

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Screening report

Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan

April 2019

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report for the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan.

The main purpose of this HRA screening exercise is to assess whether the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant negative effect on a European Site¹, which are designated areas of exceptional ecological importance, and hence whether the subsequent steps of the HRA process (including Appropriate Assessment) are required. If it is concluded that there would be no likely significant effect on a European Site, then further assessment is deemed unnecessary. However, if it is found that project would have a likely significant effect on a European Site then further assessment is required through the subsequent stages of the HRA process.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND TO HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

EU Directive (92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ('the Habitats Directive') led to the establishment of a network of 'European sites', collectively known as Natura 2000, which are areas of exceptional importance with respect to rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats or species. European Sites consist of the following ecological designations:

- Special Protection Areas (SPAs): Classified under the EU Directive (79/409/EEC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('the Birds Directive'), with the objective of protecting and managing areas which are important for rare and vulnerable birds as they are important grounds for breeding, feeding, wintering or migration; and
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs): Classified under the Habitats Directive, these areas provide rare and vulnerable animals, plants and habitats with increased protection and management.

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 176) states that the following sites should be afforded the same protection as European Sites:

- Potential Special Protection Areas (pSPA): Potential Special Protection Areas, are sites on which the Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a Special Protection Area;

¹ For the purposes of this report, a 'European Site' includes Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar Sites, (including possible, potential and proposed sites)

- Possible Special Areas of Conservation (pSAC): Possible Special Areas of Conservation are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a candidate Special Area of Conservation;
- Ramsar sites (and proposed Ramsar sites): Wetlands of international importance designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention, and proposed Ramsar sites are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for a Ramsar site; and
- Sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites and Ramsar sites: Sites which are included as compensation in schemes to mitigate adverse impacts upon European and Ramsar sites.

The requirement to undertake an assessment of plans or projects that are likely to have an effect upon European sites is given in Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

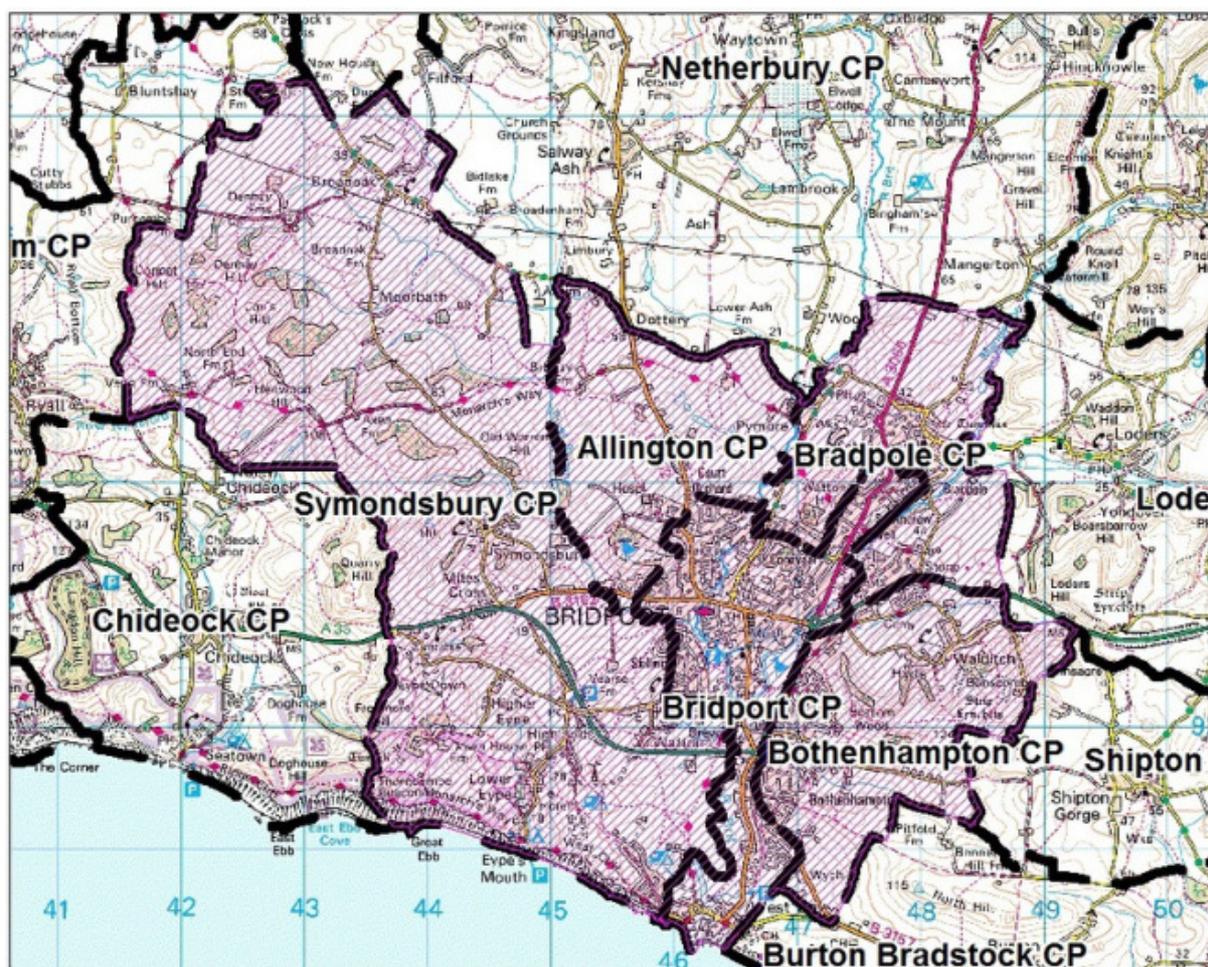
The Habitats Directive is transposed into UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('the Habitats Regulations'). Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations implements Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive by requiring the competent authority to complete an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives before deciding to undertake a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

2. THE BRIDPORT AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan² aims to help the community develop Bridport and its surrounding parishes as a place that people want to live in, where there is economic and educational opportunity and the community is inclusive, dynamic and successful.

The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan covers the civil parishes of Symondsburys, Allington, Bradpole, Bridport and Bothenhampton & Walditch (Figure 2.1), occupying an area of 2,870ha and a population of approximately 14,627³ and 6,935 households.

Figure 2.1: The extent of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (shown in the pink hatching)



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The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan, which runs until 2036, aims to achieve the following 18 objectives:

- To ensure that the anticipated level of carbon emissions from development is made public.

² At the time of writing, the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed here: <https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/BANP-Regulation-15.pdf>

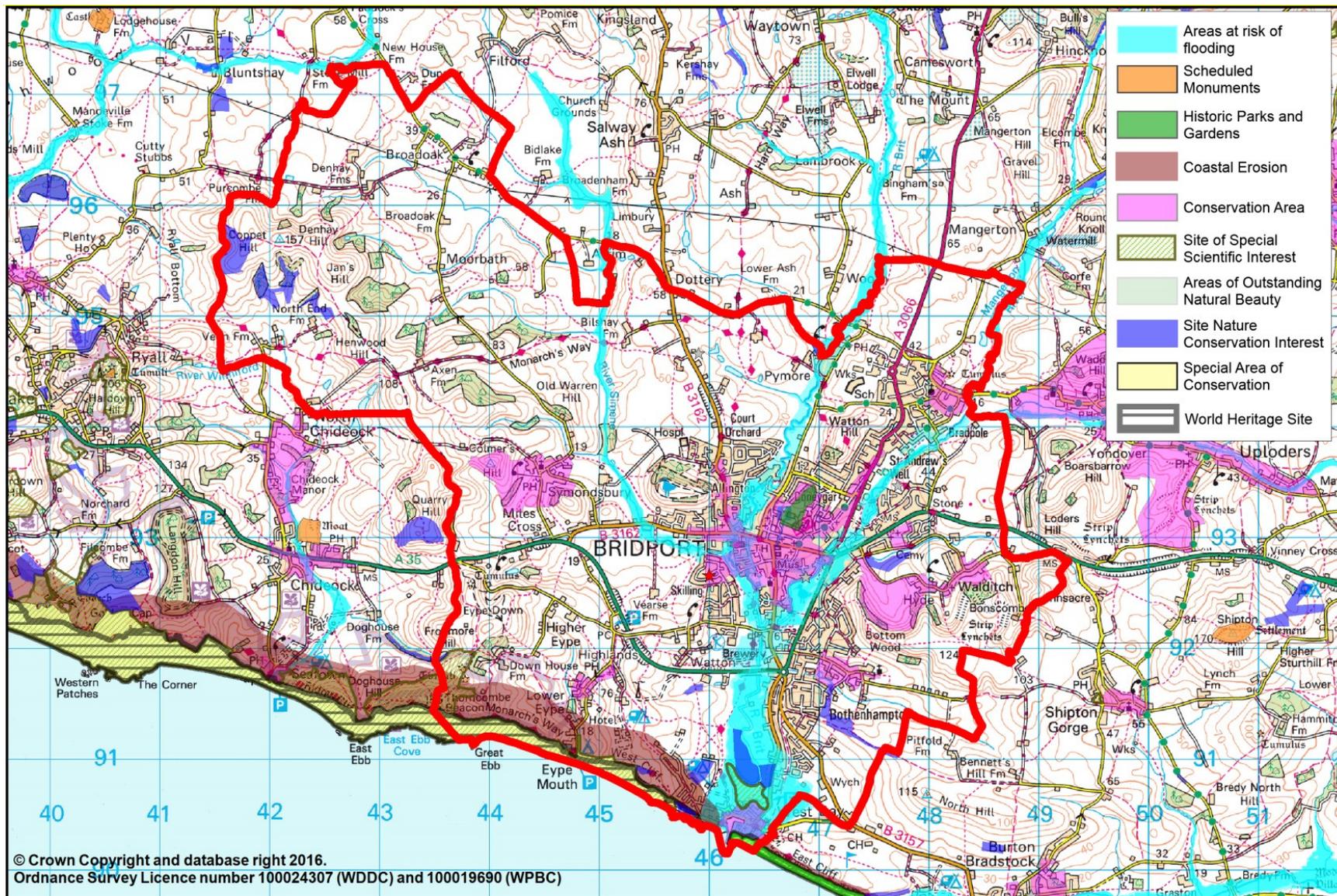
³ According to the 2014 mid-year estimates released by the Office for National Statistics

- To enable the community in the Plan area to make informed comment and decisions about proposed development, taking into account the anticipated carbon footprint.
- To maintain, protect and enhance the unique nature of the area, its heritage, important features, character, and its environmental assets.
- To enhance and protect the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation, the Conservation Areas, and the Jurassic Coast UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- To maximize the provision of housing that is genuinely affordable for those in need and of the right mix of house types and tenure.
- To support socially balanced communities through measures that encourage younger people to live here, enable older people to downsize, and cater for a broad spectrum of financial means.
- To ensure that the design of housing developments and the homes within them are responsive to local context and conditions, are energy efficient, adaptable to different residents' abilities, and accessible to public services.
- To protect the excellent community facilities that exist today, including education, health, cultural, sport and leisure facilities.
- To increase the range and availability of community facilities, sports, and leisure provisions where these bring benefits to the community.
- To expand the local economy, improve opportunities to start up new businesses and to grow existing businesses.
- To ensure that the local economy is robust and diverse with emphasis on creating skilled, well paid jobs.
- To encourage tourism which uses local services, facilities, and locally produced goods, creating an accessible and attractive destination for visitors and local people.
- To make it easier to walk, cycle and use public transport, with the aims of shifting to less polluting forms of transport and improving safety and well-being.
- To safeguard and improve pedestrian movements in the neighbourhood area.
- To safeguard and revitalise use of the bus station as a transport hub.
- To maintain, protect and enhance the thriving, independent nature of the centre of Bridport, its businesses, and its attractions.
- In the short to medium term, to protect car parking capacity in the Centre of Bridport and explore options for temporary peak time/overflow car parking on the Bridport town edge.
- Over the medium to longer term, move towards a town centre less dependent on private vehicle movements.

The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development, and contains a dedicated policy on biodiversity (policy L2). This policy requires development proposals to demonstrate how net gain will be achieved, prevents development which causes significant harm to biodiversity, and protects wildlife corridors and priority habitats.

The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area and surrounding areas include a number of environmental designations, indicating the importance and sensitivity of the plan area from an environmental perspective (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Environmental designations within the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area

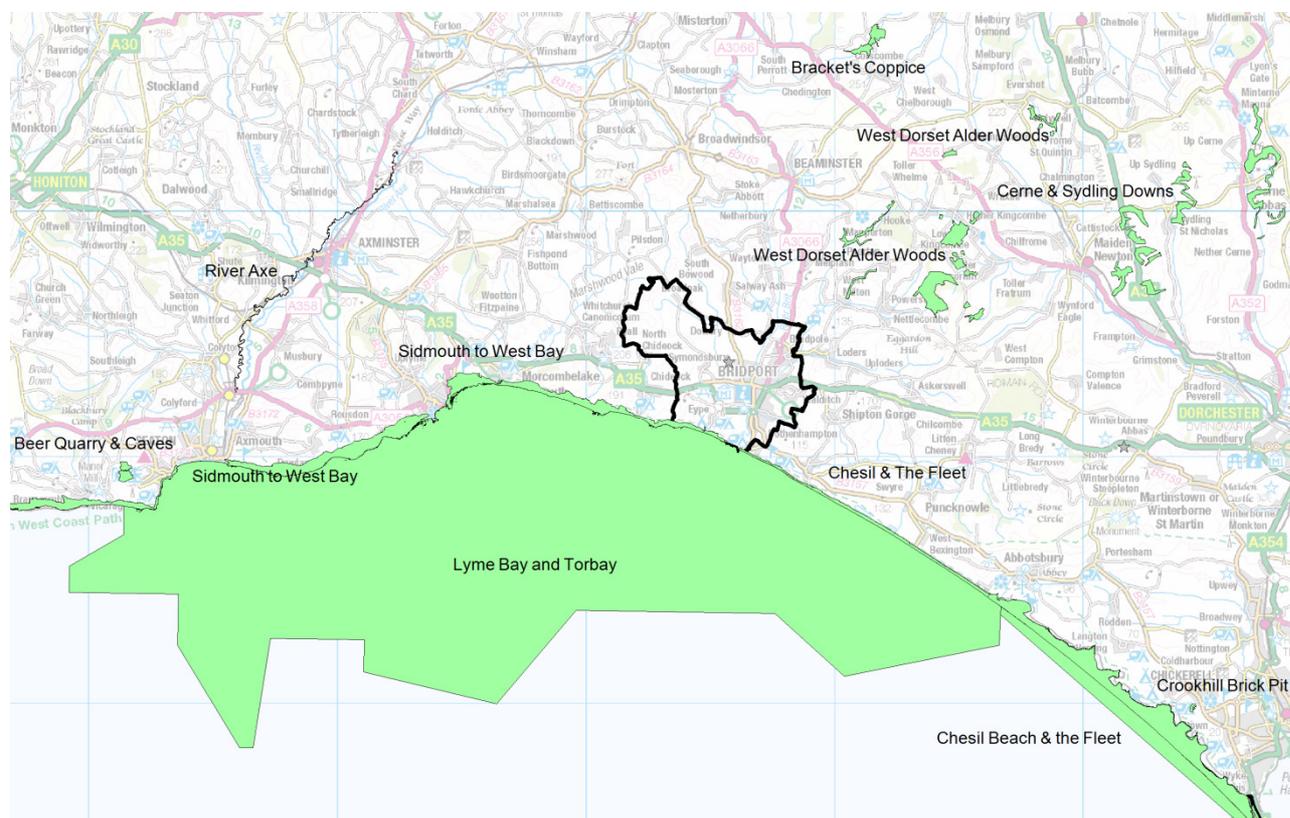


3. HRA SCREENING

The first stage of the HRA process is the screening stage, the purpose of which is to determine whether the plan is likely to result in a significant effect upon a European Site.

In order to determine this, there is a requirement to identify those European Sites which may be affected by the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan. Those European Sites within approximately 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area were considered to be relevant for the purposes of this HRA (Figure 3.1 and 3.2).

Figure 3.1: European sites within 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (European Sites shown in Green, Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area shown in black outline).



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Figure 3.2: European sites within 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan

European site	Designation	Approx. distance from plan area
Sidmouth to West Bay	SAC	On the southern boundary of the NP area
Chesil and the Fleet	SAC	On the southern boundary of the NP area

Lyme Bay and Torbay	pSAC	Adjacent to the southern boundary of the NP area
West Alder Woods	SAC	2.2km to the northeast
Chesil Beach and the Fleet	SPA and Ramsar	10.7km to the southeast
River Axe	SAC	10.8km to the west
Brackets Coppice	SAC	11km to the north
Cerne and Sydling Downs	SAC	12.2km to the east
Crookhill Brick Pit	SAC	20.4km to the east
Beer Quarry and Caves	SAC	20.2km to the west

The following stage of the HRA was to consider which of the European sites within 20km of the neighbourhood plan area were linked to the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan through a known 'pathway', defined as the method by which a change due to the neighbourhood plan may lead to an effect on a European Site.

In order to determine this, an initial HRA screening was carried out which took into account the characteristics of the European Sites (Figure 3.3) and the scope of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (Chapter 2). Where a possible pathway was not identified during this initial screening exercise, it was concluded that the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan would not result in a likely significant effect upon that particular European Site and the European Site was discounted from further consideration. Where a possible pathway was identified, the European Site was taken forward for further consideration.

Figure 3.3: The characteristics of the European site, including qualifying features, conservation objectives and threats

Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Threats
Sidmouth to West Bay SAC		
<p>The site is designated under Article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts 2. Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines; Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes* 3. Annual vegetation of drift lines (AVDL) 	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely <p>With regards AVDL, maintain in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beta vulgaris maritima</i> (sea beet) - <i>Atriplex</i> (orache) communities; • <i>Honkenya peploides</i> (sea sandwort) – <i>Cakile maritima</i> (sea rocket) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive non-native species • Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources) • Other human intrusions and disturbances • Interspecific floral relations • Other urbanisation, industrial and similar activities
Lyme Bay and Torbay Inshore SAC		
<p>The site is designated under Article 4 (4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats in Annex 1 (JNCC, 2015):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reefs 2. Submerged or partially submerged sea caves 	<p>Subject to natural change, the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of the qualifying species • the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats • the structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely • the populations of qualifying species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing and harvesting aquatic Resources.

Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the distribution of qualifying species within the site 	
Beer Quarry and Caves SAC		
<p>The site is designated under Article 4 (4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex 2 (English Nature, 2005):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> 2. Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i> 3. Lesser horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> <p>In addition to the qualifying features noted above, the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (JNCC, 2015) notes the following habitat as present on the site and provides an assessment for it:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (*important orchid sites) 	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely The populations of qualifying species, and, The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other human intrusions and disturbances Other urbanisation, industrial and similar activities Biocenotic evolution, succession Other ecosystem modifications
Chesil and Fleet SAC		
<p>The site is designated under Article 4 (4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats in Annex 1:(English Nature, 2005):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coastal lagoon* 2. AVDL 3. Perennial vegetation of stony banks 4. Mediterranean and thermos-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticoia</i>) 5. Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) <p>In addition to the qualifying features noted above, the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (JNCC, 2015) notes the following habitats as present on the site and provides an assessment for them:</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing and harvesting aquatic resource Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities Invasive non-native species Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources) Changes in biotic conditions

Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time 2. Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 3. Vegetated sea cliffs of Atlantic and Baltic Coasts Salicornia and other colonising mud and sand 		
Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC		
<p><u>Annex I habitat:</u> Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates <i>Festuco-Brometalia</i> (* important orchid sites)</p> <p><u>Annex II species:</u> Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely; • The populations of qualifying species; and • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat fragmentation • Overgrazing • Undergrazing • Inappropriate weed control • Fertiliser use • Direct impact from 3rd party (unintentional agricultural runoff) • Inappropriate scrub control • Atmospheric pollution from atmospheric nitrogen deposition.
West Alder Woods SAC		
<p><u>Annex I habitats:</u> Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> Alno-Padion, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>; <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>); and Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains.</p> <p><u>Annex II species:</u> Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas</i> (<i>Eurodryas</i>, <i>Hypodryas</i>) <i>aurinia</i>; and Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grazing • Forest and Plantation management & use • Invasive non-native species • Problematic native species • Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources)

Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely; The populations of qualifying species; and The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	
River Axe SAC		
<p><u>Annex I habitat:</u> Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation</p> <p><u>Annex II:</u> Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>; Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i>; and Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely; The populations of qualifying species; and The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources) Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions Invasive non-native species
Brackets Coppice SAC		
<p><u>Annex I Habitat:</u> Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</p> <p><u>Annex II species:</u> Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grazing Air pollution, air-borne pollutants Problematic native species

Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Threats
	and the habitats of qualifying species rely; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The populations of qualifying species; and • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	
Crookhill Brick Pit SAC		
<i>Annex II: Great crested newt Triturus cristatus</i>	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely; • The populations of qualifying species; and • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biocenotic evolution, succession
Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA and Ramsar		
<p>The site is designated under Article 4.1 of Directive 2009/147/EC as it hosts the following species listed in Annex 2 of Directive 92/43/EEC (SPA Citation, 1996):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little terns <i>Sterna albifrons</i> (breeding) 2. Common terns <i>Sterna hirundo</i> 3. Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> 4. Wigeon <i>Anas Penelope</i> (overwinter) 5. Pochard <i>Aythya farina</i> (overwinter) 6. Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> (overwinter) 7. Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> (overwinter) 8. Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> (overwinter) 	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features; • The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features; • The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely; • The population of each of the qualifying features; and • The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities • Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources • Invasive non-native species • Changes in biotic conditions • Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources)

Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Threats
<p>9. Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> (overwinter)</p> <p>10. Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i> (overwinter)</p> <p>11. Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> (overwinter)</p> <p>12. Mute swan <i>Cygnua olor</i> (overwinter)</p> <p>13. Brent geese <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> (overwinter)</p> <p>The information sheet on the Ramsar Wetland lists the following criterion as justification of the designation:</p> <p><i>Ramsar criterion 1</i>- The Fleet is an outstanding example of rare lagoon habitat and is the largest of its kind in the UK. In Europe lagoons are classified as a priority habitat by the EC Habitats and Species Directive. The site also supports rare saltmarsh habitats.</p> <p><i>Ramsar criterion 2</i>- The Fleet supports 15 specialist lagoonal species and five nationally scarce wetland plants as well as ten nationally scarce wetland animals. Chesil Bank is one of the most important UK sites for shingle habitats and species.</p> <p><i>Ramsar criterion 3</i> - The site is the largest barrier-built saline lagoon in the UK and has the greatest diversity of habitats and of biota.</p> <p><i>Ramsar criterion 4</i> - The site is important for a number of species at a critical stage in their life cycle including post-larval and juvenile bass <i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i>.</p> <p><i>Ramsar criterion 6</i> - Dark-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla</i> species/populations occurring at levels of international importance. Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i></p> <p><i>Ramsar criterion 8</i> - The site is important as a nursery for bass <i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i>.</p>		

The following European Sites were discounted during the initial screening exercise due to the absence of a pathway for an effect to occur:

- West Alder Woods SAC
- Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA and Ramsar
- River Axe SAC
- Brackets Coppice SAC
- Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC
- Crookhill Brick Pit SAC
- Beer Quarry and Caves SAC

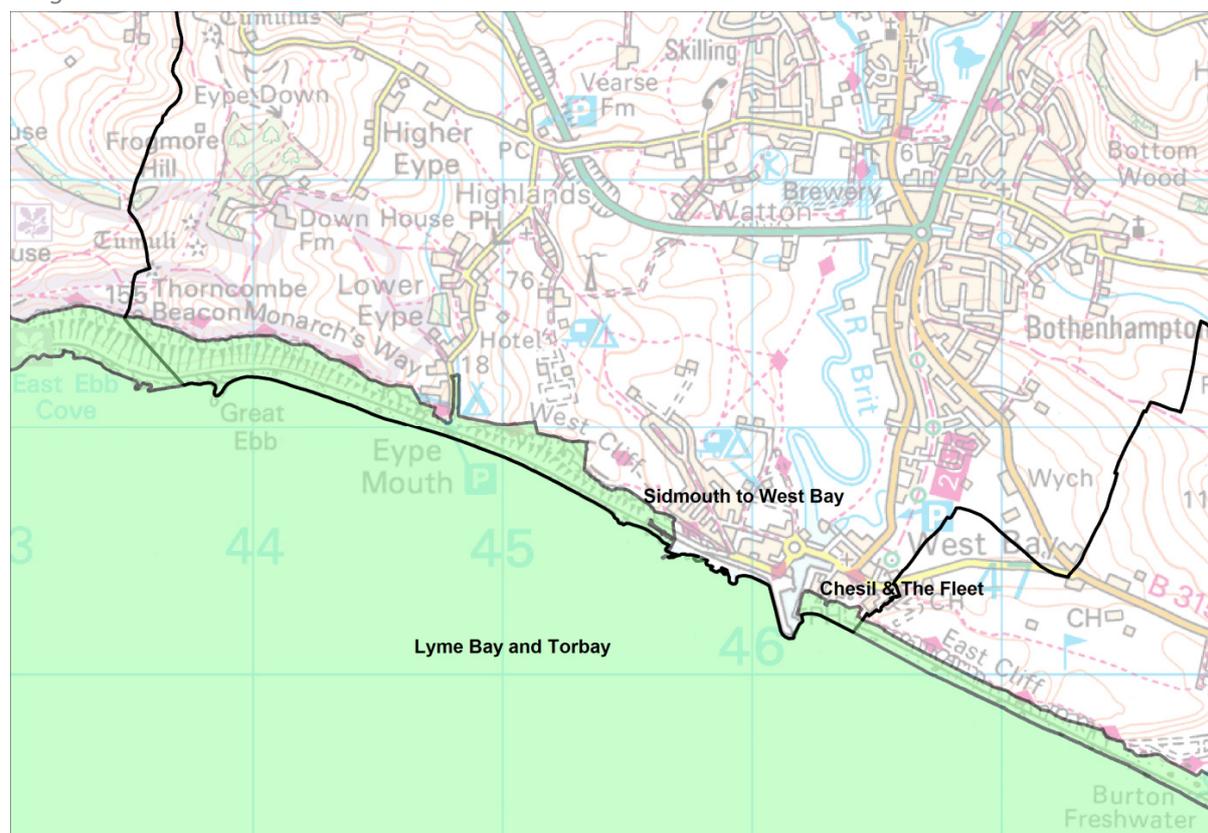
These sites were largely discounted as a result of the distance of the European Site from the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area and since the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan will not allocate further land for development.

However, the potential linkages between the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan and the following European sites could not be discounted at this stage:

- Sidmouth to West Bay SAC
- Chesil and the Fleet SAC
- Lyme Bay and Torbay pSAC

This is largely due to the Sidmouth to West Bay SAC and Chesil and the Fleet SAC occupying an area on the southern site boundary and the Lyme Bay and Torbay pSAC being situated immediately beyond the southern site boundary (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: The location of European sites on the Southern boundary of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area



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Following the initial screening (Figures 3.1 and 3.2), a more detailed assessment of the likely significant effects which may result upon the Sidmouth to West Bay SAC, Chesil and the Fleet SAC, and Lyme Bay and Torbay pSAC was undertaken (see Figure 3.3).

SIDMOUTH TO WEST BAY SAC

The Sidmouth to West Bay SAC occupies the southern section of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area (Figure 3.5).

The primary reasons for designation of the site are the following habitats:

- Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; and
- Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines; Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes; and

However, the Tilio-Acerion forests and mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slope habitat is associated with an area of active landslipping between Axmouth and Lyme Regis.

The vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts is characterised by highly unstable soft cliff coastline subject to mudslides and landslips. The principal rock types are soft mudstones, clays and silty limestones. The cliffs on the eastern end of the designation, which lies within the Bridport Area

Neighbourhood Plan area, has no chalk capping and is therefore subject to even more frequent mudslides in the waterlogged soft limestones and clays. The vegetation includes pioneer communities on recent slips, calcareous grassland and scrub on detached chalk blocks and extensive self-sown woodland dominated by ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) or sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

In addition to the primary reasons for designation, the site is also designated on the basis of the annual vegetation of drift lines.

According to the information provided by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the annual vegetation of drift lines habitat typically occur on deposits of shingle lying at or above mean high-water spring tides. The types of deposits involved are generally at the lower end of the size range of shingle (2-200mm diameter). These shingle deposits occur as fringing beaches that are subject to periodic displacement or overtopping by high tides and storms, meaning that it may form only sparse cover and be ephemeral and composed of annual or short-lived perennial species⁴.

The threats to the Sidmouth to West Bay SAC which may be considered the most relevant to a development plan, such as the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan, include the following:

- Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources);
- Other human intrusions and disturbances; and
- Other urbanisation, industrial and similar activities

Since the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing any additional residential or industrial development and provides protection against the impacts of development upon areas of wildlife importance in policy L2 in addition to the protection afforded by policy ENV2 of the overarching adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan, it is considered unlikely to result in urbanisation, contribute to pollution, or cause additional human intrusion or disturbance. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that the plan will result in likely significant effect or compromise the integrity of this coastal habitat.

LYME BAY AND TORBAY INSHORE SAC

The Lyme Bay and Torbay Inshore SAC is a marine wildlife designation, located below the low water tide line immediately beyond the southern boundary of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area (Figure 3.5).

The Lyme Bay and Torbay Inshore SAC is considered a marine biodiversity hot spot, and is designated as it hosts the following habitats:

- Reefs; and
- submerged or partially submerged sea caves.

The reef habitat is considered particularly high in species richness. The reefs extend over a large area, occurring as outcropping bedrock slightly offshore with softer sediment habitats commonly found between the bedrock or boulder areas. The sea caves typically occur within the infralittoral

⁴ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/habitat.asp?FeatureIntCode=H1210>

zone, which is defined as the zone immediately below the littoral intertidal zone and to a depth of 200m.

The main threat to the Lyme Bay and Torbay Inshore SAC is fishing and harvesting aquatic resources. The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to significantly affect fishing practices in the area. Furthermore, the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any offshore works or development close to the sea, and the reefs and sea caves exist beyond the low water tide line. The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is therefore considered unlikely to directly result in adverse impacts upon the offshore reef habitat.

In terms of the potential in-combination effects, recent planning approval has been given for the West Bay Coastal Improvement Scheme. The scheme involves the import of materials via barge for beach recharge purposes, a new stub groyne and maintenance to the existing groyne, and works at Parkdean Caravan Park. The beach recharge element of the scheme may result in fine material entering suspension in the water column and being deposited onto the reef or from shingle naturally being transported onto the reef, causing sedimentation and the smothering of the reefs. The works at the Parkdean Caravan Park may also cause increased turbidity in the water column and sedimentation of the downstream benthic habitats, such as the reefs. Also, the barges used to import the recharge material to the site will require anchorage offsite, potentially causing physical damage to the reef through abrasion and damaging the sensitive reef habitat. In addition, the construction of the new groyne and the maintenance of the existing groyne will result in the placement of rock on the seabed, potentially resulting in the loss of the reef habitat and damage to the seabed. Since the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan will not result in any additional development, it is considered unlikely to result in adverse impacts upon the offshore reef habitat in combination with other projects.

CHESIL AND THE FLEET SAC

The western section of the Chesil and the Fleet SAC occupies a small area on the southeast corner of the neighbourhood plan area (Figure 3.5).

The Chesil and the Fleet SAC is characterised by a 29km long shingle bar, the very western end of which occupies the southeast corner of the neighbourhood plan area, and a coastal lagoon called the Fleet.

The primary reasons for the designation of the Chesil and the Fleet SAC are the following habitats:

- Coastal lagoon;
- Annual vegetation of drift lines;
- Perennial vegetation of stony banks; and
- Mediterranean and thermos-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (*Sarcocornetea fruticoida*).

The Fleet coastal lagoon lies 12km to the east of the neighbourhood plan area. The Mediterranean and thermos-Atlantic halophilous scrubs habitat is largely associated with this lagoon habitat, since it is found predominantly on the seaward margin of the Fleet.

The section of the Chesil and the Fleet SAC which occupies the western end of the neighbourhood plan area is characterised by the annual vegetation of drift lines and perennial vegetation of stony banks habitats.

Chesil Beach represents an extensive area of 'perennial vegetation of stony banks', with most of it is relatively undisturbed by human activities. Chesil Beach supports the most extensive occurrences of the rare sea-kale (*Crambe maritima*) and sea pea (*Lathyrus japonicas*) in the UK, together with other grassland and lichen-rich shingle plant communities typical of more stable conditions.

In addition, Chesil beach is also one of two representatives of Annual vegetation of drift lines on the south coast of England. The inner shore of the beach supports extensive drift-line vegetation dominated by sea beet (*Beta vulgaris maritima*) and orache (*Atriplex*).

The threats to the Chesil and the Fleet SAC which may be considered the most relevant to a development plan, such as the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan, include the following:

- Fishing and harvesting aquatic resource;
- Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities; and
- Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources).

Since the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing any additional residential or industrial development, it is considered unlikely to contribute to pollution, increase leisure and recreational activities, or influence fishing practices. Furthermore, policy L2 of the Neighbourhood plan and policy ENV2 of the overarching adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan will provide protection against impacts upon the European Sites. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that the plan will result in likely significant effect upon this coastal habitat.

4. CONCLUSION

The initial HRA screening exercise concluded that there was the potential for likely significant effects upon the Sidmouth to West Bay SAC and Chesil and the Fleet SAC which occupy the southern section of the neighbourhood plan area, and the Lyme Bay and Torbay Inshore SAC which occupies the marine areas beyond the southern boundary of the neighbourhood plan area.

However, upon further investigation, it was determined that there were no potential pathways between the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area and these European Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. This is largely due to the neighbourhood plan not bringing forward any development or contain policies which are likely to threaten the integrity of these European Sites and the protection provided by policy L2 of the neighbourhood plan on biodiversity and policy ENV2 of the overarching adopted West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan on Wildlife and Habitats.

Therefore, it was concluded that in the absence of such pathways, the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect upon a European Site or adversely affect the integrity of a European Site. An Appropriate Assessment of the Bridport Neighbourhood Plan is therefore not considered necessary.