therefore set back from the designated heathland and outside the 400m zone
  - Dedicated barbeque facilities and dog exercise areas provided for the chalets well away from the heathland
  - Careful management of the vegetation to minimise fire risk in the area around the chalet
  - Restrictions on dogs for visitors using the chalets

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from the Dorset Heaths Planning Framework 2012-2014 SPD: <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/387392>

- Routes within the country park focussing access away from the designated sites and focussing access along the eastern shore of the lake and the fields near the B3075.
- Parking for the country park and focal point for visiting set close to the B3075, ensuring access is set well back from the heathland
- Provision of extensive areas for dog walking well away from the heathland – ideally with areas that are fenced from the road, minimal grazing and safe for dogs to be off the lead.
- Provision of access to draw visitors away from Sherford Bridge and from walking onto Morden Bog National Nature Reserve.
- Access in the western part of the site carefully zoned to ensure access to the heathland is not promoted
- Measures to ensure the site is ‘nitrogen neutral’ (see Bryan & Kite 2013)

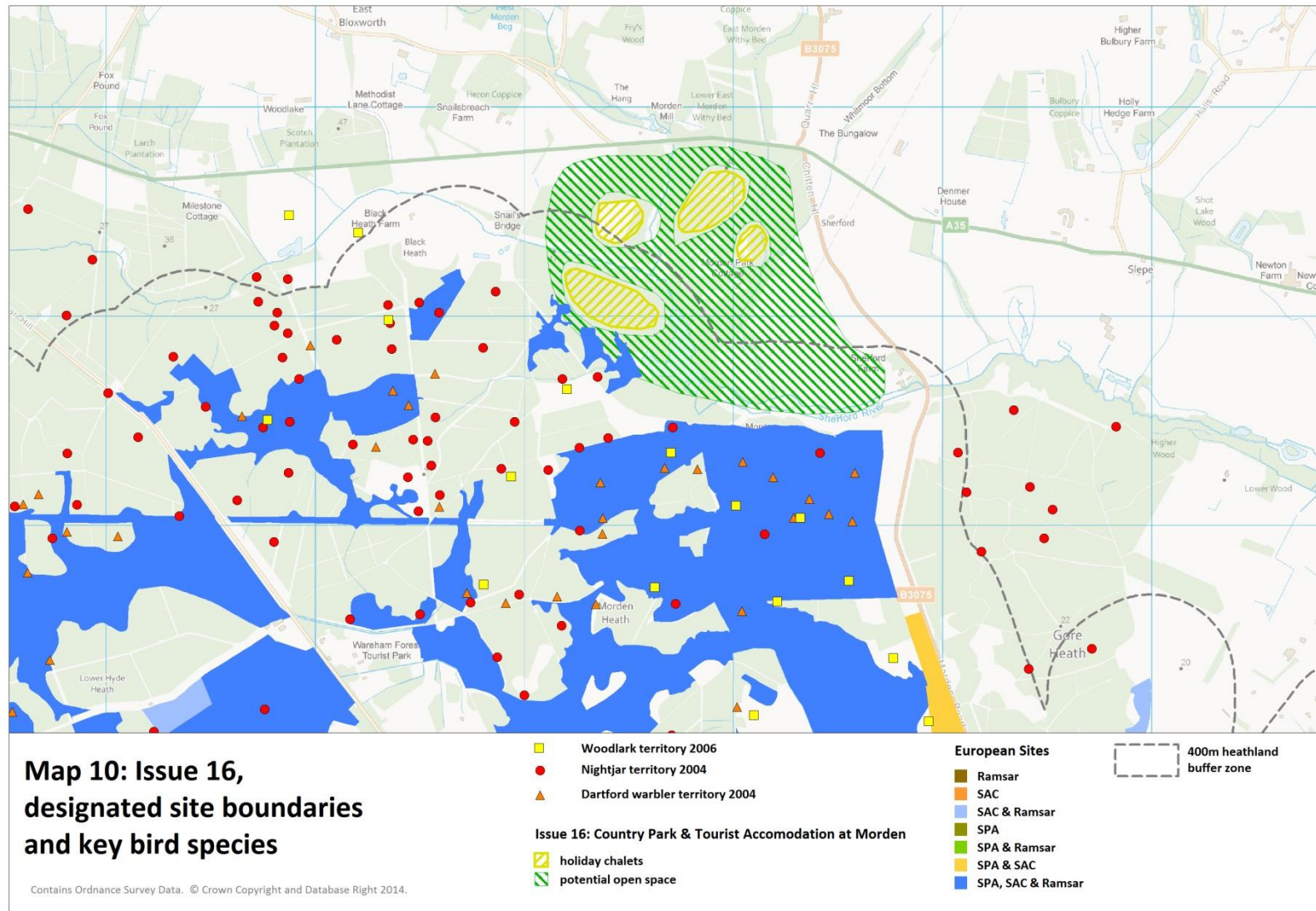
### Potential for the Country Park to function as a SANG

8.5 In Map 11 we show visitor postcodes from surveys undertaken at Sherford Bridge. Surveys were undertaken at the roadside parking area just by the bridge, at the south-east corner of the area proposed for green space (dark green on Map 9). The survey data originates from 2008 (see White et al. 2008 for details) and then more recently as part of the Wild Purbeck NIA visitor work (Cruickshanks & Floyd 2014). The 2008 visitor surveys involved 16 hours of survey work and that was doubled in 2014, so the survey effort was different between years. By pooling the data in this way it is possible to see where visitors to the proposed open space may originate from. The current access is at Sherford Bridge is much more informal than the country park might be, currently there is just some roadside parking (unsurfaced layby) and a popular local walk that provides access to the top of Morden Bog National Nature Reserve and into Wareham Forest. People do already walk to the lake, despite there being no formal right of access. It can be seen that the SANG could function well in terms of drawing residents from Upton, Lytchett Minster and the west of Poole in particular. How well it would work in the future would depend on the detailed design. The chalets may not necessarily be compatible with the SANG, as residents using the chalets may wish for privacy and seclusion, and therefore the area for SANG is more constrained than appears at first. As residents of the chalets would clearly be likely to explore the full extent of Wareham Forest, the Country Park would have to draw users who would otherwise be using the forest in order to have any scope to function as a SANG. It may be that any SANG ‘capacity’ is absorbed by the chalet users. Additional mitigation besides the SANG may also be relevant. The following design elements would be necessary for the site to function effectively as a SANG:

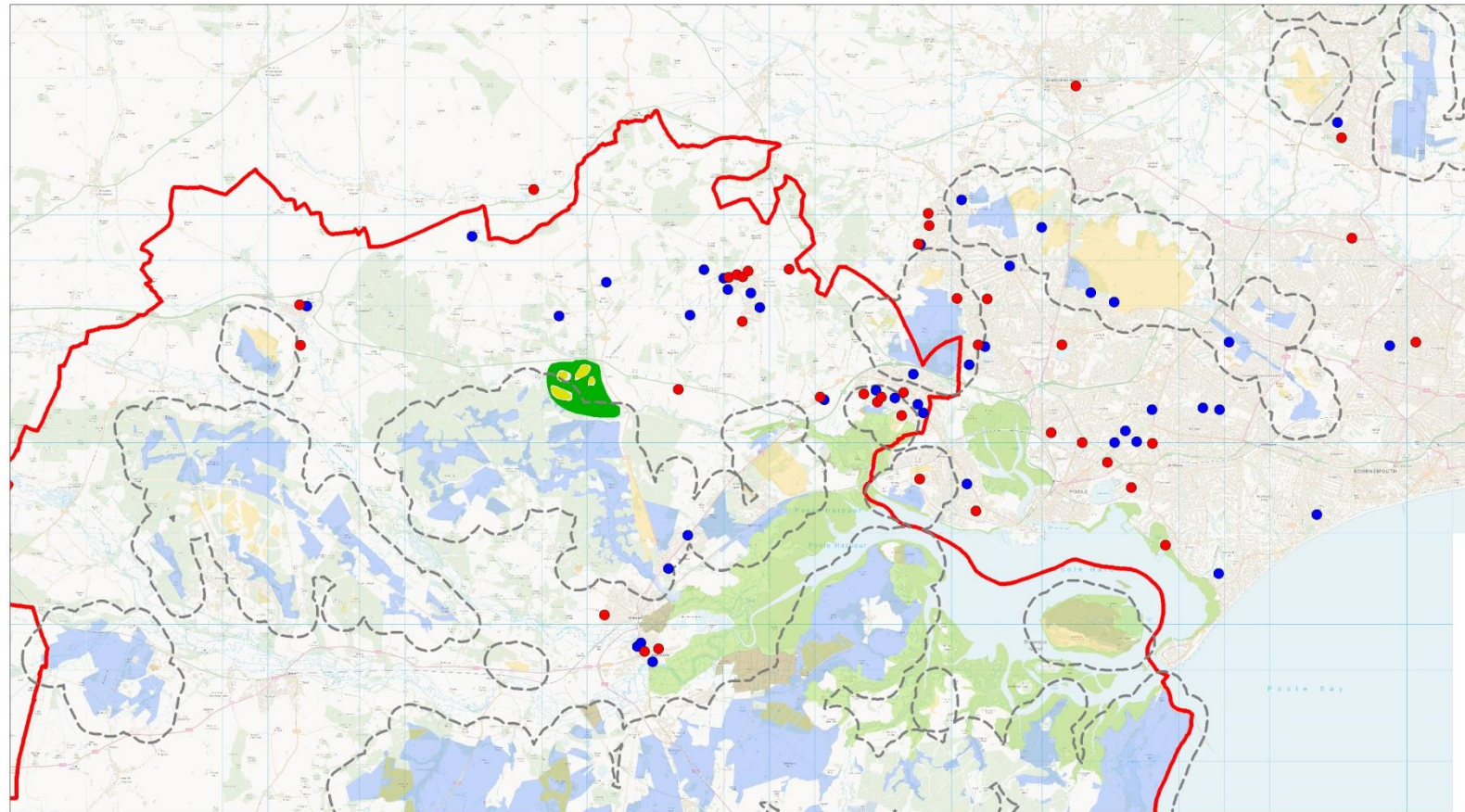
- Free parking
- Good, easy and safe access to the car-park from the road
- Careful design to provide safe, dog-friendly exercise areas that replicate the experience gained from walking within the main block of Wareham Forest and Morden Bog NNR.
- Relatively wild, low key access provision, ensuring that the Country Park doesn’t become an attraction in it’s own right, with the potential risk of

drawing more visitors to the area who then deflect local dog walkers etc onto the more sensitive areas.

- 8.6 Additional evidence gathering might include visitor surveys at similar chalets in other parts of the country, ideally within a similar forest setting, to determine what kind of activities are undertaken and how much they stay within the area adjacent to the chalets and how much they visit more widely.







**Map 11: Issue 16 and Visitor Postcodes for Sherford Bridge**

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. © Crown Copyright and Database Right 2014.

**Issue 16: Country Park and Tourist Accomodation at Morden**

- holiday chalets
- potential open space

- 400m heathland buffer zone
- Purbeck District

**European Sites**

- Ramsar
- SAC
- SAC & Ramsar
- SPA
- SPA & Ramsar
- SPA & SAC
- SPA, SAC & Ramsar

- Visitor Postcode, 2013
- Visitor Postcode, 2008

## **9. Summary of Initial Assessment Work and Next Steps**

- 9.1 The preliminary appropriate assessment work has considered the issues relating to the overall quantum of development, focussed in detail on the seven large housing sites put forward to Purbeck District Council by landowners and developers, and has also considered implications of the employment sites identified and the proposal for a country park and tourist accommodation at Morden. The recommendations made should assist the council in refining options and developing the plan further.
- 9.2 It should be noted that a number of uncertainties and potential risks were identified in the screening table, but which cannot be assessed in detail at this stage. These issues should be noted by the Council to inform the development of the plan, but more detailed assessment will only be possible once further information is available with regard to the options proposed.
- 9.3 This Habitats Regulations Assessment will continue to be updated alongside the plan review, informing the development of the new plan. It is currently unclear how much of the existing plan will be amended. A recheck of all elements of the new plan, including those not amended, will be made as part of this Habitats Regulations Assessment, to provide a comprehensive and whole plan assessment.

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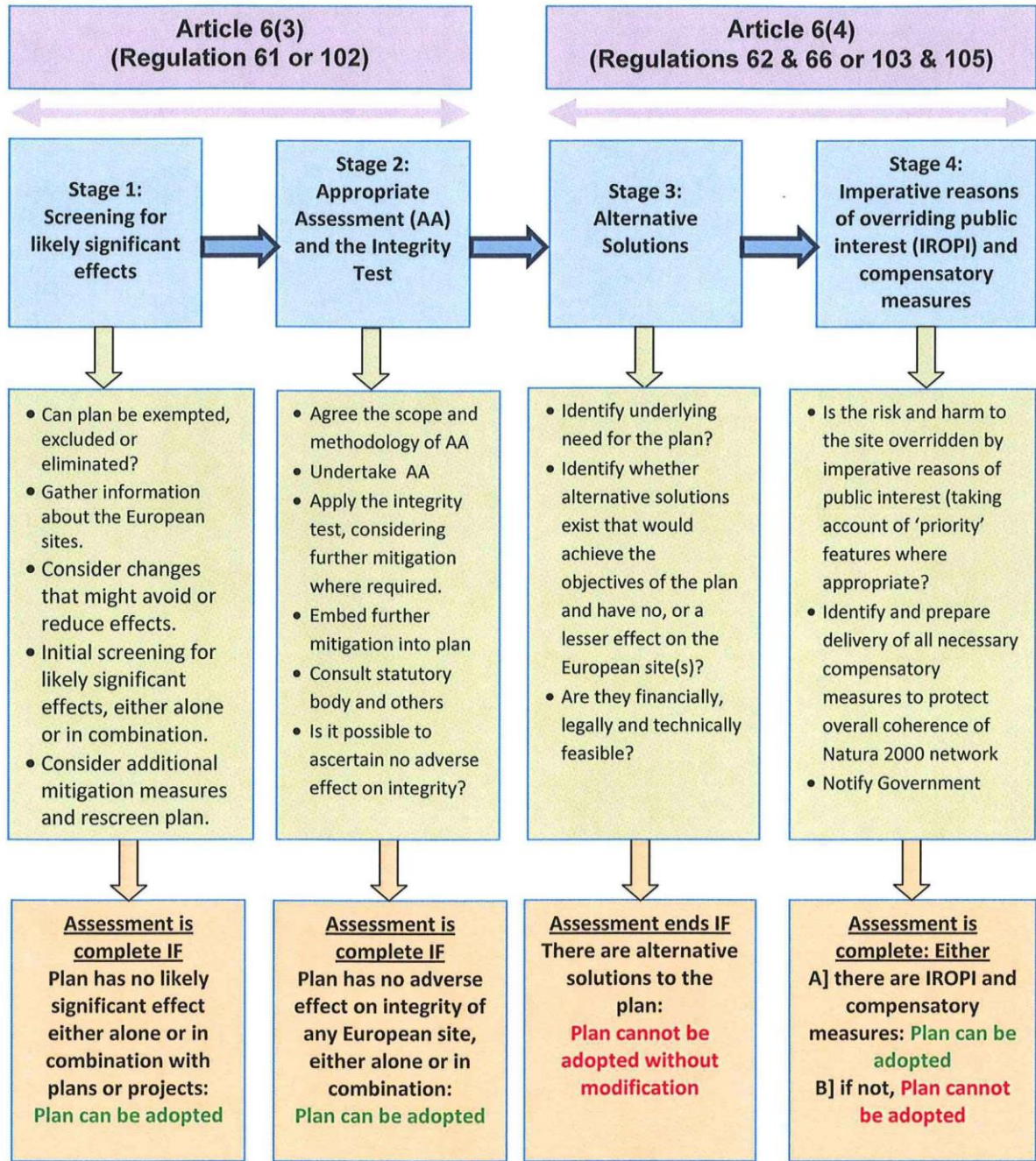
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## 12. Appendix 1 - The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

- 12.1 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, the focus of this report or the previous Habitats Regulations Assessment work undertaken for the Poole Core Strategy, upon which some of this Habitats Regulations Assessment relies.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 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.
- 12.4 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.

- 12.5 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.
- 12.6 The step by step process of Habitats Regulations Assessment is summarised in Figure 2 and is as follows. 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 Habitats Regulations Assessment 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.
- 12.7 The step by step approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment 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
- 12.8 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.

- 12.9 When preparing a plan, a competent authority may 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.
- 12.10 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.
- 12.11 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.
- 12.12 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 2: Outline of the assessment of plans under the Habitat Regulations

### 13. Appendix 2 – European Site Conservation Objectives

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 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 Habitats Regulations Assessments 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 it is anticipated that the second stage, which is to provide more detailed and site specific information for each site to support the generic objectives, will follow shortly.
- 13.3 The new list of generic Conservation Objectives for each European site include 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 detailed site specific information to underpin these generic objectives, will provide much more site specific information, and this detail will play a fundamental role in informing Habitats Regulations Assessments, and importantly will give greater clarity to what might constitute an adverse effect on a site interest feature.
- 13.4 In the interim, Natural England advises that Habitats Regulations Assessments 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.
- 13.5 For SPAs the overarching objective is to:
- 13.6 '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.'
- 13.7 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.

13.8 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.'*

13.9 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.

13.10 Conservation objectives inform any Habitats Regulations Assessment 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.



## 14. 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 6 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 :		
	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar	<p>Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i><sup>+</sup>, temperate Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and <i>Erica tetralix</i><sup>+</sup>, European dry heaths<sup>+</sup>, depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i><sup>+</sup>, <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 davalliana</i><sup>*</sup>, Alkaline fens, Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains</p> <p>Southern damselfly<sup>+</sup>; great crested newt.</p>	<p>Breeding nightjar, Dartford warbler, woodlark. Wintering hen harrier, merlin.</p>	<p>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>, largest example in Britain of southern Atlantic wet heaths with Dorset heath <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and cross-leaved heath <i>Erica tetralix</i>.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2: Supports 1 nationally rare and 13 nationally scarce wetland plant species, and at least 28 nationally rare wetland invertebrate species.</p> <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>
Dorset Heaths	<p>Embryonic shifting dunes<sup>+</sup>, shifting dunes along the shoreline</p>	<p>See above.</p>	<p>See above</p>

Site	Reason for designation :		
	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
<p>(Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland dunes SAC</p>	<p>with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (“white dunes”) <sup>+</sup>, Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes*, humid dunes slacks<sup>+</sup>, oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) <sup>+</sup>, Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i><sup>+</sup>, temperate Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and <i>Erica tetralix</i>*, European dry heaths<sup>+</sup>, depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i><sup>+</sup>, 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<sup>+</sup>; great crested newt.</p>	<p>Little Sea and Eastern Lake located within this SAC fall within Poole Harbour SPA.</p>	
<p>Poole Harbour SPA and Ramsar</p>		<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</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</p>

Site	Reason for designation :		
	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
		least 20,000 waterfowl.	tern, and Mediterranean gull, and of wintering. avocet.  Ramsar criterion 5: internationally important assemblages of waterfowl.  Ramsar criterion 6: Internationally important populations of common shelduck, black-tailed godwit..
The New Forest	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains ( <i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i> ) <sup>+</sup> , Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or of the <i>Isoëto-Nanojuncetea</i> <sup>+</sup> , Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> <sup>+</sup> , European dry heaths <sup>+</sup> , <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils ( <i>Molinion caeruleae</i> ) <sup>+</sup> , Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> <sup>+</sup> , 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>Ilici-Fagenion</i> ) <sup>+</sup> , <i>Asperulo-Fagetum</i> beech forests <sup>+</sup> , Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains <sup>+</sup> , Bog woodland <sup>+</sup> , Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ( <i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i> ) <sup>+</sup> , Transition mires, quaking bogs and Alkaline fens.  Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i> <sup>+</sup> , Stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i> <sup>+</sup> , Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i> .	Breeding Dartford warbler, nightjar, woodlark, honey buzzard, wood warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i> , hobby. Wintering hen harrier	Ramsar Criterion 1: Valley mires and wet heaths of outstanding scientific interest. The largest concentration of intact valley mires of their type in GB.  Ramsar Criterion 2: Supports a diverse assemblage of wetland plants and animals.  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.
St Alban's	Vegetated sea cliffs of the	N/A	N/A

Site	Reason for designation :		
	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Head to Durlston SAC	<p>Atlantic and Baltic coasts, Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (important orchid sites)*.</p> <p>Early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i><sup>+</sup>, Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i></p>		
Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC	<p>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts<sup>+</sup>, Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia)<sup>+</sup>, annual vegetation of drift lines.</p> <p>Early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i><sup>+</sup></p>	N/A	N/A