

Bourton Neighbourhood Plan  
Strategic Environmental Assessment  
Screening Report

and

Habitats Regulations Assessment  
Screening Report

February 2014

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment  
Screening Report for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan

## Contents

1.	Non-technical Summary .....	3
2.	Introduction .....	4
	Strategic Environmental Assessment .....	4
	Habitats Regulations Assessment.....	7
3.	Bourton Neighbourhood Plan.....	9
4.	SEA Screening Assessment.....	10
5.	HRA Screening Assessment.....	13
6.	Conclusions .....	24
	Strategic Environmental Assessment .....	24
	Habitats Regulations Assessment.....	24
	Appendix 1 – Environmental Constraints .....	25
	Appendix 2 – Internationally Designated Sites.....	27
	Appendix 3 – Consultation Responses.....	28
	Response from English Heritage.....	28
	Response from the Environment Agency .....	29
	Response from Natural England.....	32

# 1. Non-technical Summary

- 1.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required under European legislation for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. This particularly relates to plans which designate sites for development such as the District Council's Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans produced by parish councils.
- 1.2 The purpose of SEA is to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate considerations of the environment into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.
- 1.3 The SEA process sets out criteria for assessing the significance of the impact of a plan on the environment. For example, if a plan proposes a housing development it may have an impact on the wildlife of the area or have an impact on landscape. If a significant effect is possible, the assessment requires the consideration of options and for the evaluation of the potential effects on the environment.
- 1.4 To ascertain if SEA is required, a "screening" exercise is undertaken which looks at the proposals in a Neighbourhood Plan to see if a significant effect is likely. The criteria for doing this are set out in the relevant legislation.
- 1.5 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a process which looks at the potential impact of proposals within a plan on internationally designated wildlife sites. For the purpose of the HRA, internationally designated wildlife sites are Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar wetland sites.
- 1.6 The initial stage of the HRA process involves consideration of the reasons for designation and the conservation objectives of each internationally designated wildlife site within a reasonable distance of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and the potential impact of the proposals within the plan on these.
- 1.7 This report details the assessment of the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan against the need for an SEA or HRA to be produced to accompany the Plan. It concludes that an SEA is likely to be required to accompany the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan but that it would not need to be subject to HRA.
- 1.8 This report has been sent to the three statutory consultees of the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England to elicit their views on its contents. The results of this consultation are included in Appendix 3 and a formal screening opinion has been issued to Bourton Parish Council indicating the outcomes of the screening stage including responses to this consultation.
- 1.9 The result of this screening is that an Environmental Report covering the requirements of the SEA Directive is required to accompany the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan. A Habitats Regulations Assessment is however not required

## 2. Introduction

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.1 This screening report seeks to determine whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with European<sup>1</sup> and National<sup>2</sup> legislation.
- 2.2 The SEA Directive aims to secure a high level of protection for the environment and to integrate environmental considerations into the preparation of plans. The Directive seeks to promote sustainable development by ensuring that a SEA is undertaken which may have a significant effect on the environment.
- 2.3 To establish if a plan needs to be accompanied by a full SEA, a “screening” assessment is required against a series of criteria set out in the SEA Directive. Figure 2.1<sup>3</sup> sets out the screening process and how a plan would be assessed against the SEA Directive criteria. A generic assessment of Neighbourhood Plans has been undertaken with the results of this assessment being set out in Figure 2.2 of this report.

---

<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC – known as the SEA Directive

<sup>2</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 – the Regulations

<sup>3</sup> Reproduced from “A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” published September 2005

Figure 2.1 Application of criteria of the SEA Directive to Plans

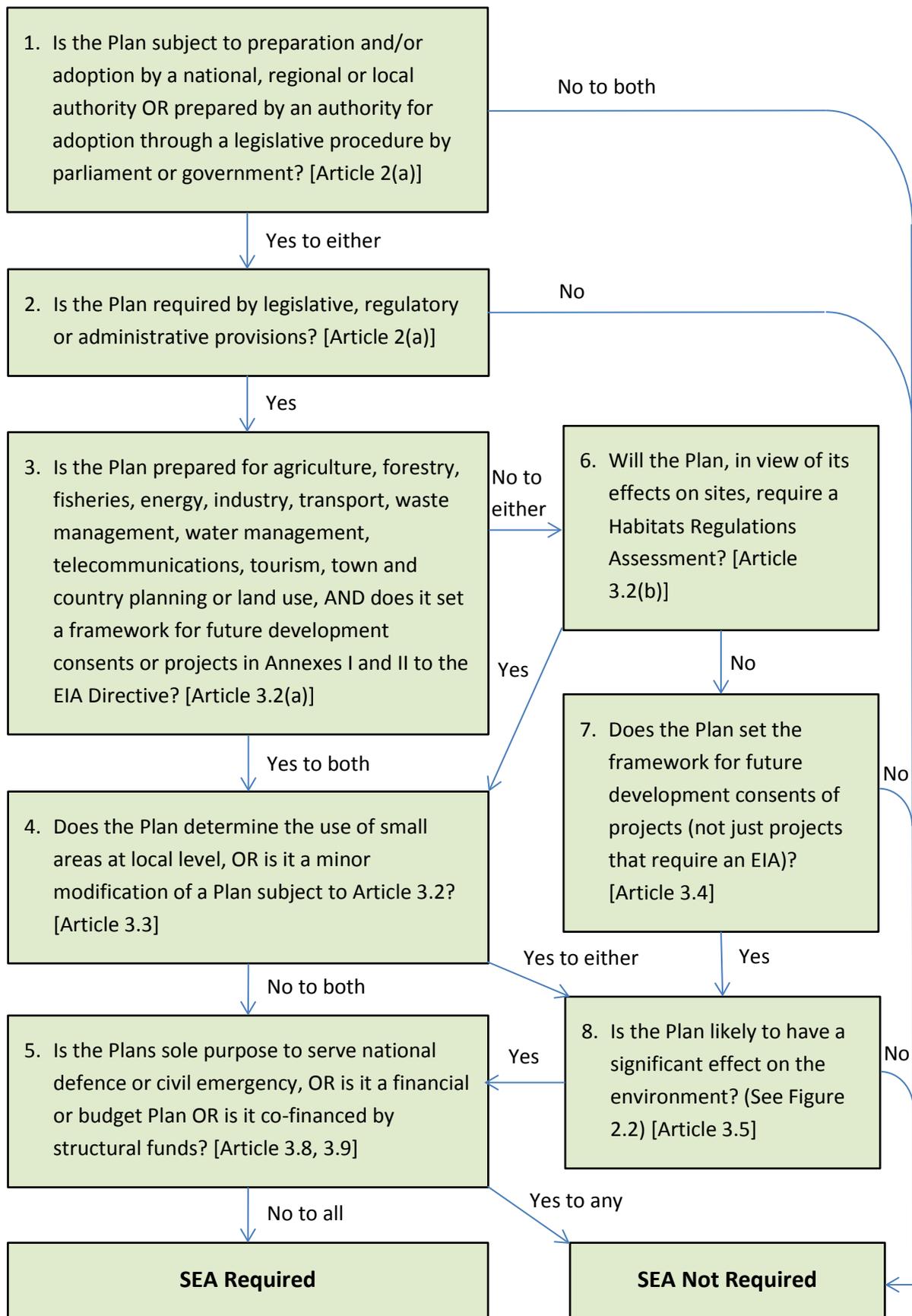


Figure 2.2 Assessment of the characteristics of the Plan

Assessment criteria	Assessment	
1. Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by parliament or government? [Article 2(a)]	Yes	Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by Parish Councils (as the “qualifying body”) under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. Once the Plan has been prepared, and subject to examination and referendum, it will be “made” by North Dorset District Council as the Local Planning Authority
2. Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? [Article 2(a)]	Yes	It is not a requirement for a parish to produce a Neighbourhood Plan however a Neighbourhood Plan, once “made” does form part of the statutory Development Plan and will be used when making decisions on planning applications.
3. Is the Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consents or projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? [Article 3.2(a)]	Yes	Neighbourhood Plans can cover some of the topics identified in this list and they could set the framework for development of a scale that would fall under Annex II of the EIA Directive. However for Neighbourhood Plans, developments which fall under Annex I of the EIA Directive are “excluded development” as set out in Section 61k of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act)
4. Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a Plan subject to Article 3.2? [Article 3.3]	Yes	A Neighbourhood Plan can determine the use of small areas at the local level.
5. Is the Plans sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget Plan OR is it co-financed by structural funds? [Article 3.8, 3.9]	No	A Neighbourhood Plan does not deal with any of these categories of plan.
6. Will the Plan, in view of its effects on sites, require a Habitats Regulations Assessment? [Article 3.2(b)]	?	A Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have an impact on an internationally designated wildlife site covered by the Habitats Regulations, <b>a case by case assessment it needed</b> for each Plan.

Assessment criteria	Assessment	
7. Does the Plan set the framework for future development consents of projects (not just projects that require an EIA)? [Article 3.4]	Yes	A Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the development plan and therefore will be used in the decision making process. The policies in a Neighbourhood Plan therefore set the framework for future developments.
8. Is the Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (See Figure 2.2) [Article 3.5]	?	The impact of a Neighbourhood Plan on the environment will depend on the proposals included within it. For this reason <b>a case by case assessment of each Neighbourhood Plan will be required.</b>

2.4 The conclusion of the generic screening of Neighbourhood Plans has determined<sup>4</sup> that depending on the content of a plan, an SEA may be required. For this reason a case by case analysis of plans will be required to determine the likely significant effects on the environment.

2.5 Assessment of the significance of the effect of a Neighbourhood Plan will depend on the proposals within it. The criteria for assessing the likely significance of effects are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive, Schedule 1 of the Regulations and shown in Figure 2.3 of this report. The proposals within individual Neighbourhood Plans will need to be assessed against these criteria.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.6 In addition to the screening of Neighbourhood Plans in relation to SEA, there is a need to assess the likelihood of proposals within a Plan having an adverse impact on internationally designated wildlife sites. This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required by the European Habitats Directive.

2.7 A Habitats regulations Assessment may be required depending on the contents of the Neighbourhood Plan and the potential impact of the Plan on internationally designated wildlife sites. Again, a case by case assessment of Neighbourhood Plans will need to be undertaken to see if a full HRA is required.

2.8 The approach to assessing the potential impact of a Neighbourhood Plan on an internationally designated wildlife site, and hence the need for an HRA include consideration of the reasons for designation and conservation objectives for each site within a reasonable distance from the Neighbourhood Plan area. The key environmental conditions that support the site are assessed against the proposals within the Plan.

---

<sup>4</sup> Under Regulation 9 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and under Article 3 of the SEA Directive

- 2.9 Once the assessments of the requirement for both SEA and HRA had been undertaken, the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage were consulted on the outcomes. This report summarising the process, incorporating the results of the consultation.

Figure 2.3 Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment  
[from Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive]

1. The characteristics of the plans, having regard to:
  - the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
  - the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
  - the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
  - environmental problems relevant to the plan;
  - the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:
  - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
  - the cumulative nature of the effects,
  - the transboundary nature of the effects,
  - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
  - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
  - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
    - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
    - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
    - intensive land-use,
  - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

### 3. Bourton Neighbourhood Plan

3.1 The parish of Bourton is located in the North of the District, on the Somerset and Wiltshire border. The population of the parish is 822<sup>5</sup> people with this being centred on the village of Bourton itself. Just over the border into Wiltshire is the village of Zeals. Gillingham is the nearest larger town approximately 5km to the southeast.

3.2 The Bourton Neighbourhood Area was designated on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2012 covering the whole of the parish area. Bourton Parish Council<sup>6</sup>, as the qualifying body for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, has delegated the responsibility for its production to the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Group. Consultation undertaken at the early stages of the neighbourhood plan has identified a desire for a replacement village hall.

3.3 Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Group have indicated that the approximate parameters of the development they are looking to secure through the Neighbourhood Plan process would be:

- Village hall: 500m<sup>2</sup> gross footprint.

*“The proposed new building will replace an existing, almost life-expired, industrial-type barn of a similar height to the new hall, constructed with asbestos cement roof and cladding”.*

- Residential development: Small scale (5 to 10 dwellings).

*“As an aid to the delivery of a new village hall, we will be considering a site of some 0.3 hectares for a small development of private housing. Also, and again to assist the delivery of the new hall, we will be considering a small development of private housing on the site currently occupied by the existing village hall i.e. what would then be a brownfield site”.*

3.4 This report focuses on the screening of the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan against the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment in the light of the North Dorset Local Plan and its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

---

<sup>5</sup> 2011 Census

<sup>6</sup> More information is available at <http://www.bourtondorset.org/>

## 4. SEA Screening Assessment

- 4.1 At this early stage in the Neighbourhood Planning process it is difficult to know what will be proposed in the final version of the Neighbourhood Plan. The approximate parameters of the development being proposed for inclusion in the draft Neighbourhood Plan as set out in Section 2 of this report, have been used to undertake this screening assessment.
- 4.2 If it is found that an SEA is required to support the Neighbourhood Plan, any changes to the quantum of development can easily be assessed for environmental impact through the SEA process. If the conclusion of a screening exercise is that an SEA is not required, any changes to the quantum of development being proposed should be subject to a further screening assessment to ensure that significant effects are not likely.
- 4.3 Under Criteria 8 of the assessment in Figure 2.2, it was concluded that a Neighbourhood Plan may have a significant effect on the environment depending on the proposals within it and that a case by case assessment was required. The criteria for undertaking such an assessment are drawn from Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive and set out in Figure 2.3 of this report. Figure 4.1 outlines the results of this assessment.

Figure 4.1 Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
The characteristics of the plans, having regard to:	
— the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is intending to deliver a new village hall and modest housing growth within the village. It therefore sets the framework for other projects including the location, size and nature of the development. There is therefore the potential for an effect on the environment resulting from proposals in the Plan.
— the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	A Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the whole of North Dorset District. It does not influence other plans.
— the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	A Neighbourhood Plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised.

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— environmental problems relevant to the plan;</li> </ul>	<p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be minimal due to the scale of development proposed. However, the location and form of the proposed development will be the key determining factor in the magnitude of the environmental impact. Any existing environmental problems could be tackled through the implementation of the plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).</li> </ul>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in conformity with the Local Plan. The Local Plan has had regard to European Community legislation on the environment and therefore this legislation will not be relevant for the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
<p>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,</li> </ul>	<p>Development is proposed within the Neighbourhood Plan and therefore some element of environmental change will take place. Removing land from intensive agricultural use and incorporation of biodiversity features within the scheme has the potential to enhance the local environment. However, any impact will depend on the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— the cumulative nature of the effects,</li> </ul>	<p>The cumulative effects of proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant on the local environment. However, in combination with proposals within the emerging North Dorset Local Plan, there is the potential for more widespread cumulative effects.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— the transboundary nature of the effects,</li> </ul>	<p>As Bourton village is adjacent to the District and County boundaries, the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to have an impact on neighbouring areas.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),</li> </ul>	<p>There is limited risk to human health or the environment as a result of the development being proposed.</p>

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),</li> </ul>	<p>The scale of development proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan is small and therefore the potential for environmental effects is also likely to be small and localised. It is unlikely that the effects of the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan will be large scale and extensive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</li> <li>– exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,</li> <li>– intensive land-use,</li> <li>– the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan offers an opportunity to enhance the Natural Environment and the Cultural Heritage of the area through the proposals being considered. The broad environmental characteristics of the area are shown in Figure A1.1 in Appendix A.</p> <p>In relation to the Natural Environment, the area is generally farmland with nearby local designations rather than sites designated as nationally or internationally important.</p> <p>In relation to the Historic and Cultural Heritage of the area, there are a number of listed buildings within the village but no Conservation Area has been designated.</p> <p>The Cranborne Chase &amp; West Wiltshire Downs AONB lies just to the north of the village with a small area to the north west of the neighbourhood Area being within the AONB. Proposals within the village will have the potential to have an impact on this designated landscape.</p> <p>Within the village, there are areas at risk from flooding associated with a watercourse and hence the possibility of environmental effects associated with this.</p>

4.4 As a result of the assessment undertaken to broadly assess significant effects on the environment resulting from the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan, there is the potential for environmental effects. The magnitude and geographical scope of these effects is however difficult to ascertain with the limited amount of information that is available at this stage.

4.5 It is likely that the impacts of the plan will not be significant however without a more detailed assessment of the environmental impact, it is not possible to make a judgement and therefore it is recommended that an SEA of the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is undertaken to support its production.

## 5. HRA Screening Assessment

- 5.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. The HRA therefore looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. European wildlife sites are:
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
  - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)
- 5.2 In addition to SPAs and SACs sites Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although they are not covered by the Habitats regulations, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites should be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites. European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.
- 5.3 European wildlife sites and therefore internationally designated wildlife sites, are offered the highest level of protection under European legislation. This legislation sets out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan for internationally designated sites. The first stage of this process is a “screening” exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the Plan to have an impact on the site.
- 5.4 Under Criteria 6 of the assessment in Figure 2.2, it was concluded that a Neighbourhood Plan may have an impact on internationally designated wildlife sites and that a case by case assessment was required. This section reports on the “screening” assessment for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan. It looks at the potential impact of the proposals for the Plan on sites within 20km of the Neighbourhood Plan area. These sites are:
- Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC – approximately 13km to the south east
  - Mendip Woodlands SAC – approximately 15km to the north
  - River Avon SAC – approximately 15km to the east
  - Chilmark Quarries SAC – approximately 15km to the east
  - Rooksmoor SAC – approximately 15km to the south
  - Mells Valley SAC – approximately 17km to the north
  - Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA – approximately 18km to the north east
  - Holnest SAC – approximately 20km to the south
- 5.5 The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 was subject to HRA during its production. This assessment looked at all internationally designated sites within 20km of the district boundary. This concluded that:

*“...if all minor text revisions suggested in the screening table are made, and if the mitigation measures recommended in the appropriate assessment for each of the key issues where uncertainties remain are incorporated, it can be concluded that the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 will not have or contribute to an adverse effect on site integrity.”*

- 5.6 The HRA of the Local Plan highlighted a number of areas of concern relating to specific internationally designated sites where mitigation or monitoring would need to be put in place. The areas of concern were the impacts:
- of housing on the Dorset Heaths (Dorset Heaths SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites)
  - of recreation on chalk grassland sites (particularly in relation to Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC, Cerne & Sydling Downs SAC and Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA)
  - of increased recreational pressure on coastal/estuarine sites (particularly in relation to Poole harbour SPA/Ramsar, Chesil & the Fleet SAC/SPA, Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs and Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Studland) and Studland Dunes SAC)
  - of increased recreational pressure on the New Forest (New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar)
  - relating to water resources and water quality
  - relating to air quality resulting from new growth (Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC and Rooksmoor SAC)
- 5.7 In addition, the difficulties of the long term sustainable management of Rooksmoor SAC were highlighted in relation to road traffic.
- 5.8 The implications of the proposals in the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed against each of the internationally designated sites to establish the likelihood of a significant effect on the reason for designation. This assessment has been undertaken having regard to the results and information in the HRA prepared for the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 and is set out in detail in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Sites within 20km of Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Area<sup>7,8</sup>

Site Name	Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC
Distance to Bourton Parish	Approximately 13km to the south east.
Reasons for designation	<p>The site includes large areas of species-rich chalk grassland with wide variety in relation to soil type, aspect and grazing pressure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site supports consistently large populations of early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i>, numbering many thousands of plants</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>)</li> </ul>
Vulnerability	<p>Much of the site is managed by voluntary nature conservation organisations who are in receipt of government grants. However, localised threats to the site still exist. This area was traditionally extensively grazed by cattle and although much of the land is currently grazed by cattle or sheep, a return to the traditional regime for the whole site is desirable. Scrub encroachment is one result of suboptimal management. Marginal effects from adjacent intensive agricultural practices pose a threat. This, together with a lack of management, can allow invasive species such as nettles and ragwort to thrive.</p>
Impact as a result of the Plan	<p>The HRA of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 highlighted recreational pressure as the main threat to Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC. It can therefore be assumed that the main pressure on the site as a result of the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan would also be as a result of recreational pressure.</p>
Significance of risk	<p>It is unlikely, given the level of development proposed and the distance to Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, that the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant impact on the site.</p>
Cumulative impacts with other Plans	<p>The Appropriate Assessment of the draft New Plan produced in 2010 raised concerns about recreational pressure on Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC resulting from residential growth to the east of Shaftesbury. Subsequently, the HRA of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 noted that development had taken place at Shaftesbury and that the recreational impact on the site was insignificant. It was suggested that as part of the Local Plan, monitoring arrangements were put in place to assess any future impact that may occur and for appropriate mitigating action to be taken if adverse effects were noticed. This monitoring would also monitor the effects of development brought forward through Neighbourhood Plans and neighbouring Local Plans.</p>

<sup>7</sup> Extracts from the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (Publication Draft) November 2013

<sup>8</sup> Extracts from the JNCC Standard Data Forms for each site

Site Name	Mendip Woodlands SAC
Distance to Bourton Parish	Approximately 15km to the north.
Reasons for designation	The site is designated for the Annex 1 habitat “Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines”. The site consists of three ash-dominated woods on Caberiferous limestone with a rich variety of other trees and shrubs being present including elm and small-leaved lime. The three parts of the SAC are; Ebbor Gorge where elm is mixed with ash in a steep-sided gorge; and Rodney Stoke and Cheddar Wood where lime and ash are found on rocky slopes with patches of deeper soils between.
Vulnerability	Two parts of the SAC, Ebbor Gorge and Rodney Stoke, are National Nature Reserves, with the exception of a small area at Rodney Stoke. These are not currently under any threat. Cheddar Wood is a Somerset Wildlife Trust nature reserve but is owned by the quarrying company, Associated Aggregates. The woodland is currently protected by local planning policies as a notified SSSI. No threat from quarrying is at present anticipated. The Asham Wood extension has been badly affected by quarrying in the past with up to 20% lost. This has now ceased and no major threats are apparent.
Impact as a result of the Plan	There are no threats to the SAC identified as a result of the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan.
Significance of risk	Not applicable.
Cumulative impacts with other Plans	There was considered to be no impact on the Mendip Woodlands SAC resulting from policies in North Dorset’s Local Plan and hence the limited growth proposed in the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is also likely to have no impact on the SAC.

Site Name	River Avon SAC
Distance to Bourton Parish	Approximately 15km to the east.
Reasons for designation	<p>The Avon Valley is a large, lowland river system running through clay to chalk soils. The valley includes one of the largest expanses of unimproved floodplain grassland in Britain including extensive areas managed as hay meadow. The SAC covers the upper reaches of the river, closest to the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan area whilst the lower, more distant reaches of the river are also designated as Ramsar and SPA sites. There has been limited modification of the river course by comparison with many other southern lowland rivers in England.</p> <p>The River Avon is particularly important for its water-crowfoot species, and the SAC is designated for water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranuncion-fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation. Five such species occur within this habitat, but stream water-crowfoot <i>Ranunculus penicillatus</i> ssp. <i>pseudofluitans</i> and river water-crowfoot <i>R. fluitans</i> are the main dominants, with <i>R. peltatus</i> dominant in some winterbourne reaches.</p> <p>The Avon has an excellent mosaic of aquatic habitats, which include extensive areas of gravel, sand and silt essential for spawning and growth of juvenile fry. The site is also designated for Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>, sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>, brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i>, Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>, bullhead <i>Cottus gobi</i>.</p> <p>The extensive floodplain grasslands support wintering Bewick's Swans <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> in numbers of European importance (though this winter flock has declined markedly in recent years), and Blashford Lakes Gravel Pits within the SPA are particularly important for wintering Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>.</p>
Vulnerability	<p>The main factors influencing the river system are historical modifications for mills, water meadows and more recently land drainage; land use in the catchment, abstraction of water for public supply and agricultural uses, disposal of sewage effluents and management of the water courses for fishery, agricultural and other uses. Currently much of the system is considered to be at risk from reduced flows, elevated nutrient levels and changes to sediment processes resulting from previous channel modifications.</p> <p>Full restoration of the conservation status of the qualifying features will be a long-term process addressing major land use activities on a catchment scale as well as through management agreements with landowners/occupiers. Reviews of abstraction licences and discharge consents under the Habitats Regulations will help to address some water quality and quantity issues.</p>
Impact as a	The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan area is within the catchment of the River Stour and therefore impact on the River Avon river

result of the Plan	system is unlikely. Whilst the HRA of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 highlighted a potential but improbable impact on the Avon resulting from development at Shaftesbury, the impact resulting from the small levels of growth at Bourton is likely to be even less probable.
Significance of risk	Insignificant risk due to distance and the fact that Bourton is in the River Stour catchment rather than the River Avon catchment.
Cumulative impacts with other Plans	The impact on the River Avon SAC has been assessed to be insignificant and improbable therefore, no cumulative impact exists.

Site Name	Chilmark Quarries SAC
Distance to Bourton Parish	Approximately 15km to the east.
Reasons for designation	The site consists of a number of abandoned stone mines used as a hibernation site by a range of bat species. Bat species present (the reason for designation) include Greater Horseshoe bat, Barbastelle, Bechstein's bat and Lesser Horseshoe bat.
Vulnerability	The site is well protected from development and disturbance. The main threats arise from unauthorised access to the mines and from collapse of the underground voids.
Impact as a result of the Plan	As the site is well protected from development and disturbance, there will be no impact on the site resulting from development proposed within the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan
Significance of risk	Not applicable.
Cumulative impacts with other Plans	There was considered to be no impact on the Chilmark Quarries SAC resulting from policies in North Dorset's Local Plan and hence the limited growth proposed in the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is also likely to have no impact on the SAC.

Site Name	Rooksmoor SAC
Distance to Bourton Parish	Approximately 15km to the south.
Reasons for designation	Rooksmoor SAC is designated due to the presence of <i>Molinia</i> purple moor-grass on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils. The site is also one of the best areas in the UK for the presence of the marsh fritillary butterfly. The site is divided into two areas, part at Lydlinch Common and part at Rooksmoor.
Vulnerability	Grassland management on the site is problematic and both parts of the SAC suffer from scrub invasion. Light grazing of cattle is difficult on the Lydlinch Common part of the site as it is bisected by two busy roads however the infrastructure needed to overcome this issue is being considered at present.  The presence of the busy road running through the Lydlinch Common part of the site results in air pollution and associated nitrogen and acid deposition.
Impact as a result of the Plan	With Bourton Neighbourhood Area being approximately 15km from the Rooksmoor site and only proposing a modest level of residential development, the impact of traffic generated from the development on the Rooksmoor SAC is likely to be negligible if it exists at all.
Significance of risk	The risk to the Rooksmoor site arising from the Bourton neighbourhood Plan is likely to be insignificant.
Cumulative impacts with other Plans	The levels of growth proposed in the North Dorset Local Plan raises the issues related to air pollution and proposes monitoring of traffic levels and the provision of alternative to travel along this route. Therefore cumulative impacts are likely to be minimal.

Site Name	Mells Valley SAC
Distance to Bourton Parish	Approximately 17km to the north.
Reasons for designation	The Mells Valley SAC is an important breeding area for greater horseshoe bats comprising about 12% of the UK population. In addition, the site includes areas of semi-natural dry grassland and scrub facies on calcareous substrates ( <i>Festuco-Brometalia</i> ) and

	caves which are not open to the public.
Vulnerability	The bat population at Mells Valley use a range of natural caves and man-made tunnels to breed and hibernate. None of the sites are currently managed directly for bats. The population is vulnerable to disturbance from human access.
Impact as a result of the Plan	The presence of a right of way through one part of the site would suggest that disturbance resulting from human access is the most likely impact resulting from the Plan. However, the distance from the Neighbourhood Area and the level of development being proposed make this impact unlikely.
Significance of risk	The risk to the Mells Valley SAC arising from the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be insignificant due to the distance to the site and the level of development being proposed.
Cumulative impacts with other Plans	As there is unlikely to be an impact arising from the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan, cumulative impacts are also unlikely. The HRA of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 did not identify any impact on the Mells Valley SAC.

Site Name	Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA
Distance to Bourton Parish	Approximately 18km to the north east.
Reasons for designation	Salisbury Plain is the best remaining example in the UK of lowland juniper scrub on chalk alongside extensive semi-natural dry grassland and chalk heath: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) 5% of which is considered to be the priority sub-type: "important orchid sites".Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</li> </ul>

<b>Vulnerability</b>	<p>The site comprises three landholdings: a military training area, a military research area and a National Nature Reserve. The interests of all three sites require low intensity grazing which on the military areas has occurred as a by-product of military use over many years and on the NNR has been maintained through traditional farm management. Lack of management is a problem in some places on the training area, and the decline in the UK livestock industry has implications for all three areas, such that future grazing management may require increased financial support.</p> <p>Changes in military use, particularly use of increased numbers of vehicles and construction of roads and tracks to accommodate those vehicles, have the potential to damage the qualifying interests, but are subject to prior assessment and are being strategically addressed through an integrated land management plan. The land that is subject to purely agricultural use is managed sympathetically through a National Nature Reserve management plan.</p>
<b>Impact as a result of the Plan</b>	<p>The HRA of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 highlighted recreational pressure as the main threat to Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA. Therefore, it can be assumed that the main threat arising from the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan will be limited recreational pressure relating to the proposed residential development.</p>
<b>Significance of risk</b>	<p>The majority of the military training areas have restricted public access except for areas to the east of the designated site. The risk of impact arising from the Neighbourhood Plan is therefore considered to be minimal due to distance to the publicly accessible areas of the SAC/SPA and the level of residential growth being proposed.</p>
<b>Cumulative impacts with other Plans</b>	<p>The proposals in the submission version of the North Dorset Local Plan were judged to have no impact on the Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA as evidenced in the HRA of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1. The Wiltshire Local Plan has not yet been adopted however the most recent version contains policies which seek to provide mitigation to reduce recreational pressure on Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA and to reduce other impacts such as nitrogen deposition on the site.</p>

<b>Site Name</b>	Holnest SAC
<b>Distance to Bourton Parish</b>	Approximately 20km to the south.
<b>Reasons for designation</b>	The site is designated solely for the presence of great crested newts. It comprises around 20 ponds and a mix of habitats including scrub, semi-improved grassland, semi-natural habitats, woodland and hedgerows. The habitats around the pond create ideal hibernation habitat for the newts.

Vulnerability	The site lies in a poorly drained vale which does not lend itself well to further agricultural intensification. However, agricultural diversification and alternative uses of the land could threaten breeding ponds, foraging areas and hibernation sites.
Impact as a result of the Plan	The site is distant from Bourton Neighbourhood Area and the sites restricted access means that the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan will not have an impact on the Holnest SAC.
Significance of risk	Not applicable.
Cumulative impacts with other Plans	The HRA for the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 discounted the site from having an impact on the Holnest SAC and therefore it can be assumed that the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan will not have an impact on the site.

- 5.9 The assessment of the potential impacts on internationally designated wildlife sites resulting from the proposals for inclusion in the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan has concluded that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of sites. One of the assumptions behind this conclusion is that the mitigation and monitoring measures suggested for the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 are implemented.
- 5.10 The conclusion that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of internationally designated sites means that a full HRA of the Bourton neighbourhood plan is not required if the level of growth is maintained at that set out in Section 2 of this report. Should the level of growth be increased, the need for a full HRA may have to be reassessed.

## 6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This report contains the detail of the assessment of the need for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and Appropriate Assessment as required by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).
- 6.2 The assessment for both of these requirements has been undertaken on the basis of the level of growth outlined in Section 2 of this report and within the strategic framework established in the Pre-submission version of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.3 In relation to the requirement for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the assessment detailed in Section 3 concludes that as the plan is looking to allocate a site for a new village hall and small scale residential development, an assessment is likely to be required.
- 6.4 The need for SEA relates to several factors which could result in significant effects on the environment. These include the fact that the Plan sets the framework for other projects, namely the developments it proposes.
- 6.5 The development proposed will not be reversible as the new village hall and housing are to be permanent buildings. In addition, the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB lies just to the north of the village, the village contains a number of listed buildings and areas liable to flooding hence the proposals have the potential to have an impact on the environment.
- 6.6 To fulfil the requirements of the SEA Directive, the Neighbourhood Plan must assess options for fulfilling the objectives of the Plan, namely alternative sites for the delivery of a village hall and residential developments.

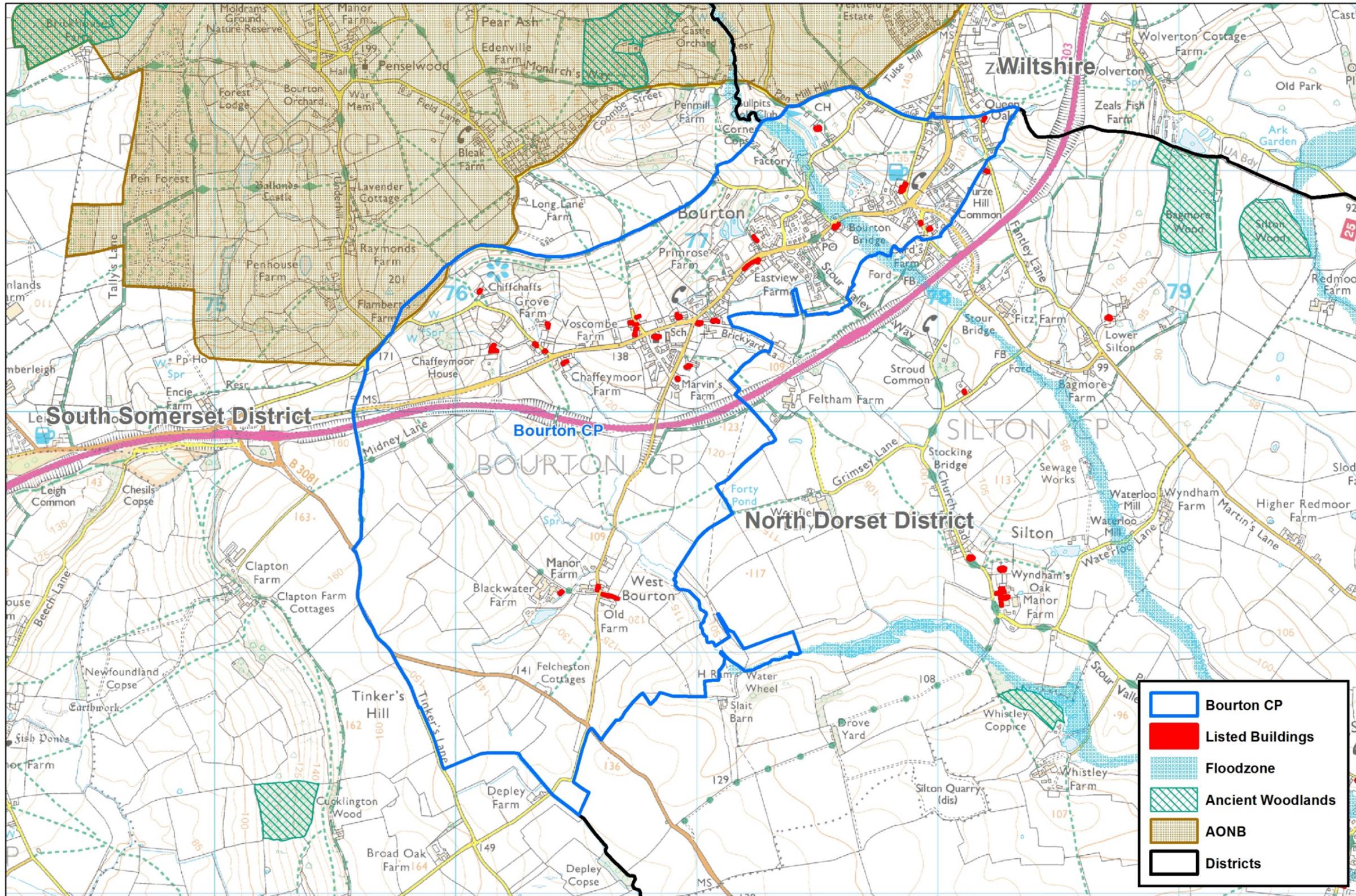
### Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.7 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) checks for potential impacts on internationally designated wildlife sites arising from the implementation of a plan such as the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan. This stage of the HRA has looked in simple terms, at the potential impacts of the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan on internationally designated wildlife sites within 20km of the Neighbourhood Area.
- 6.8 The conclusion of this assessment is that the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan, implemented in the framework established through the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1, will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of internationally designated sites either on its own or in combination with other plans. The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan will therefore not need to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

## Appendix 1 – Environmental Constraints

Figure A1.1 shows the broad environmental constraints that exist within the Bourton Neighbourhood Area which could be impacted upon by the development proposed for inclusion within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Figure A1.1: Bourton Parish main constraints



Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Area - Main Constraints

0 0.25 0.5 1 Kilometers

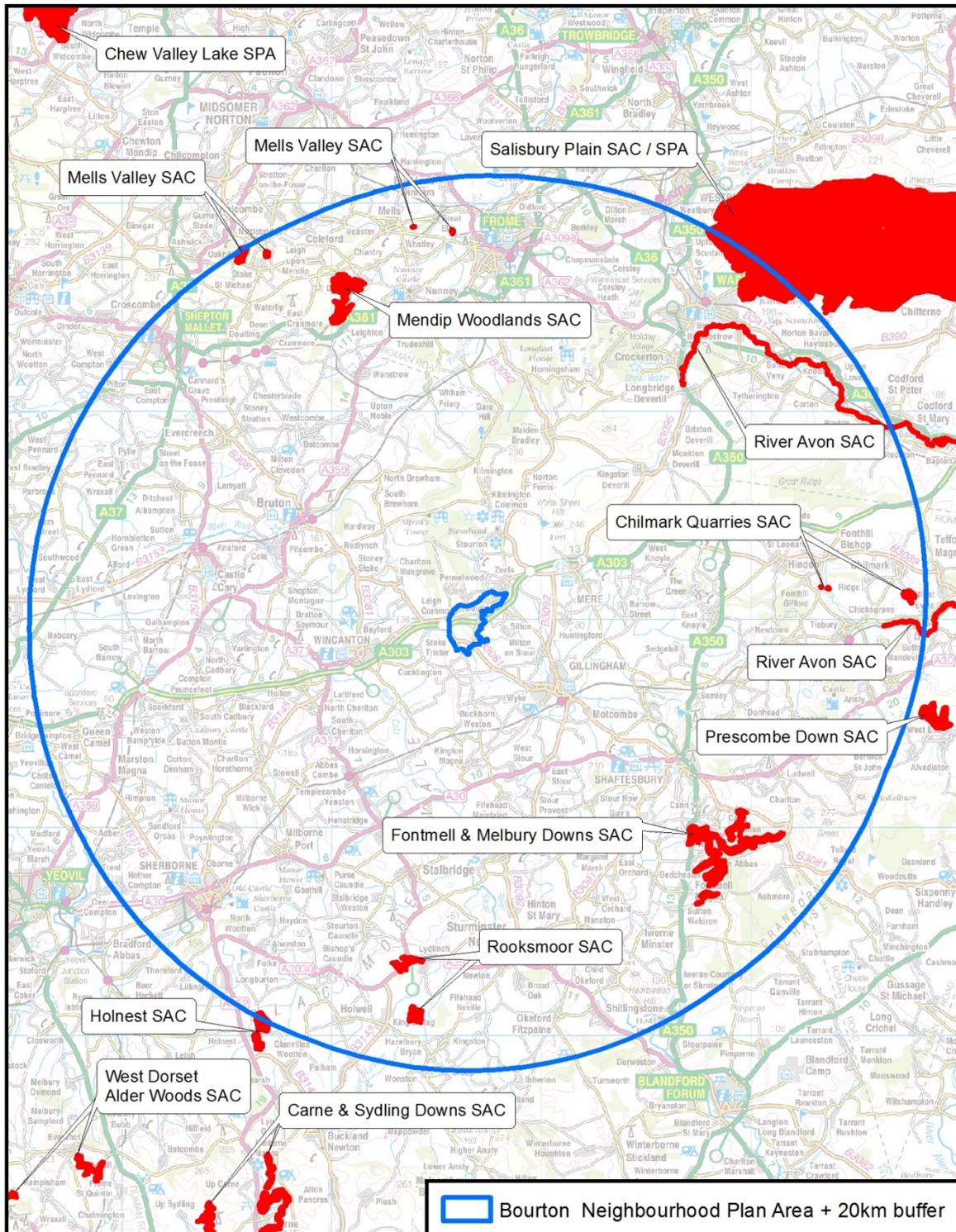


© Crown copyright and database rights 2013  
Ordnance Survey LA100018415



## Appendix 2 – Internationally Designated Sites

Figure A2.1: Internationally designated wildlife sites within 20 kilometres of Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Area



0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

## Appendix 3 – Consultation Responses

Responses to the consultation agreed with the conclusions of the above screening exercise. The responses from the three statutory bodies of Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency are included below.

### Response from English Heritage

**From:** Stuart, David [<mailto:David.Stuart@english-heritage.org.uk>]  
**Sent:** 06 May 2014 15:35  
**To:** Terry Sneller  
**Cc:** Kevin Morris  
**Subject:** RE: Bourton Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening

Dear Terry

Thanks for this chaser, and my apologies for not getting back to you sooner on your original consultation. I should be your point of contact on all matters relating to Neighbourhood Plans.

We are happy to agree with your conclusion on the need for an SEA. Are the development provisions within the emerging NP additional to those within the parent Local Plan as if not the SEA for the latter might possible obviate the need for an additional piece of work?

Otherwise, I would just wish to highlight the need to take account of the existence of the full range of heritage assets which may be affected by proposals. Reference is made to Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area – are there any Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Registered Parks or Gardens, for example? Non-designated heritage assets, such as those on a Local List, should also be taken account of.

On a related though separate matter, Kevin Morris has advised me of the intention to create an officer team within the Council for engaging in neighbourhood plans. I have offered to come and meet it, to see how we might interface with its activities particularly at the strategic level or where economies of scale might be possible.

Have there been developments in this regard, and if so would it now be timely for me to visit?

Regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places Adviser  
Direct line: 0117 975 0680  
Mobile phone: 0797 924 0316

English Heritage | 29 Queen Square  
Bristol | BS1 4ND  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

## Response from the Environment Agency

Dear Terry

I believe that the original conclusion was that SEA was required and HRA was not, to which we had no objection to this position based on the information submitted. We are satisfied with your comments below that the SEA process would be necessary due to the uncertainties relating to the local sensitive natural and heritage assets for the unknown development locations in the neighbourhood plan.

Therefore, we are satisfied with your conclusions that SEA should be carried out.

Yours sincerely

*Mike*

Michael Holm  
Planning Advisor  
Sustainable Places - Wessex Area

For West Dorset; Weymouth and Portland; North Dorset;  
Purbeck; East Dorset; Poole; Bournemouth;  
Christchurch; and South Somerset

Telephone: 01258 483380

Internal: 7-24-3380

Email: [michael.holm@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:michael.holm@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Environment Agency, Rivers House, Sunrise Business Park,  
Higher Shaftesbury Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 8ST



### New: charging for planning advice

From 24 March 2014 we will begin charging for some of our planning advice.  
For more information please speak to your local Sustainable Places team.



**From:** Terry Sneller [<mailto:TSneller@north-dorset.gov.uk>]  
**Sent:** 28 April 2014 11:03  
**To:** Holm, Michael  
**Subject:** RE: Bourton Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening

Mike,

Thanks for sending through your response.

However, can you confirm whether you consider that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required or not. My inference from your response below is that the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan will require an SEA. I notice that the

Freshford and Limpley Stoke NP was subject to SEA despite the screening decision reached by the Local Authority.

In our view, the development location (not yet identified) will be the key determinant in the significance of environmental effects. The SEA process enables this decision to be taken in an open way through the consideration of options avoiding environmental impact especially as there are some environmental features within the Neighbourhood Area which are of local and national importance.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards  
Terry

**Terry Sneller** BSc Hons, MSc, MSc, MRTPI  
Planning Policy Officer  
**North Dorset District Council**  
Email: [tsneller@north-dorset.gov.uk](mailto:tsneller@north-dorset.gov.uk)  
Direct line: 01258 484331

**From:** Holm, Michael [<mailto:michael.holm@environment-agency.gov.uk>]  
**Sent:** 03 April 2014 16:52  
**To:** Terry Sneller; [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk); STUART, David ([David.Stuart@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:David.Stuart@english-heritage.org.uk))  
**Subject:** RE: Bourton Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening

Dear Mr Sneller

Thank you for your email dated 13 March 2014, consulting the Environment Agency on the Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Decision for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan.

We have no objection to the information within the SEA Screening Decision and HRA position reached by your Authority. However, please note that similar to this area that our organisation responded to the Freshford and Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Decision that the local authorities concluded that is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and accordingly does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

This is on the basis that the proposed limited infill development proposed in the plan would be not be subject to EIA and is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, it would subject to the usual planning controls therefore we would not have any objection if the screening opinion concluded that SEA was not required.

I hope this information is useful, but please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

*Mike*

Michael Holm  
Planning Advisor  
Sustainable Places - Wessex Area

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment  
Screening Report for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan

For West Dorset; Weymouth and Portland; North Dorset;  
Purbeck; East Dorset; Poole; Bournemouth;  
Christchurch; and South Somerset

Telephone: 01258 483380

Internal: 7-24-3380

Email: [michael.holm@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:michael.holm@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Environment Agency, Rivers House, Sunrise Business Park,  
Higher Shaftesbury Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 8ST

## Response from Natural England

Please see letter on following page.

Date: 24 March 2014  
Our ref: 115535  
Your ref: Bourton Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA screening



Mr Terry Sneller  
North Dorset District Council

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Mr Sneller

**Planning consultation:** Bourton Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 13 March 2014 which was received by Natural England on 13 March 2014.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

**SEA Screening Report**

Natural England concurs with your conclusion that a SEA will be required.

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance at:

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/does-a-neighbourhood-plan-require-a-sustainability-appraisal/>

**HRA Screening Report**

Natural England concurs with your conclusion that a HRA will not be required.

Where a Neighbourhood Plan could potentially lead to significant environmental effects it will be necessary to screen the Plan in relation to the Habitats and Species Regulations (2010), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). One of the basic conditions that will be tested at Examination is whether the making of the plan is compatible with European obligations and this includes requirements relating to the Habitats Directive.

**In relation to the Habitats Regulations, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot progress if the likelihood of significant effects on any European Site, either alone (or in combination with other plans and projects) cannot be ruled out** (see Schedule 2, The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012). Therefore measures may need to be incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that any likely significant effects are avoided in order to secure



compliance with the Regulations. A screening exercise should be undertaken if there is any doubt about the possible effects of the Plan on European protected sites. This will be particularly important if a Neighbourhood Plan is to progress **before** a Local Plan has been adopted and/or the Neighbourhood Plan proposes development which has not be assessed and/or included in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Local Plan.

### **Other comments**

We are of the opinion that the generic assessment set out in Figure 2.2 has made the correct conclusions and that a case by case assessment of each Neighbourhood plan will be required under assessment criteria 6 and 8 of Figure 2.2.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Alison Appleby on 07500 913698. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Alison Appleby  
Land Use Operations, Winchester team