

**The Dorset Heathlands  
Planning Framework 2012-2014**

**Supplementary Planning Document**



**September 2012**

**Borough of Poole Bournemouth Borough Council Christchurch Borough Council  
Dorset County Council East Dorset District Council Purbeck District Council**

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## Consultation Note

The Local Authorities party to 'The Dorset Heathlands Interim Planning Framework 2010-11 issued a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public consultation in February 2012. It proposed the conversion of the Interim Planning Framework (IPF) to a Supplementary Planning Document that when adopted will sit within each of the Local Planning Authorities, with responsibility for determining residential planning applications, Local Development Frameworks. The new Dorset Heathland Planning Framework Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is proposed to run to 31 March 2014. Each of the local authorities has subsequently adopted the SPD and it takes effect from 20 September 2012.

The SPD retains as its guiding principle that there is no net increase in urban pressures on internationally important heathland as a result of additional development. The Planning Framework was published for public consultation for a 6 week period commencing **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2012** and ending **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012**. The public consultation document was made available on the websites of the relevant local authorities i.e. Bournemouth, Christchurch, Dorset, East Dorset, Poole ([www.boroughofpoole.com/dorsetheathlandconsultation](http://www.boroughofpoole.com/dorsetheathlandconsultation)) and Purbeck and in local libraries.

The Borough of Poole co-ordinated the consultation arrangements on behalf of the local authorities. A copy of the report on consultation is made available on the websites of each authority.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Dorset Heathlands cover an extensive area of South East Dorset fragmented by urban development and other land uses. It is the view of Natural England that the cumulative effect of a net increase of dwellings up to 5 kilometres from protected heathland in Dorset<sup>1</sup> would have a significant effect on Dorset's lowland heaths that are covered by several international designations.<sup>2</sup> Mitigation will be required otherwise there is the prospect that Local Authorities will not be able to grant permission for residential development within 5 kilometres of these designated sites.
- 1.2 Local authorities in South East Dorset whose administrative area is within 5 kilometres of protected heathland and which have responsibility for the determination of residential planning applications, have been operating an interim strategy for the protection of heathland since 2007. During this time the local authorities have been gathering evidence into the effects of urban pressures on the protected heaths that will inform the longer term strategy to be set out in a joint Development Plan Document (DPD) which is timetabled for adoption in April 2014.
- 1.3 This Supplementary Planning Document replaces the previous Dorset Heathland Interim Planning Framework 2010-2011 and becomes a Local Development Document within each of the local authorities planning frameworks. It is intended that the SPD will facilitate the delivery of mitigation in the same way as the previous IPF. It is also intended that the SPD be based on a programme to April 2014 that enables the targeting of resources to specific projects as with the IPF but enables partners in this time to consider how to address the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy and its implications for the funding of mitigation.
- 1.4 It is the purpose of this document to set out the approach that, together, the local authorities in South East Dorset will follow. This forms a basis for how harm to the heathlands can be avoided, based upon identified measures set out in an appendix to this document together with a map of the South East Dorset sub region. The document has been adopted by all the local authorities in South East Dorset i.e. Borough of Poole, Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, East Dorset District Council and Purbeck District Council. Dorset County Council is also party to the

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<sup>1</sup> The Dorset heathlands are found in the local authority areas of Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, Poole, Purbeck and West Dorset.

<sup>2</sup> Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area, Dorset Heathlands Ramsar Site, Dorset Heathlands Special Area of Conservation and Dorset Heathlands Special Area of Conservation (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes

document due to its implementation role but has no responsibility for the determination of residential planning applications.

## **2. Relationship with Development Plans**

- 2.1 Supplementary Planning Documents provide guidance on local planning matters. They are not required to have a specific link or to “hang off” a development plan document policy but they must be consistent with national planning policy and any relevant regional plan.<sup>3</sup> The recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the value of our natural environment stating that the ‘planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment’<sup>4</sup>, and importantly that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.2 This SPD accords with the principles of the NPPF and therefore does not require all local authorities to have in place up to date Local Plans. It is also a result of the co-operative approach to partnership working between the local authorities in south east Dorset and statutory and third party stakeholders as prescribed by the Localism Act 2011. For reference, Poole adopted its Core Strategy in February 2009, Bournemouth and Purbeck Councils have recently completed Examinations in Public into their Local Plans and East Dorset and Christchurch are producing a joint plan which has reached the pre-submission stage with submission programmed for 2013. The SPD will be a local development document within each authority’s planning frameworks.

## **3. Context**

- 3.1 European wildlife sites are protected by the EC Birds and Habitats Directives, specific provisions of which are applied in the UK by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the Habitats Regulations). They place particular responsibilities on a decision maker in relation to such sites. As competent authorities, Local Authorities must have regard to these requirements, as advised in Circular 06/2005<sup>6</sup>, which provides the procedure that should be followed in deciding whether to approve a proposal (a plan or project) that will potentially affect a European wildlife site.
- 3.2 Regulations 68 (grant of planning permission) and 102 (Assessment of implications for European sites and Marine sites) of the Habitats

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from the Planning Advisory Service website

<sup>4</sup> NPPF para 109

<sup>5</sup> NPPF para 119

<sup>6</sup> Circular 06/2005: DEFRA Circular 01/2005 to Accompany now superseded PPS9

Regulations require that any application for development or strategic plan or policy which is likely to significantly affect a European site is subject to an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal for the site's conservation objectives. The planning authority must ascertain that the plan or project will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, either directly or indirectly, taking account of any conditions or restrictions that would help ensure no adverse effect, before granting permission or adopting a plan or policy.

- 3.3 Natural England locally is concerned at the intensification of residential development in South East Dorset and the resultant pressures placed upon protected heathland by new occupants of these developments living in close proximity to the heathlands. These are similar to the impacts being observed within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Various studies<sup>7</sup> have found that public access to lowland heathland, from nearby development, has led to an increase in wild fires, damaging recreational uses, the introduction of incompatible plants and animals, loss of vegetation and soil erosion and disturbance by humans and their pets amongst other factors.
- 3.4 These effects are most marked for development within 400m of heathland where Natural England advise that additional residential development is likely to have a significant adverse effect upon the designated site, either alone or in combination with other developments. The implication of this is that in most cases it will not be possible for a local planning authority undertaking an appropriate assessment of a proposal for residential development (Use Class C3: Dwelling Houses<sup>8</sup>) to be certain that any adverse effects could be avoided or alleviated.
- 3.5 In the area between 400m and 5 km measured as a straight line from the boundary of a protected heath, see plan attached at Appendix B and Appendix C 400m Consultation Area, Natural England considers that local authorities undertaking appropriate assessment will still identify a significant adverse effect in combination with other proposals, but that avoidance or mitigation measures can allow development to be approved. Mitigation of this effect will encompass measures to divert recreational pressure away from heathland, access management measures and resources to enable the aforementioned to be implemented. **It is in this area between 400m and 5km that the SPD applies.**
- 3.6 There may be circumstances within 400m of protected heaths where residential development within the Town and Country Planning (Use

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<sup>7</sup> de Molinaar 1998, Haskins 2000, Underhill-Day 2005

<sup>8</sup> Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as amended

Classes) Order as amended Use Class C2 may be permitted. Appendix D sets out the consideration of such uses.

## **4. Towards a Solution**

- 4.1 This document sets out an approach to the mitigation of the harmful effects of residential development in South East Dorset on Dorset's lowland heaths. The solution will be in place until April 2014 by when the local authorities have agreed to have in place a joint Heathland Development Plan Document as part of their Local Development Frameworks (Local Plans).
- 4.2 Appendix A to this document sets out a range of measures that have been identified jointly by the local authorities and Natural England. Natural England's advice is that together these comprise an appropriate package of measures to reduce to an insignificant level the harm that would otherwise occur to protected heathland. These measures are costed at £4,104,000<sup>9</sup> with the cost being attributable in the form of a planning obligation to residential development between 400m and 5km coming forward over the period of the SPD. The obligation will be applied to every residential development regardless of number of units proposed where there is a net increase in dwellings but will not be applied to extensions.
- 4.3 Large scale developments will be expected to explore ways of avoiding or mitigating their adverse impacts. This may be through on site measures or more likely off site measures to facilitate the implementation of alternative natural greenspace. Recourse to financial payments in line with the SPD should be the fallback position only after exploration and agreement with Natural England and the relevant local planning authority of potential avoidance or mitigation measures. It may also be the case that a combination of avoidance/mitigation and financial payments may be required. For large greenfield sites and urban extensions the expectation is that SANGs will be provided as part of the avoidance and mitigation strategy. Guidance on SANG quality standards can be found at Appendix E.
- 4.4 The contribution will be based upon a standard charge, see section 5 for how the contribution has been calculated, with adjustment for the different occupancy rate for houses and flats. This approach is clear, robust and easy to operate. It is calculated based on the forecast increase in average population over the 2 year period of the SPD.

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<sup>9</sup> Base date figure November 2011

- 4.5 Discounting may be applied to residential schemes where an element of care is provided.<sup>10</sup> As stated in paragraph 3.4 this SPD is only applicable to dwellings, including houses, flats and maisonettes. Other accommodation types such as student halls of residence, hotels, holiday parks and residential nursing homes which fall within a separate planning use class will be subject to assessment outside of the mechanism established in this SPD. Guidance for certain development types can be found in Appendices F-H.
- 4.6 A number of the local authorities have in place open space/play provision policies that require a contribution to their provision where this cannot be provided on site. This contribution/obligation is not mitigation for the impact of urban pressures on protected heathland but to provide for recreational needs in the form of open space, sports pitches, indoor recreation and children's play. This type of provision does not provide for the diffuse recreational pressures placed upon heathland e.g. the walking of dogs. The heathland mitigation obligation does not seek to duplicate other recreation contributions. Large sites that may be able to provide open space on site are unlikely to also be able to provide suitable on site heathland mitigation. However, this will be looked at on a case by case basis and should this be possible then an appropriate reduction to the contribution will apply.

## 5. The Level of Contributions

- 5.1 To provide certainty to those considering or making applications for residential development and to ensure transparency and accountability a formulae approach has been adopted that sets out a mechanism for the calculation of the planning contribution/obligation. A standard charge is proposed that will provide the clarity required by developers, the owners of land and the general public thus avoiding unnecessary delay in the negotiation of planning obligations. The SPD has been prepared having regard to the tests set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, in particular Regulation 122 which transposes into law three tests previously found in Circular 05/2005 i.e. that the contribution is necessary, directly related and fairly and reasonable related in scale and kind to the development.
- 5.2 In order to ensure that contributions are sought only for the need generated by development the costs presented below are based on the **forecast 2 year average population increase by type of dwelling 2012-2026**. It is therefore the increase in population and their impact that needs to be mitigated and the scale and apportionment of costs needs to reflect the additional pressure generated by the growth in population allowing for the different occupancy rates of houses and

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<sup>10</sup> If there are more than 6 residents in a single dwelling then this type of proposal would not fall within use class C3(b) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as amended and would not be covered by this SPD



flats. It will also be necessary to discount the cost of the existing residential unit on site, for example, if a single dwellinghouse is proposed to be replaced by 10 flats then the calculation would be:

### **10 X cost of a flat minus the cost of 1 house**

5.3 The factors that are taken into account for calculating the contribution are:

- Forecast 2 year average population growth 2012-2026<sup>11</sup> (**4871**)
- Local Authority housing trajectory forecasts 2012-2014<sup>12</sup> (**2934**)
- the relative proportion of households in houses (**73%**) and flats (**27%**)<sup>13</sup>
- the projected net population increase per dwelling (**Houses 1.81 persons/dwelling; Flats 1.13 persons/dwelling**)<sup>14</sup>
- The cost of the mitigation at **£4.1m** (November 2011)<sup>15</sup>

5.4 The cost of mitigation divided by the forecast population growth i.e. **£4.10m** divided by **4871** gives a charge per person of **£842**. However an adjustment to the charge to allow for the net population increase per dwelling type results in a charge per dwelling of:

- Cost per house (£825.40 x 1.81) of **£1,524.00**
- Cost per flat (£825.40 x 1.13) of **£952.00**

5.5 Any contribution will need to be contained within a Section 106 planning obligation whether this is through an agreement or unilateral undertaking. An additional administrative charge<sup>16</sup> to cover the cost of collection and distribution of the obligation will be applied at a standard rate reflecting the work involved in administering the obligation payable at the following rate (The charge excludes any legal costs that are incurred in respect of the completion of the deed that secures the planning obligation.):

- 2% of the total contribution payable on commencement of development<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ONS Population forecasts for participant local authorities, 2010 mid year estimate base

<sup>12</sup> Predicted housing numbers taken from each Local Authority housing trajectories for the 2 years 2012/13 and 2013/14

<sup>13</sup> Census 2001

<sup>14</sup> Provided by Borough of Poole R&I team

<sup>15</sup> Base costs as at November 2010

<sup>16</sup> The administrative charge excludes the recovery of individual local authority legal costs where these are incurred

- Administrative payments are subject to a minimum charge of £50 and capped to a limit of £1,000 per contribution type.

5.6 The cost of the mitigation measures is calculated at November 2011 prices. On each of the subsequent anniversaries of the adoption of this document the base costs will be adjusted by an amount equivalent to the percentage change in the Retail Price Index. In addition the Heathland Executive Group will review the level of contribution sought per unit on an annual basis, effective on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. The principles to be applied to the annual scheme review of the SPD will include reference to the following:

- Actual residential development levels delivered;
- Any revisions to planning legislation and procedures;
- Analysis of appeal decisions and financial viability assessments;
- Any changes to Government funding procedures;
- Impact of the delivery of Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANGs).

5.7 Contributions will be spent in a timely manner to ensure that mitigation is delivered as close as possible to occupation of new residential development.

## **6. Model Clauses for Planning Obligations**

6.1 The use of a standard clause for either an agreement or unilateral undertaking by the five local authorities will be in the interest of all involved and will help speed up delivery. For the purposes of the obligation the s106 clause could be worded:

*“the Nature Conservation Contribution” means the sum of ( ) thousand ( ) hundred and ( ) Pounds increased by the percentage (if any) by the Retail Price Index shall have increased between the date of publication prior to the date of this Deed and the date of payment together with an administrative fee of £(pounds) towards measures which avoid or mitigate against any adverse effect of the Development on the Dorset Heathlands in accordance with the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework Supplementary Planning Document 2012-2014. For the avoidance of doubt such sum or any part of thereof shall not be reimbursed to the pay or to any other party.*

6.2 The obligation could then be worded:

*“The Owner hereby Covenants with the Council that he will not cause or permit the commencement of the development on the land until the Nature Conservation Contribution has been paid to the Council.”*

- 6.3 For strategically significant sites delivering large numbers of residential units the obligation may be worded differently to reflect payment of the contribution on a phased basis.

## **7. Administration and Audit Trail**

- a. The SPD will be adopted by the South East Dorset local authorities.
- b. A joint Dorset Heathland Executive Group was established in 2007 to oversee the implementation of the IPF. This group consists of a Councillor from each of the 6 local authorities together with representatives from Natural England, Home Builders Federation and the RSPB. The Executive considers schemes recommended by the Heathland Planning Framework Officer Group (HPFOG) to mitigate the impact of additional urban pressures. Schemes are able to be put forward for consideration by public, private and voluntary sector. The officer group will meet regularly to review and consider schemes and to oversee the monitoring process. Progress on the implementation of the PF will be reported in the Annual Monitoring Reports of the local authorities collecting contributions. These provisions will continue under the operation of the SPD.
- c. Contributions will be required from all qualifying developments from adoption of the new SPD unless avoidance/mitigation measures have been agreed as overcoming any significant effects of a proposed development. The proposed mitigation at Appendix A may be varied through the on-going review process but crucially Natural England will need to be satisfied that the necessary overall level of mitigation is achieved.
- d. The partnership between the local authorities will be separate from the Urban Heaths Partnership (UHP). The UHP has received funding from the IPF through 2010-2011 to manage the increased pressures arising from development in South East Dorset. Dorset County Council will continue to employ staff of the UHP and will continue to work across local authority boundaries. Local authority countryside teams are able to put forward projects for delivery by UHP. The work of the UHP will be scrutinised by the Executive Group and will agree and monitor their annual business plan. The Executive Group in prioritising expenditure will maintain an appropriate balance between the activities of the UHP and agreed capital schemes. The partnership will also explore other funding sources to supplement the developer funded programme.
- e. Each of the partner local authorities is responsible for the collection of contributions through their role as local planning authority. The

financial responsibilities of local authorities also require them to administer the contributions in an accountable and transparent way. The contributions will be held separately from other accounts and will be co-ordinated by the Borough of Poole.

## Appendix A: List of Mitigation Projects proposed for 2012-2014

<b>Projects to divert users from Heaths</b>							
<b>A. Preferred projects</b>							
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Area (ha) new access created</b>	<b>Catchment area</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>HOF contribution</b>	<b>Proposer</b>
1	Berry Hill footpath & cycle/horse riding route	Construction of surfaced route linking Berry Hill with Stour Valley LNR as part of an improvement programme for the Stour Valley Way in Bournemouth and as a contribution to the strategic development of the Stour Valley SANG. The route is approx. 1 km in length.	n/a	5000m	£100,000	£50,000	BBC
2	Bourne Valley Park BMX	Creation of a dirt based BMX circuit at end of Turbary Close. To divert use of an informal BMX area, part within the nearby SAC which will be restored to heath.	n/a	1500m	£24000	£22800	BoP
3	Broadstone Heath Extension of Footpath	To provide a 200m southern extension to an existing path for walkers and dog walkers. The existing path was constructed in 2007 using Heathland Mitigation Funds. The extension would complete a route through woodland onto a large open field. The new section of path would be usable throughout the year and in all weather conditions. To take pressure off Canford and Dunyeats	200m surfaced pathway	1500m	£9550	£9550	BoP
4	Ford Lane Recreation Ground Ferndown	To develop existing derelict underused open space directly adjacent to the high user pressure area of Parley Common SSSI. Ford Lane is as readily accessible as Parley Common from the Heatherlands housing estate and with improvements such as improved play, path network for dog walking and signage will offer an attractive alternative to the Heathland.	6 ha	1500m	£150000	£150000	EDDC
5	Iford Meadows – re-routing of Stour Valley Way	Re-route path across Iford playing fields and Iford Meadows LNR instead of along Iford Lane as part of an improvement programme for the Stour Valley Way in Bournemouth and as a contribution to the strategic development of the Stour Valley SANG	n/a	5000m	£75,000	£75,000	BBC
6	Mudford Wood Access Improvements	Enhancing an under-used track into a dual-use path, allowing access to a green corridor from Somerford to Mudford. The purpose is not only to improve access to nature by allowing recreational activities away from the	1.8 km of dual access path	5000m	£60000	£60000	CBC

		busy main roads but encourages people to reach the coast and sensitive sites such as Christchurch Harbour in a sustainable manner. This also widens the cycle network created by Chewton Bunny and South Shore bike park projects.					
7	Potterne BMX and Skate Park Verwood	To build on existing IPF and EDDC funded facilities to provide increased high quality and latest design BMX and Skate area. The work at Potterne has already seen huge benefits in diverting BMX users away from local heaths due to its integrated approach to the design and development of the facilities. With increased improvements the area will continue to attract users from the wider area lessening the impact of BMX on other surrounding heathland areas.		5000m	£40000	£30000	EDDC
8	Sherborn Open Space	Improvements to access and attractiveness as interceptor site for Canford Heath. Create dog walking route around this site to join up with Haymoor dog walking route funded and completed as part of heath mitigation work. Length, approximately 400m. To allow for surfaced fixed dog walking path to be created, drainage of area needs to be improved. At present football pitches are moved around area, meaning that there is no fixed route for a dog walking path. Increase in size of car park on Sherbon OS to increase desirability as a destination.		1500m	£104500	£104500 (possibility of some co-funding)	BoP
9	Slades Farm landscaping and car park improvements	Landscaping work as phase 2 of the site masterplan to include development of a 'wildlife area' with pond etc. Increased car park capacity of approx 100 spaces		1500m	£75000	£75000	BBC
10	The Dell Broadstone Phase 2	To provide new path including steps to connect path constructed in The Dell Phase 1 and northern connection to all weather dog walking route made with heath mitigation funds in 2007. Length 150 m, which is same length as in Phase 1. To create this path route through understory in woodland will be cleared of thick vegetation, which will benefit woodland element of		1500m	£29000	£29000	BoP

		SNCI in this area. To take pressure off Canford and Dunyeats					
11	Turlin Moor dog gym	Installation of a dog gym. To improve that attractiveness of this site as a destination for dog owners as an alternative and welcoming site for dog owners to exercise and play with their dogs, taking pressure of heaths		1500m	£4800	£4800	BoP
12	Upton Farm/ Upton Country Park	Creation of a strategic SANG as an extension of Upton Country Park. To include 1) Identifying preferred option for securing the SANG 2) Appointment of consultants to carry out masterplanning exercise to determine how to make best use of the site. 3) Laying out of SANG	30 ha	5000m plus	£2000000	£1100000 (includes £170000 already allocated)	BoP
13	Upton Heath Estate and Woods	Phase 3. Provide through route from Upton Heath Estate to Upton Country Park by creating new access to Upton Wood from Palmerston Road through the Upton Heath Estate and a new road crossing and footpath/cycleway across Poole Road joining Upton Wood and Upton Country Park			Phase 3 £400000	£200000	PDC
14	West Moors Plantation	Improvements to access and attractiveness of open space connected to Castleman Trailway	Increase usage 129 ha	5000m	£27000	£21000	FC
15	Woolslope Farm (phase 1) West Moors	Acquisition of 13ha site from current owners (Heron Homes) to be combined with adjacent land owned by DCC and Wessex Water to create 15ha sustainable open space. To carry out initial site safety works to enable public access, introduce base line monitoring measures and provide an all weather surfaced route allowing access from West Moors, Ferndown and the Castleman Trailway. As a completely new open space resource this site offers the opportunity to really change recreational habits within the local area away from a large number of Heathland sites by providing a very large area of well designed, safe, easy to use and attractive SANG	13 ha  2 km all weather paths	5000m	£450000	£350000	EDDC
16	Woolslope Farm (phase 2)	Further development of site to include increased path network allowing circular routes, secure perimeter	Further 2km of all weather	5000m	£250000	£250000	EDDC

	West Moors	fencing, play equipment, allotments and educational resources and car park to make the site more attractive as SANG and increase user catchment.	paths and parking for approx 15 cars				
17	Muscliff	Bank stabilization to maintain important access point to Stour Valley	n/a	5000m	£37,080	£37,080	BBC
18	Christchurch Harbour	Bank Stabilisation works to key access through Hengistbury Head	n/a	5000m	£21,000	£21,000	BBC
	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£4,117,930</b>	<b>£2,589,780</b>	

## B. Reserve Projects

1 9	Arrowsmith Coppice, Poole	Acquire site (cost dependant on method)  Improve access and attractiveness for visitors as alternative to Canford Heath and Dunyeats Hill	13.5 ha	5000m	£76950 - £416812  £65000	£76950 - £416812  £65000	BoP
2 0	Coopers Lane Meadow Verwood	To acquire and enhance a meadow area adjacent to Stephens Castle. The area lies across the main access route to Stephens Castle and as such would act as an interceptor site for much of the recreational activity that takes place there. To provide secure boundary fencing, benches and attractive access points.	1.5 ha	1500m	£50000	£50000	EDDC
2 1	Delph Woods, Phase 3, Poole	Acquisition of area of land adjacent to council owned area to increase size of site.  Works to improve access and connections with rest of woodland and Castleman Trailway, and improve attractiveness of whole area as alternative to Canford Heath and Dunyeats Hill.	10 ha	5000m	£57000 - £308750  £49700	£57000 - £308750  £49700	BoP
	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£298,650 - £890,262</b>	<b>£298,650 - £890,262</b>	



## Access and fire management projects

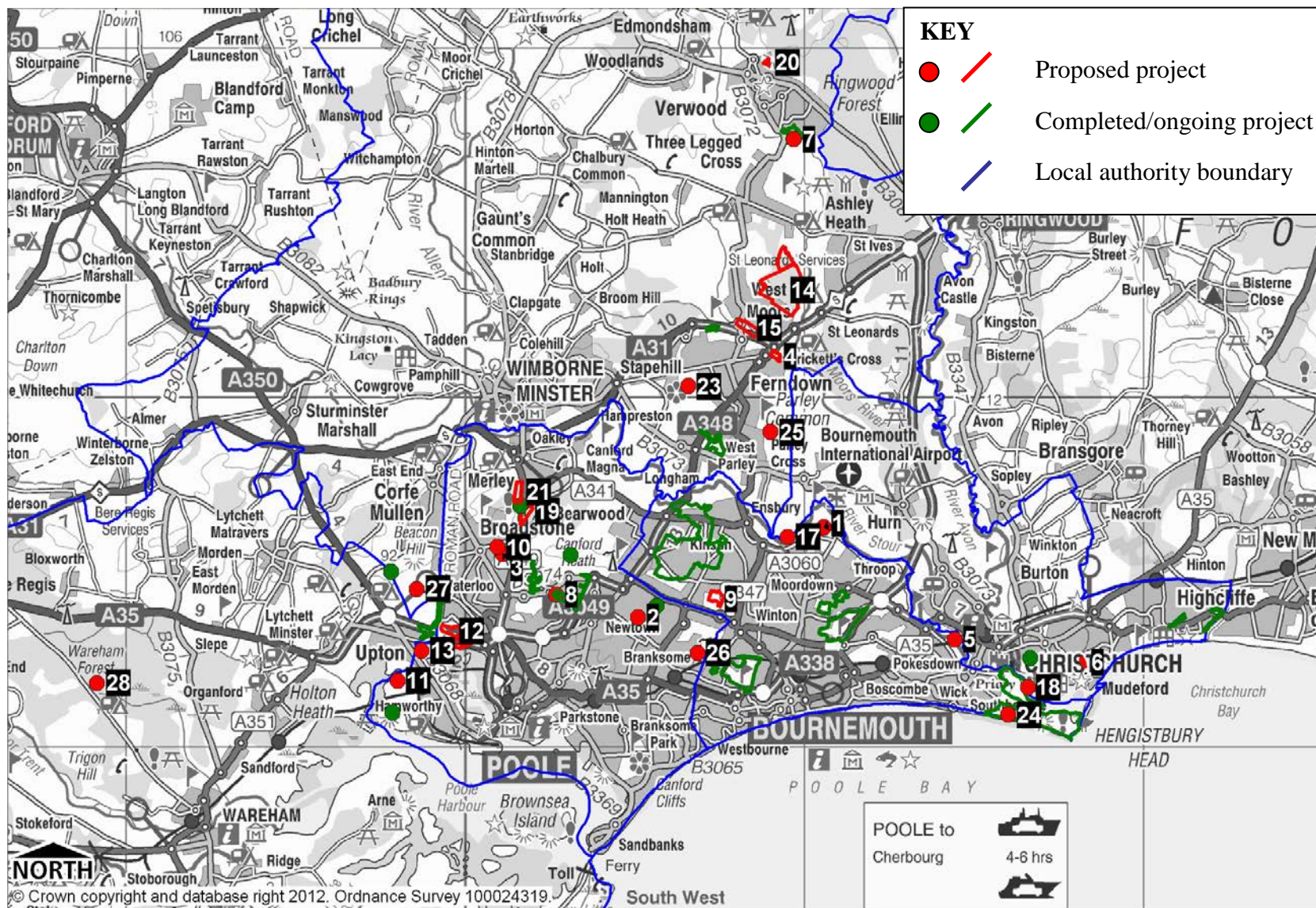
<b>A. Preferred projects</b>						
Ref	Project	Description	Catchment area	Budget	HOF contribution	Proposer
22	Dorset Dogs	Further development of project to encourage responsible access by people with dogs and to encourage use of alternative areas. Work to include improvements to website, programme of dog friendly events, information leaflets about suitable dog walking areas, an annual Doggy Festival.	5000m	£40000	£30000	UHP/ DUHGAP
23	Ferndown Common Fire/Visitor Access Management	Implementation of review of fire access and management plans with DFRS, to include improvements to signage, entrances, waymarked routes, information boards etc	1500m	£3820	£3820	ARC
24	Hengistbury Head boardwalk extension	Extend existing boardwalk through the rest of the dune system at Whitepits to complete surfacing work for route of the West Trail. The trail is encouraging use of the less sensitive area of Hengistbury Head to the west of the SAC.	5000m	£21000	£21000	BBC
25	Parley Common Fire/Visitor Access Management	Implementation of review of fire access and management plans with DFRS, to include improvements to signage, entrances, waymarked routes, information boards etc	1500m	£4920	£4920	ARC
26	Talbot Heath	Install fire hydrant on heath to combat risk and damage caused by heath fires.	1500m	£20000	£20000	BoP
27	Upton Heath fire risk management	Multi faceted project to lessen fire risk on Upton Heath. To include; signage onto and around the Heath, improving access onto and around Heath, setting up of a Heathwatch group, implementation of fire management measures from DFRS review of 2011 fire.	5000m	£105000	£89250	BoP/DWT
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£194740</b>	<b>£168990</b>	
<b>B. Reserve projects</b>						
28	Integrated fire planning for natural	Production of integrated fire planning for all open land holdings including heaths. Development and implementation of single GIS based	5000m	£10250	£6000	FC

	spaces in Purbecks	methodology for fire plans with DFRS			
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£10,250</b>	<b>£6,000</b>

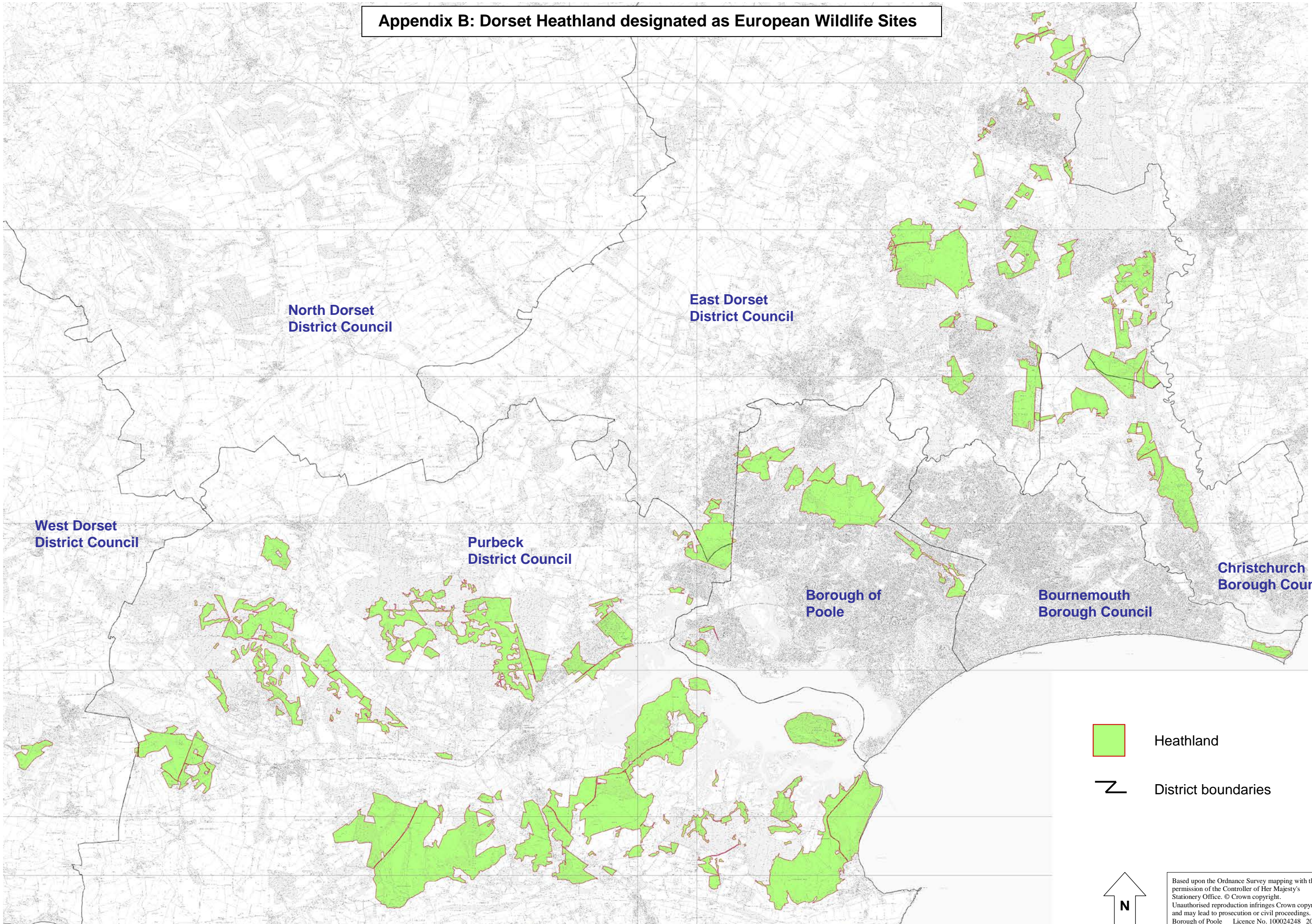
<b>Revenue Projects</b>			
UHP costs 2012 -2014	Wardening, education and strategic coordination of access management (includes 6 seasonal wardens per year)	£557619	DCC
Area wide monitoring programme 2012 -2014	Implementation of area wide monitoring strategy	£166,656	DCC
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£724,275</b>	



<b>Total heathland obligations funds contributions</b>		
Projects to divert users from heaths	A	£2,589,780
	B	£298,650 - £890,262
Access and fire management projects	A	£168990
	B	6000
Wardening, education, monitoring etc		£724,275
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£3,787,645 - £4,379,257</b>

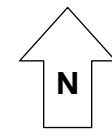
## Location of mitigation projects for 2012-2014



**Appendix B: Dorset Heathland designated as European Wildlife Sites**



-  Heathland
-  District boundaries



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## Appendix C

### 400m Consultation Area

The five south east Dorset Local Authorities of Borough of Poole, Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, East Dorset District Council and Purbeck District Council were provided with a formal requirement under the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 Statutory Instrument 1995 No 419 to consult English Nature (now Natural England ) in the mapped Consultation Areas on 12 July 2006.

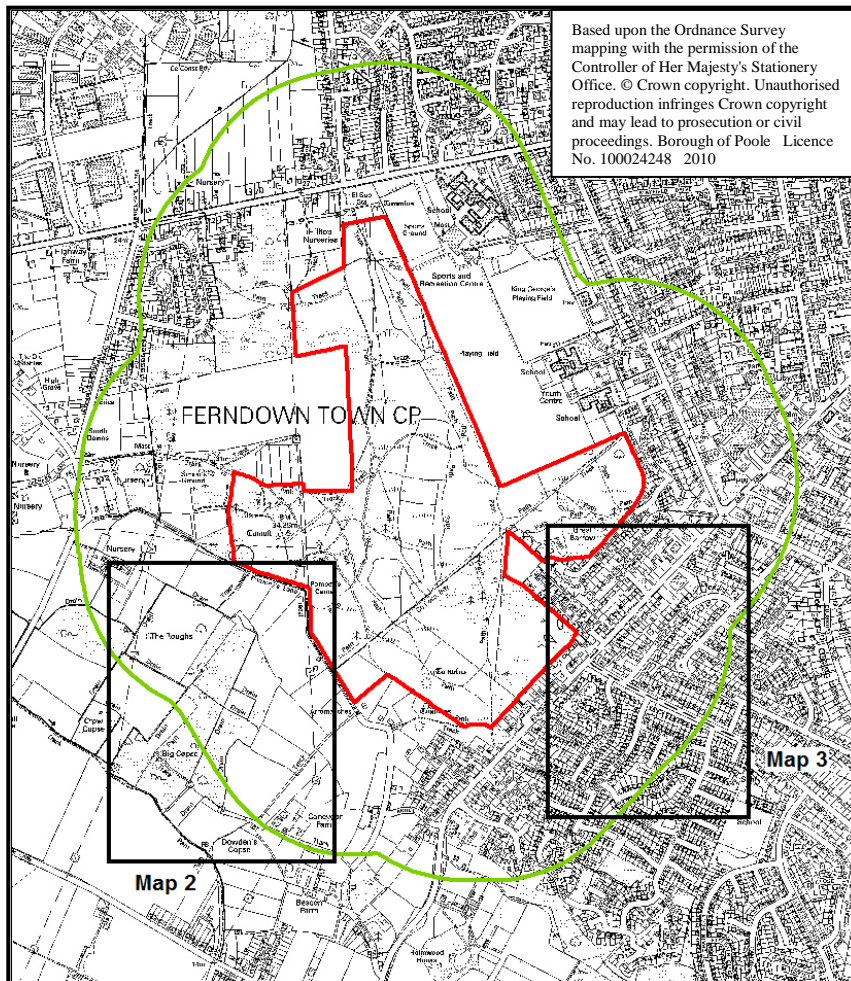
The Consultation Area is around the Sites of Special Scientific Interest in south east Dorset which are also protected as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPA) or classified as Ramsar for their lowland heathland features. The SSSI and European/international boundaries are in most cases co-located.

The Consultation Areas are mapped in the following way, with the current Master Map base mapping from Ordnance Survey using the most up to date software MapInfo V. 9.5 a Geographic Information System (GIS).

The software is set to measure metric distance units in a Cartesian projection. The component SSSI is selected and then a 400m straight line buffer is applied which has a smoothness value of 20. This gives a surrounding area of 400m as the crow flies see below.

Information on the Dorset Heathlands including Natural England's consultation area maps can be found at [http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south\\_west/ourwork/heathlands/default.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_west/ourwork/heathlands/default.aspx)

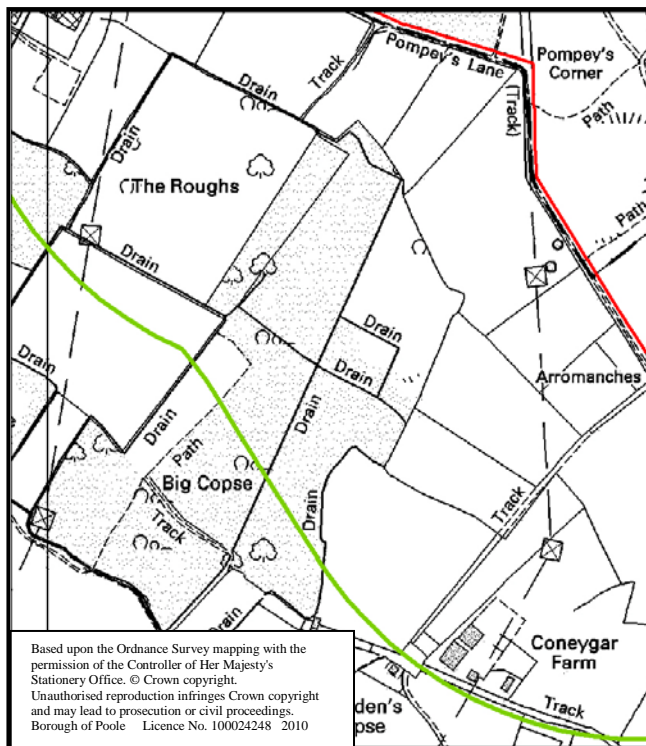
**Map 1**



The SSSI land is edged red and the buffer is shown in green against a 1:10,000 OS base map for clarity.

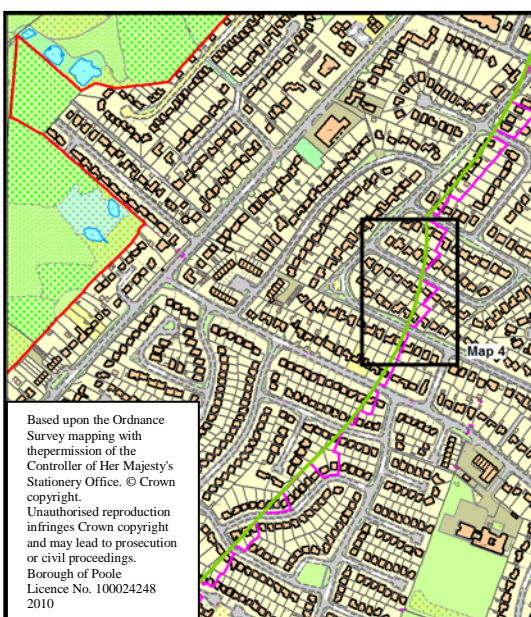
The final boundary of the Consultation Area is selected as follows. In the open countryside where there is no residential development the original buffer is used and crosses fields as an arc shown in green (SSSI boundary in red).

**Map 2**

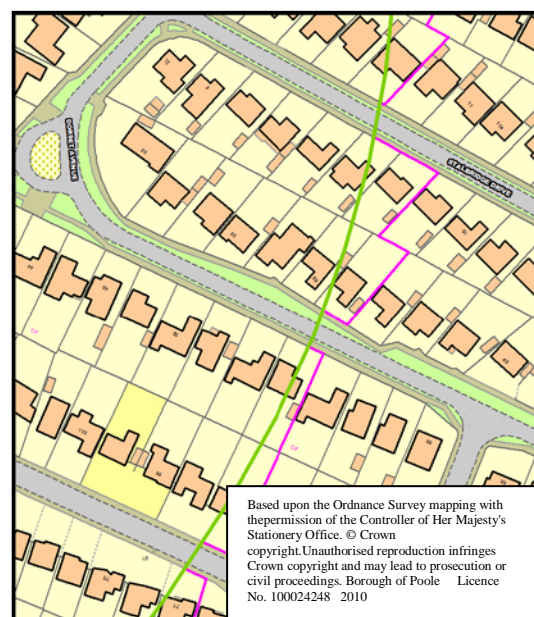


Where the buffer crosses residential areas English Nature (now Natural England) has included within the 400m Consultation Area the curtilage of each property which the buffer intersects. The red line is the SSSI boundary, green line is the buffer and purple the 400m Consultation Area.

**Map 3**

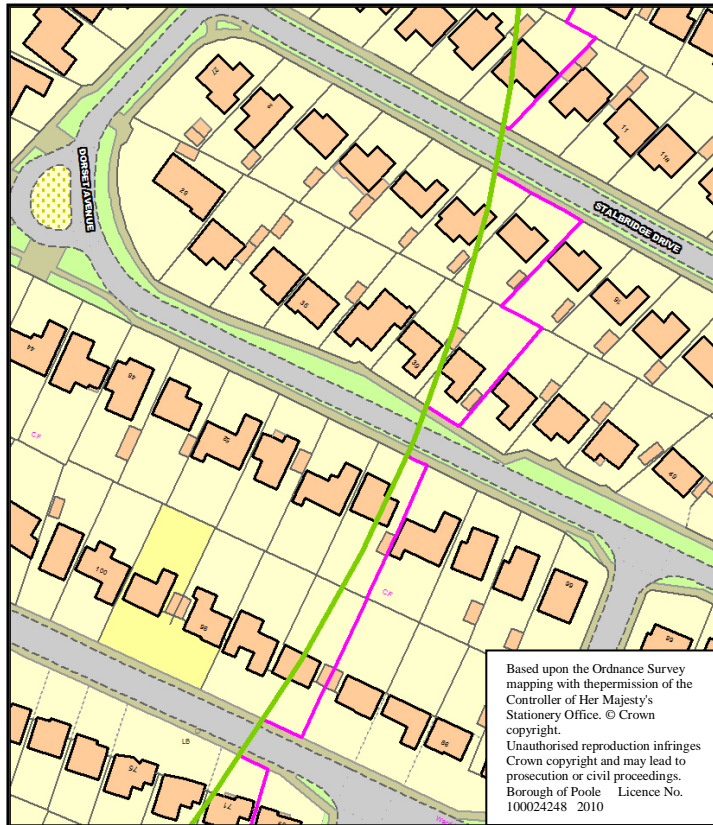


**Map 4**



The final 400m Consultation Area now looks as shown below:

Map 5



The Local Authorities are required to consult Natural England on all residential applications within the 400m Consultation Area which lies to the left side of the purple line in this case.

## Appendix D

### Natural England Advice for Use Class C2 proposals

#### A. Within 400m of protected heathland

Developments within the C2 class (ie residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres) will be considered on a case by case basis and Natural England will advise whether an appropriate assessment would be required, taking into account the potential 'in combination effect. In general, developments such as hospitals and nursing homes would not be considered to have a likely significant effect with regard to recreational impacts. The types of C2 residential accommodation that could be considered acceptable within 400m of protected heaths are as follows:

1. Purpose built schemes for the frail elderly where there is an element of close care provided on site 24 hours a day. This level of care is above that of provision of an on site wardening service provided for sheltered accommodation. It would be expected that there would normally be an age restriction of 60+years for the occupants of the units and that the planning permission would be conditioned in such a way that the units could not become open market housing. Experience from schemes of this nature indicates that in order to provide 24 hour care the minimum number of units is generally around 40 and the scheme will also have communal facilities. Authorities should consider requiring a covenant restricting pet ownership where it is in their view an effective measure in reducing the risk of adverse effects of predation and disturbance
2. Purpose built schemes for the accommodation of the disabled, for example a care home for people with dementia, where by the nature of the residents' disabilities, they are unlikely to have any impact on the adjacent protected heaths.

The above categories would not generally be required to provide a financial contribution through the Heathland SPD if located within or beyond 400m from protected heathland.

The planning authority will need to be mindful of the net change in residential occupancy in relation to carers residing on the site.

The use of pet covenants or other suitable legally binding agreements by authorities is considered acceptable by Natural England in these specific situations as:

1. The nature of the establishment is such that pressure from residents to own pets is likely to be very low creating an acceptable risk.
2. In the context of a residential care home with 24 hour wardening, enforcement is seen as being achievable in terms of time taken to detect infringements and resources on site to achieve enforcement outcomes.

Natural England advice to local authorities is that planning conditions should be attached to permissions as follows:



1. The applicant/management body will provide a biannual written confirmation to the LPA detailing the compliance with the pet covenant, the number of residents and their age.
2. The applicant/management body will prevent, through design and enforcement measures, the use of onsite car parking for public use for accessing nearby heathlands.

Natural England advises the local authorities to be aware that this advice does not relate to other significant effects on the international sites such as considerations related to surface water discharge from the application sites. These will require case by case consideration in consultation with Natural England.

Natural England advises the authority to be aware that this advice does not apply to matters related to species protected by law.

**B: Between 400m and 5km**

Use Class C2 applications in the 400m to 5km area that would not fall into the categories identified in A above, this may include retirement homes where the occupants are still active, will need to be assessed on a case by case basis to assess the potential impact of such development. Where significant adverse effects are identified then development will be expected to demonstrate how it will avoid or mitigate such effects or alternatively may apply the financial contribution mechanism set out within the main body of this SPD. It may be reasonable for local authorities to conclude that such units of accommodation are comparable to additional residential flats. Mitigation contributions should also be secured where there are additional on site staff accommodation provided.

## Appendix E

### Guidelines for the establishment of Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) Quality Standards for the Dorset Heaths

#### INTRODUCTION

'Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace' (SANG) is the name given to green space that is of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation for applications likely to affect the Dorset Heathlands European and internationally protected sites. The provision of SANGs is one of a range of mitigation measures, a number of which are detailed in the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework SPD, which the south east Dorset Planning Authorities and Natural England consider offer an effective means of avoiding or mitigating harm from a number of urban effects.

Its role is to provide alternative green space to divert visitors away from the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area (SPA), the two Dorset Heaths SACs and the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar (collectively called the 'Dorset Heathlands' in these guidelines). SANGs are intended to provide mitigation for the likely impact of residential type developments on the Dorset Heathlands by preventing an increase in visitor pressure. The effectiveness of SANGs as mitigation will depend upon its location and design. These must be such that the SANGs is more attractive than the Dorset Heathlands to visitors of the kind that currently visit them.

These guidelines describe the features which have been found to draw visitors to the Dorset Heathlands, which should be replicated in SANGs:

- the type of site which should be identified as SANGs
- measures which can be taken to enhance sites so that they may be used as SANGs

These guidelines relate specifically to the means to provide mitigation for development of a residential nature within or close to 5km of the Dorset Heathlands. They do not address nor preclude the other functions of green space (e.g. provision of disabled access). Other functions may be provided within SANGs, as long as this does not conflict with the specific function of mitigating visitor impacts on the Dorset Heathlands.

SANGs may be created from:

- existing open space of SANGs quality with no existing public access or limited public access, which for the purposes of mitigation could be made fully accessible to the public
- existing open space which is already accessible but which could be changed in character so that it is more attractive to the specific group of visitors who might otherwise visit the Dorset Heathlands
- land in other uses which could be converted into SANGs

The identification of SANGs should seek to avoid sites of high nature conservation value which are likely to be damaged by increased visitor numbers. Such damage may arise, for example, from increased disturbance, erosion, input of nutrients from dog faeces, and increased incidence of fires. Where sites of high nature conservation value are considered as SANGs, the impact on

their nature conservation value should be assessed and considered alongside relevant policy in the core strategy/local plan.

## **THE CHARACTER OF THE Dorset Heathlands AND ITS VISITORS**

The Dorset Heathlands are made up of 42 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and consists of a mixture of open heathland and mire with some woodland habitats. The topography is varied with some prominent viewpoints. Many sites contain streams, ponds and small lakes and though some have open landscapes with few trees others have scattered trees and areas of woodland. Most sites are freely accessible to the public though in some areas access is restricted by army, or other operations.

Surveys have shown that about half of visitors to the Dorset Heathlands arrive by car and about half on foot. Where sites are close to urban development around Poole and Bournemouth, foot access tends to be most common. On rural sites in Purbeck and East Dorset, more visitors come by car. Some 75% of those who visited by car had come from 5.3km of the access point onto the heathlands. A very large proportion of the Dorset Heathland visitors are dog walkers, many of whom visit the particular site on a regular (i.e. multiple visits per week) basis and spend less than an hour there, walking on average about 2.2km. Further detailed information on visitors can be found in the reports referenced at the end of this document.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE QUALITY OF SANGS**

The quality guidelines have been sub-divided into different aspects of site fabric and structure. They have been compiled from a variety of sources but principally from visitor surveys carried out at heathland sites within the Dorset Heathlands and the Thames Basin Heaths. These are listed as references at the end of this appendix.

The guidelines concentrate on the type of SANGs designed principally to cater for heathland dog walkers. Other important heathland mitigation measures, for example, facilities designed to attract motor cycle scramblers or BMX users away from heathlands or facilities for adventurous play for children are not covered specifically and will need to be considered on a case by case basis.

The principle criteria contained in the Guidelines have also been put into a checklist format which can be found in a table at the end of this appendix.

It is important to note that these Guidelines only cover the Quality of SANG provision. There are a number of other matters that will need to be agreed with Natural England and the Local Planning Authority including; Provision of In Perpetuity Management of the SANG; SANG Capacity; and other Avoidance and Mitigation Measures as necessary.

## **ACCESSIBILITY - REACHING THE SANG**

Most visitors reach the Dorset Heathlands either by foot or by car and the same will apply for SANGs. Thus SANGs may be intended principally for the use of a local population living within a 400 metre catchment around the site; or they may be designed primarily to attract visitors who arrive by car (they may also have both functions).

SANG design needs to take into account the anticipated target group of visitors. For example, where large populations are close to the Dorset Heathlands the provision of SANGs may need to be attractive to visitors on foot.

If intended to attract visitors arriving by car, the availability of adequate car parking is essential. Car parks may be provided specifically for a SANG or a SANG may make use of existing car parks but some existing car parks may have features incompatible with SANG use, such as car park charging. The amount and nature of parking provision should reflect the anticipated numbers and mode of arrival by visitors to the site and the catchment size of the SANGs. It is important that there is easy access between the car park and the SANG i.e. this is not impeded by, for example, a road crossing. Thus such SANGs should have a car park with direct access straight on to the SANG with the ability to take dogs safely from the car park to the SANG off the lead. Similarly, the nature of foot access between urban development and a SANG is important and green corridors reaching into the urban area can be an important part of facilitating access to the SANG. Key points:

- 1. Sites must have adequate parking for visitors, unless the site is intended for local pedestrian use only, i.e. within easy walking distance (400m) of the developments linked to it. The amount of car parking space should be determined by the anticipated numbers using the site and arriving by car*
- 2. Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car, be of an open nature and should be clearly sign posted.*
- 3. There should be easy access between the car park or housing and the SANG with the facility to take dogs safely from the car park to the SANG off the lead.*
- 4. Access points should have signage outlining the layout of the SANGs and the routes available to visitors.*

### **Paths, Tracks and other SANG infrastructure**

SANGs should aim to supply a choice of circular walking routes that provide an attractive alternative to those routes on heathlands in the vicinity (i.e. those heaths that the SANG is designed to attract visitors away from). Given the average length of walks on heathland, a circular walk of 2.3-2.5km in length is necessary unless there are particular reasons why a shorter walk is considered still appropriate. Where possible a range of different length walks should be provided; a proportion of visitors walk up to 5km and beyond so walking routes longer than 2.5 km are valuable, either on-site or through the connection of sites along green corridors.

Paths do not have to be of any particular width, and both vehicular-sized tracks and narrow paths are acceptable to visitors although narrow corridors where visitors/dogs may feel constrained should be avoided. The majority of visitors come alone and safety is one of their primary concerns. Paths should be routed so that they are perceived as safe by the visitors, with some routes being through relatively open (visible) terrain (with no trees or scrub, or well spaced mature trees, or wide rides with vegetation back from the path), especially those routes which are 1-3 km long.

A substantial number of visitors like to have surfaced but not tarmac paths, particularly where these blend in well with the landscape. This is not necessary for all paths but there should be some visitor-friendly, all weather routes built into the structure of a SANGs, particularly those routes which are 1-3 km long. Boardwalks may help with access across wet areas but excessive use of boardwalks, as may be necessary on sites which are mostly wet or waterlogged such as flood plain and grazing marsh, is likely to detract from the site's natural feel.

Other infrastructure specifically designed to make the SANG attractive to dog walkers may also be desirable but must not detract from a site's relatively wild and natural feel. Measures could include accessible water bodies for dogs to swim/drink; dog bins, fencing near roads/car-parks etc to ensure dog safety, clear messages regarding the need to 'pick-up', large areas for dogs to be off lead safely:

5. *Paths must be easily used and well maintained but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel. A majority of paths should be suitable for use in all weathers and all year around. Boardwalks may be required in wet sections.*
6. *All SANGs with car parks must have a circular walk which starts and finishes at the car park.*
7. *It should be possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3-2.5km around the SANGs, and for larger SANGs a variety of circular walks*
8. *SANGs must be designed so that visitors are not deterred by safety concerns.*

### **Advertising - making people aware of the SANG**

The need for some advertising is self evident. Any advertising should make clear that the site is designed to cater specifically for dog walkers:

9. *SANGs should be clearly sign-posted and advertised. .*
10. *SANGs should have leaflets and/or websites advertising their location to potential visitors. It would be desirable for leaflets to be distributed to new homes in the area and be made available at entrance points and car parks.*

### **Landscape and Vegetation**

The open or semi wooded and undulating nature of most of the Dorset Heathland sites gives them an air of relative wildness, even when there are significant numbers of visitors on site. SANGs must aim to reproduce this quality but do not have to contain heathland or heathy vegetation. Surveys in the Thames Basin heath area show that woodland or a semi-wooded landscape is a key feature that people who use the SPA there appreciate. Deciduous woodland is preferred to coniferous woodland.

In these circumstances a natural looking landscape with plenty of variation including both open and wooded areas is ideal for a SANG. There is clearly a balance to be struck between what is regarded as an exciting landscape and a safe one and so some element of choice between the two is desirable.

Hills do not put people off visiting a site, particularly where these are associated with good views, but steep hills are not appreciated. An undulating landscape is preferred to a flat one. Water features, particularly ponds and lakes, act as a focus for visitors for their visit, but are not essential. The long term management of the SANG habitats should be considered at an early stage. Particularly for larger SANGs, and those with grasslands, grazing management is likely to be necessary.

A number of factors can detract from the essential natural looking landscape and SANGs that have an urban feel, for example where they are thin and narrow with long boundaries with urban development or roads, are unlikely to be effective:

11. *SANGs must be perceived as natural spaces without intrusive artificial structures, except in the immediate vicinity of car parks. Visually-sensitive way-markers and some benches are acceptable.*
12. *SANGs must aim to provide a variety of habitats for visitors to experience (e.g. some of : woodland, scrub, grassland, heathland, wetland, open water).*
13. *Access within the SANGs must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead.*
14. *SANGs must be free from unpleasant visual, auditory or olfactory intrusions (e.g. derelict buildings, intrusive adjoining buildings, dumped materials, loud intermittent or continuous noise from traffic, industry, sports grounds, sewage treatment works, waste disposal facilities).*

## **REFERENCES**

LILEY, D., SHARP, J. & CLARKE, R. T. (2008). Access Patterns in South-east Dorset. Dorset Household Survey and Predictions of Visitor Use of Potential Greenspace Sites. Dorset Heathlands Development Plan Document. Unpublished report, Footprint Ecology.

CLARKE, R.T., LILEY, D., UNDERHILL-DAY, J.C., & ROSE, R.J. (2005). Visitor access patterns on the Dorset Heaths. *English Nature Research Report*.

LILEY, D., JACKSON, D., & UNDERHILL-DAY, J. C. (2006) Visitor access patterns on the Thames Basin Heaths. *English Nature Research Report*.

LILEY, D., MALLORD, J., & LOBLEY, M. (2006) The "Quality" of Green Space: features that attract people to open spaces in the Thames Basin Heaths area. *English Nature Research Report*.

## Site quality checklist

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Future</b>
1	Parking on all sites unless the site is intended for use within 400m only		
2	Car parks easily and safely accessible by car, open in nature and sign posted		
3	Easy access between development or car park and SANG; able to safely let dog out of car into SANG		
4	Access points with signage outlining the layout of the SANGS and routes available to visitors		
5	Paths easily used and well maintained but mostly unsurfaced		
6	Circular walk start and end at car park		
7	Circular walk of between 2.3 - 2.5 km		
8	SANG design so that they feel safe for visitors		
9	Clearly sign posted or advertised in some way		
10	Leaflets or website advertising their location to potential users		
11	Perceived as semi natural space, without too much urban intrusion		
12	Contains a variety of different habitats		
13	Access unrestricted – plenty of space for dogs to exercise freely and safely off the lead		
14	Site is free from unpleasant intrusions		

## **Appendix F**

### **Gypsies and Travellers**

Natural England has provided advice to the local authorities through the draft Dorset wide Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document Issues and Options consultation which closed in February 2012 on developments of this type.

It is the view of Natural England that there is no evidence to demonstrate that the occupants of permanent or transit sites for gypsies and travellers would be likely to have any level of recreational access need which is substantially different to residents in Use Class C3 dwellings. Therefore it is the view of Natural England that effects from development proposals of this type would act in combination with effects from Use Class C3 residential development and in these circumstances:

- i. Applications within 400m of European/internationally protected heathland should be treated in the same way as applications for Use Class C3 development; and
- ii. Applications in the 400m to 5km area should provide a level of avoidance/mitigation proportionate to the likely adverse effects arising.



## Appendix G

### Self catering, touring and holiday accommodation applications

#### Within 400m

Natural England advice for self catering and touring proposals in close proximity to European/international heathlands is as follows:

- i. 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.

#### Outside 400m

Whilst individual applicants may seek to reduce impacts eg by restricting pets Natural England consider that there is considerable uncertainty about whether, over time, such agreements would be effective. In the light of the appeal decisions and a number of applications considered by competent authorities in south east Dorset Natural England has considered how best to enable applicants to provide mitigation:

- i. In the case of very large scale applications the provision of bespoke mitigation such as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace can be considered as part of a package of avoidance and mitigation measures on a case by case basis
- ii. where applications are for small numbers of additional units Natural England advise that the authorities may use the contribution policy offered by the SPD.

Authorities will need to take a proportionate approach and may seek to reduce the contribution level to account for the lower rate of occupancy of self catering or touring units. The local authorities are advised to bear in mind that neither the degree of harm or the level of occupancy may be constant through the year. Occupancy rates have been calculated as a 3-4 year average from the monthly occupancy rates available in the tables on page 3 of the report, Regional Occupancy Data Self Catering and Touring, Q1-3 Data 2010, Research Team, South West Tourism ([www.swtourismalliance.org.uk/research-facts-and-figures/regional-tourism-data/](http://www.swtourismalliance.org.uk/research-facts-and-figures/regional-tourism-data/)).

As further data becomes available Natural England advise the authorities that the rate may change accordingly. The calculations are shown over the page below:

South West Self-Catering Unit % Occupancy 2010															
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec			
2007	20	33	39	45	57	66	79	90	66	43	27	31			
2008	16	28	35	43	55	61	80	88	75	54	24	36			
2009	18	32	33	60	62	67	77	87	70	46	18	28			
2010	13	26	31	49	53	60	66	87	69	0	0	0	Total occupancy for year	Divided by 1200	SPD rate
Mean	16.75	29.75	34.5	49.25	56.75	63.5	75.5	88	70	35.75	17.25	23.75	560.75	0.467	47%

South West Touring Pitch % Occupancy 2010															
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec			
2007	0	0	0	27	37	42	60	81	41	23	11	11			
2008	2	5	19	21	43	40	54	72	47	16	3	5			
2009	8	12	9	30	51	53	62	86	43	29	13	19			
2010	14	23	23	28	35	55	52	83	32	0	0	0	Total occupancy for year	Divided by 1200	SPD rate
Mean	6	10	12.75	26.5	41.5	47.5	57	80.5	40.75	17	6.75	8.75	355	0.296	29.60%

N.B. Data is not available for the last three months of 2010.

#### Relevant Appeal and other cases:

Appeal decision, Harkwood Acres, Three Legged Cross, Wimborne, BH21 6RP. APP/U1240/C/04/1145349 (11 January 2005).

Appeal decision Naughty Boy Studio, Cripplestyle, Fordingbridge SP6 3DU. APP/U1240/A/11/2156465. 14 December 2011. Conversion of an artist's studio/gallery into two units of holiday accommodation.

Appeal decision Tanglewood Holiday Park, Organford Road, Holton Heath Poole BH16 6JY. APP/B1225/A/10/2134180, (9 Nov 2010).

Application for a 5 caravan certificate; land adjacent to 4 Heath Cottages, Sandford, Wareham, Dorset.

## Appendix H

### Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and student accommodation

Natural England advice to the local authorities is that for HMOs and student accommodation is likely to give rise to significant adverse effects on European/internationally protected heathlands arising from increased levels of residential occupancy and consequent access onto the heaths. Recent guidance from Communities and Local Government (Notes and definitions for the Housing Flows Reconciliation (HFR) form) confirms the view that “*purpose built separate homes for students should be included. Each self-contained unit should be counted as a dwelling.*” Natural England is not aware of any evidence which demonstrates that these residents, students or otherwise, would not be expected to access nearby open space including heathland in any significantly different manner to residents in C3 dwellings.

In these circumstances proposals for these types of dwellings need to provide avoidance/mitigation where applications fall within the 400m to 5km area. The local authorities should apply a suitable tariff rate to secure an appropriate level of mitigation under the SPD and this would normally be that that is applied to Use Class C3 dwellings. As set out in the framework this should be on the basis of a net change in units allowing existing dwellings to be discounted.

Natural England has advised potential applicants that proposals for the conversion of residential dwellings to independently managed student accommodation within 400m of European/internationally protected heathlands may increase pressure on these heathlands if this leads to an increase in the number of units.

Effects from managed student halls of residence on University campus are likely to be different from those of C3 residential development to the extent that there may not be significant effects on protected heathlands.

There may be an increased risk which is associated with private sector managed units, arising due to changes in the type of occupants within the Use Class C4 compared to facilities on a campus. The self contained facilities available on campus and the close management of student halls may therefore provide a degree of certainty that the risk of adverse effects is low.

Where applications are in or very close to the 400m Consultation Area Natural England would anticipate formal consultation and may in some cases advise on the need for an Appropriate Assessment.