Habitats Regulations Assessment

Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan

May 2026

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1 Introduction

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

1.0.2 The main purpose of the HRA process is to prevent a plan or project from adversely affecting the integrity of a European Site, which are areas of exceptional importance for rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats or species. Extensive areas of Dorset and surrounding areas are occupied by European sites, reflecting the importance of the region for wildlife and habitats.

1.0.3 The HRA process involves several distinct stages of assessment which must be undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). This is explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.0.4 The first of these stages is the HRA screening stage. The main purpose of the HRA screening is to assess whether a plan is likely to have a significant negative effect on a European Site, and hence whether the subsequent steps of the HRA process are required.

1.0.5 If the HRA screening concludes that there would be no likely significant effect on a European Site, then the plan may proceed without further assessment.

1.0.6 However, if it is found that the plan would have a likely significant effect on a European Site then further assessment is required through the subsequent stages of the HRA process, to ensure that the plan does not result in adverse effects upon the integrity of a European site.

1.0.7 The HRA screening report firstly explains the legal basis for HRA (Chapter 2) and explains the HRA process (Chapter 3), before setting out the scope of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (Chapter 4). Following this, consideration is given to whether the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect upon a European site in the HRA screening exercise (Chapter 5) and whether the plan will have an adverse effect upon the integrity of a European Site at the Appropriate Assessment stage (Chapter 6).

2 Legislative background to Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.0.1 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.

2.0.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 181) 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;
- 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 listed/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.

2.0.3 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.

2.0.4 The Habitats Directive is transposed into UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations implements Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and requires 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. Regulation 105 applies to land use plans, with Regulation 106 pertaining to Neighbourhood Development Plans specifically.

2.0.5 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, state that submitted neighbourhood plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood plan meets a series of 'basic conditions', which are set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the plan is compatible with EU obligations, which includes the need to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment to satisfy the Habitats Directive.

3 The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

3.0.1 The UK Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Appropriate Assessment explains that there are several distinct stages of assessment which must be undertaken in order to achieve compliance with the Habitats Regulations.

3.1. TASK 1: HRA SCREENING

3.1.1 The HRA screening stage involves consideration of whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, either alone and in combination with other plans or projects.

3.1.2 A 'likely significant effect' may be defined as a 'possible significant effect; one whose occurrence cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information'.

3.1.3 The HRA screening stage firstly involves gathering information on the European sites that may be affected, through geographical proximity or a potential impact pathway which links the plan to an effect on a European Site.

3.1.4 Following this, the HRA considers whether the plan is likely to result in a significant effect upon these European sites, either alone or in combination with other projects and plans, through the test of likely significant effect.

3.1.5 Measures which have been specifically added to achieve the purpose of avoiding or reducing the harmful effects of a plan upon a European site, known as mitigation measures, should not be considered at the screening stage.

3.1.6 If the HRA screening concludes that there is no likely significant effect on a European site, then further assessment is deemed unnecessary.

3.1.7 However, if it is found that the plan would have a likely significant effect on a European site then the next stage of assessment, known as the Appropriate Assessment stage, is required.

3.2. TASK 2: APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

3.2.1 If a proposed plan or project is considered likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, then an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site, in view of the site's conservation objectives, must be undertaken.

3.2.2 The scope and content of an appropriate assessment will depend on the nature, location, duration and scale of the proposed plan and the European sites which may be affected. However, the assessment needs to be proportionate and sufficient to support the task of determining whether the plan will adversely affect the integrity of a European site.

3.3. TASK 3: MITIGATION

3.3.1 The competent authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ruled out adverse effects on the integrity of the European site.

3.3.2 Where it cannot be concluded that there will be no adverse effects on a site's integrity, there is a need to consider potential mitigation.

3.3.3 Mitigation measures are protective measures forming part of a project and are intended to avoid or reduce any direct adverse effects that may be caused by a plan or project, to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.

3.3.4 Any measures used to inform the decision about the effects on the integrity need to be sufficiently secured and likely to work in practice.

4 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan

4.0.1 The first Bridport Neighbourhourhood Area was designated by West Dorset District Council in May 2014. This boundary reflected the parish boundaries of Allington, Bradpole, Symondsbury, Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Councils and Bridport Town Council at that time.

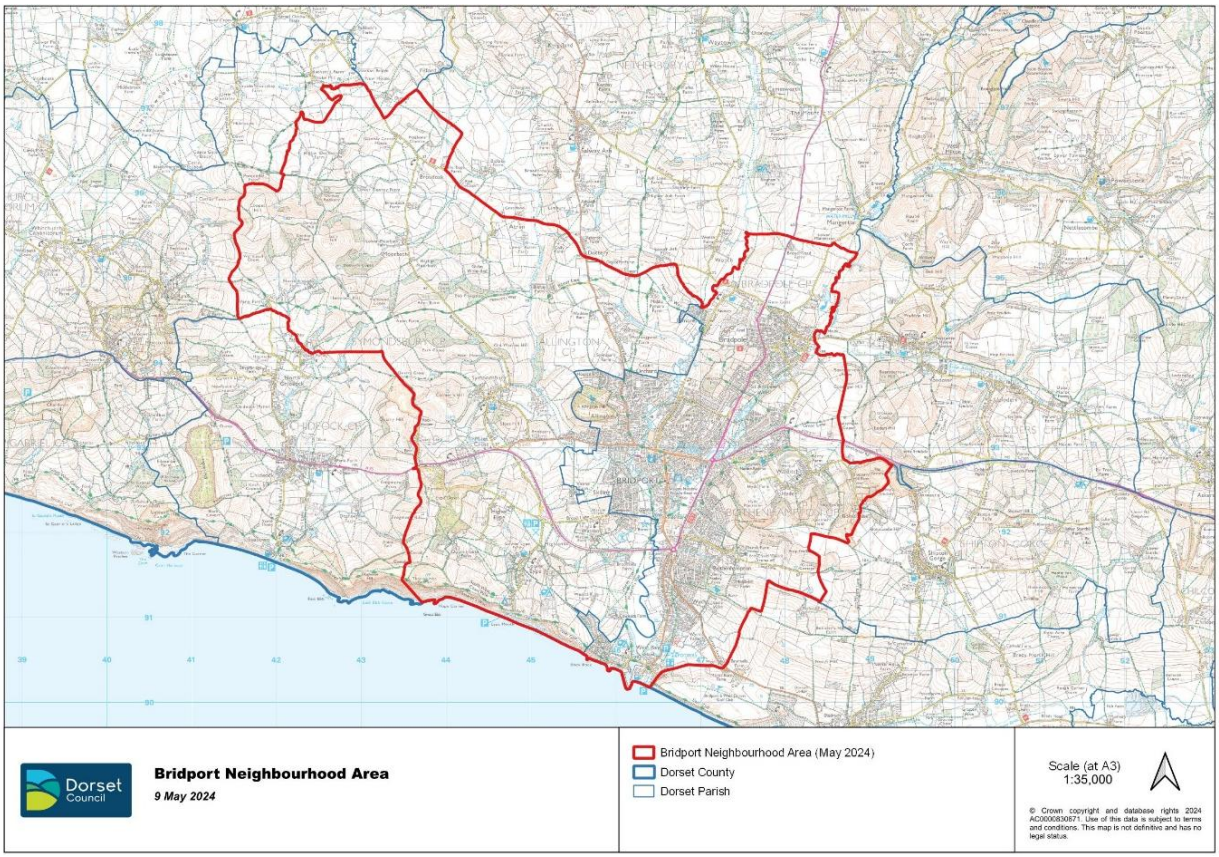
4.0.2 Following a Community Governance Review, Dorset Council approved changes to how local councils worked in July 2022 which came into effect from 1 April 2024.

4.0.3 These changes abolished the parishes of Bradpole and Bothenhampton & Walditch who's areas now sit within Bridport Parish. The parish of Allington was also abolished and now largely sits within Symondsbury parish, excluding Allington Hill & Pymore.

4.0.4 At the same time, land transfers occurred between Chideock Parish (Turnpike and Downside Cottages) and Symondsbury Parish and Netherbury Parish (Atrim) and Symondsbury Parish. Land transfers also occurred between Symondsbury Parish (West Cliff and Vearse Farm) and Bridport Parish and Burton Bradstock Parish (Station Road) and Bridport Parish.

4.0.5 These changes prompted a Revised Neighbourhood Area application by Bridport Town Council and Symondsbury Parish Council in February 2025 which was approved by Dorset Council in March 2025. The extent of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area is shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: The extent of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan



4.0.6 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan occupies an area of 2,870ha and is home to approximately 15,364[1] residents, formed into 7,562 households and occupying 8,403 dwellings.

4.0.7 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan[2] seeks to support the community in shaping Bridport and Symondsbury as places where people want to live, offering strong economic and educational opportunities, and fostering an inclusive, dynamic and successful community.

4.0.8 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.
- 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 National Landscape 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.

[1] 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

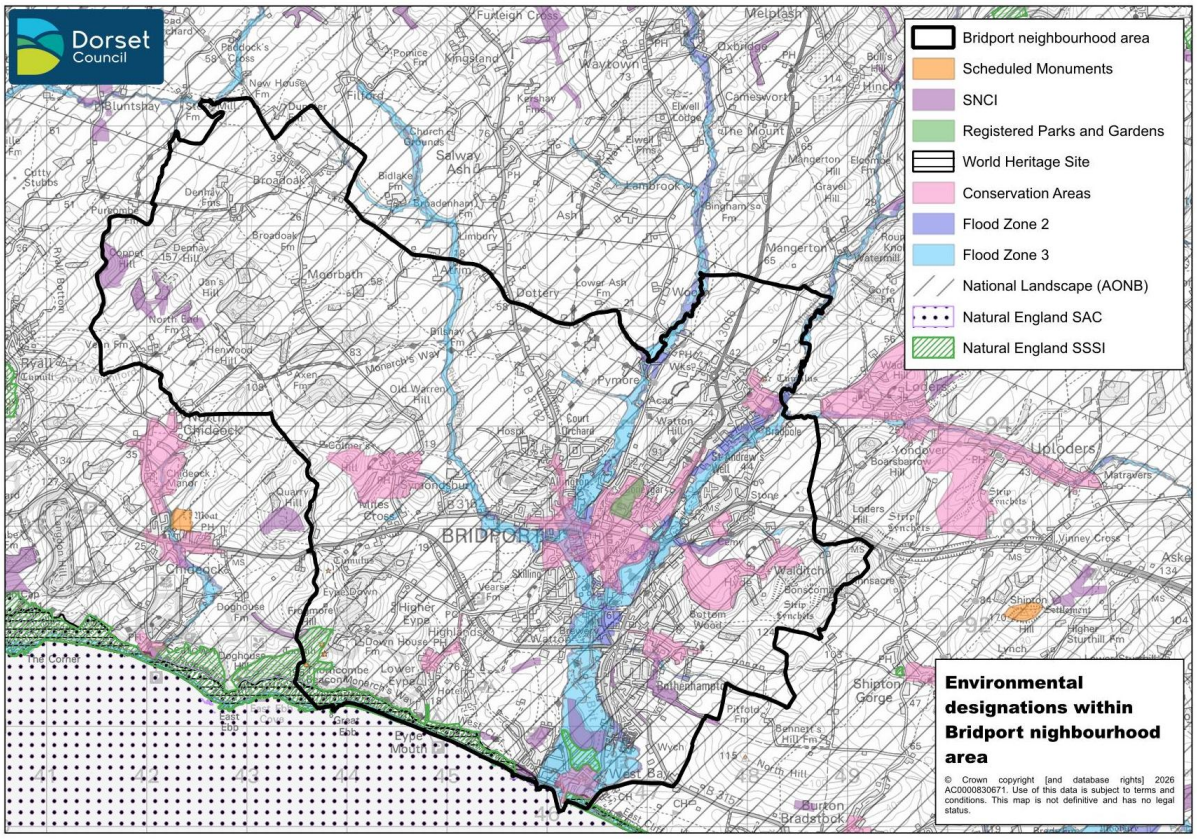
[2] At the time of writing, the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed here: BANP-Reg-15-March-2026_web-version.pdf

- Over the medium to longer term, move towards a town centre less dependent on private vehicle movements.

4.0.9 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development, and contains a dedicated policy on biodiversity (policy L2). This policy requires development to deliver mandatory biodiversity net gain, protect identified habitats and corridors, and encourage additional measures that enhance or create habitats within new developments.

4.0.10 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 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Environmental designations within the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area



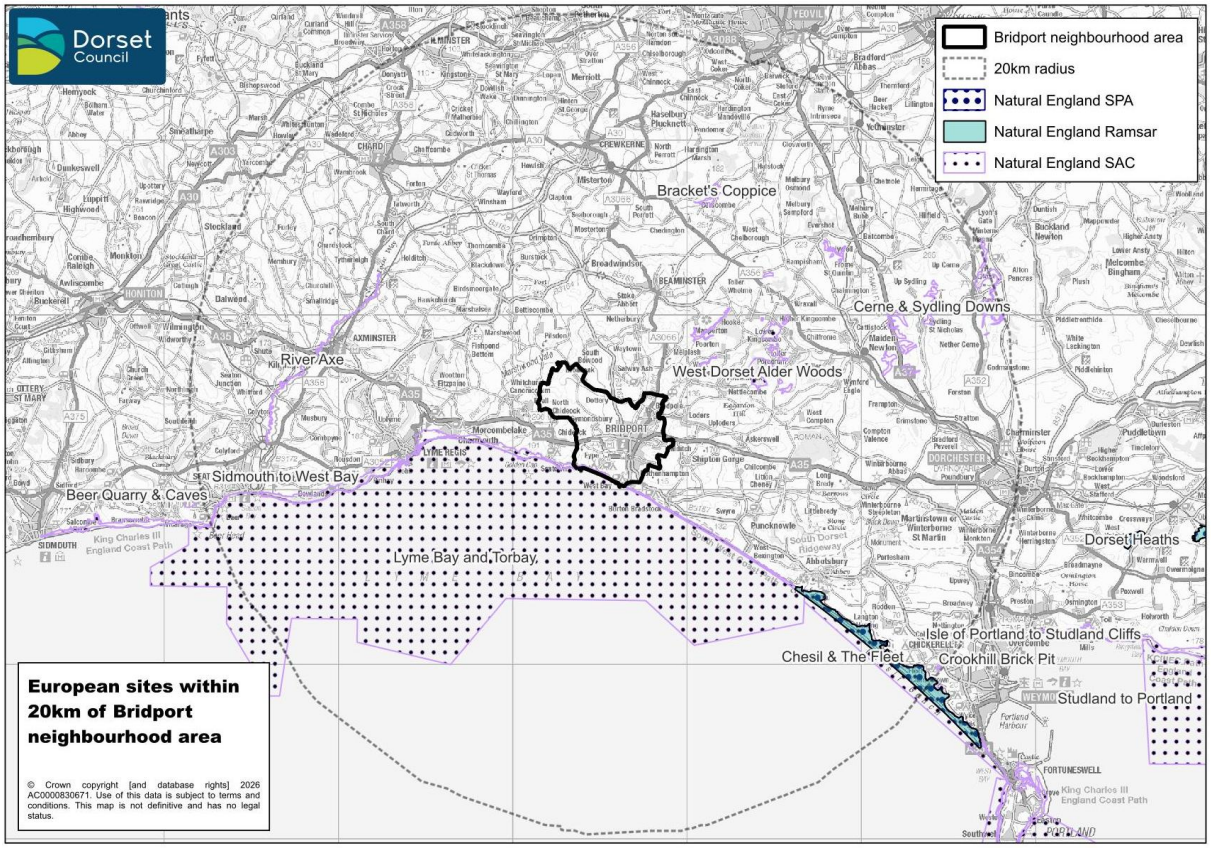
5 Habitats Regulations Assessment: Screening

5.0.1 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.

5.0.2 In order to determine whether the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in a significant effect upon a European Site, it is first necessary to identify those European Sites which may be affected by the plan. This involves gathering information about the European Sites within the neighbourhood plan area and its vicinity.

5.0.3 A map showing the location of European Sites within 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: European sites within 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (European Sites shown in Green, Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area shown in black outline).



5.0.4 The European Sites within approximately 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area are listed in Figure 5.2, with further details of these European Sites presented in Appendix A.

Figure 5.2: 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

5.0.5 Having identified the characteristics of the European sites within approximately 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan boundary, it is now possible to identify those European Sites which may be linked to the plan through a known 'pathway'.

5.0.6 A 'pathway' may be defined as the means by which a change in activity leads to an effect. In this instance, a pathway may be defined as the means by which a change in activity due to the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan leads to an effect upon a European Site.

5.0.7 The potential threats, pressures and activities in the official citation of the designated sites are presented in Appendix A.

5.0.8 At the initial stage of the HRA screening, all of the potential pathways were identified by considering the potential threats, pressures and activities to the European Sites provided in the official citation which are relevant given the scope of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix A). Those potential threats, pressures and activities that were not considered to be linked to the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan through a pathway were discounted from further consideration.

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

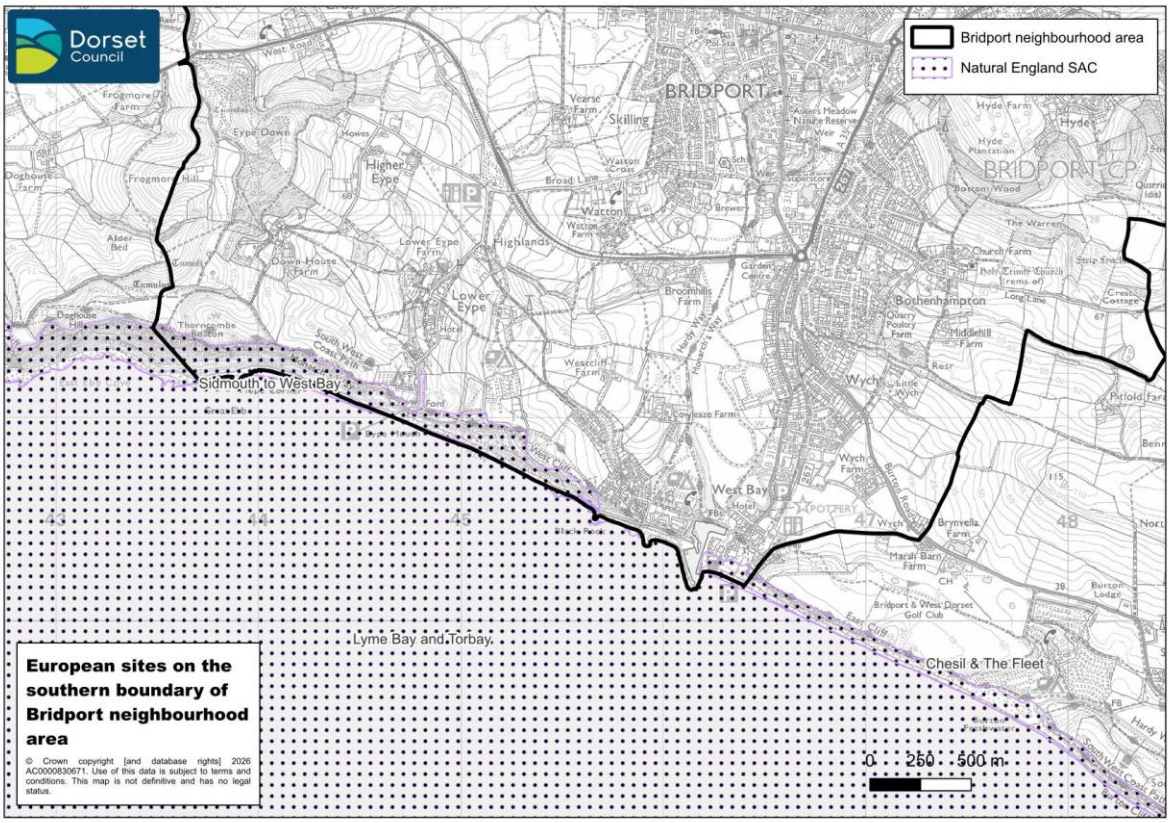
- West Alder Woods SAC
- Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA and Ramsar
- River Axe SAC
- Brackets Coppice SAC
- Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC
- Crookhill Brick Pit SAC
- Beer Quarry and Caves SAC

5.0.10 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 SAC

5.0.11 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 5.3).

Figure 5.3: The location of European sites on the Southern boundary of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan area



5.0.12 Following the initial screening, 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. The findings of this screening are presented in the following sections.

SIDMOUTH TO WEST BAY SAC

5.0.13 The Sidmouth to West Bay SAC occupies the southern section of the Bridport Area Neighghbourhood Plan area (Figure 5.3).

5.0.14 The primary reasons for desgination 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

5.0.15 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.

5.0.16 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).

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

5.0.18 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 species[3].

5.0.19 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

5.0.20 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.

[3] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/habitat.asp?FeatureIntCode=H1210

LYME BAY AND TORBAY SAC

5.0.21 The Lyme Bay and Torbay 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 5.3).

5.0.22 The Lyme Bay and Torbay 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.

5.0.23 The reef habitat is considered particularly high in species richness. The reefs extend over a large area, occuring 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 zone, which is defined as the zone immediately below the littoral intertidal zone and to a depth of 200m.

5.0.24 The main threat to the Lyme Bay and Torbay SAC is fishing and harvesting aquatic resources. The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to significant 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.

5.0.25 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

5.0.26 The western section of the Chesil and the Fleet SAC occupies the coastal area on the southern corner of the neighbourhood plan area (Figure 5.3).

5.0.27 The Chesil Beach and the Fleet Ramsar and SPA designations have been screened out from further consideration, as they are located approximately 11.4km to the east of the site since the SPA and Ramsar designation only occupies a coastal lagoon called the Fleet and immediate surroundings.

5.0.28 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 the Fleet.

5.0.29 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 fruticoia*).

5.0.30 The Fleet coastal lagoon lies approximately 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. Given the proximity of these habitats from the neighbourhood plan area, the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in impacts upon these habitats.

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

5.0.32 Chesil Beach supports an extensive area of 'perennial vegetation of stony banks', including 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.

5.0.33 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*).

5.0.34 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).

5.0.35 Natural England previously raised concerns in particular about recreational pressure affecting the integrity of the Chesil and the Fleet SAC, cited evidence on the excess recreational use of the Chesil and the Fleet European Site, including:

- 'Chesil Beach 2019 Recreational Activity Strategy', Footprint Ecology (2019) (ref: 549); and
- Supplementary Advice for Conservation Objectives (SACO) for the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA, Natural England (2019).

5.0.36 The Footprint Ecology report confirms that there is currently an unacceptable level of existing recreational pressure at Chesil Beach and the Fleet which is likely to be compromising the integrity of the SAC site features. There are concerns that the trampling of habitats and species by people are resulting in adverse effects on the features of the SAC designation.

5.0.37 Natural England have advised that development which results in an increase in population within 5km of the Chesil Beach and the Fleet European site may contribute to an unacceptable increase in recreational pressures on the features of the designated area.

5.0.38 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan doesn't mention the potential for recreational pressure impacts from new development which results in an increase in population upon the Chesil and the Fleet SAC or the need for mitigation.

5.0.39 Whilst the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan doesn't allocate any sites for development, development which comes forward in the neighbourhood plan area may result in an increase in overnight accommodation within 5km of the Chesil Beach and the Fleet European site, and will therefore result in a likely significant effect from an increase recreational pressure.

6 Appropriate Assessment

6.0.1 The HRA screening identified a likely significant effect upon the Chesil and the Fleet SAC as a result of recreational pressure.

6.0.2 Therefore, the Appropriate Assessment set out in the following chapter is required to determine whether the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan would result in an adverse effect upon the integrity of this European Site. The following chapter presents the appropriate assessment.

CHESIL AND THE FLEET SAC: RECREATIONAL PRESSURE

6.0.3 In light of Natural England's concerns about recreational pressure at Chesil and the Fleet from new development which results in an increase in population within 5km of the Chesil and the Fleet Euopean site, Dorset Council recognised that a strategic solution is required to address the potential impacts and prevent new development from affecting the integrity of the Chesil and the Fleet European site.

6.0.4 The Interim Strategy for Mitigating the Effects of Recreational Pressure on the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SAC, SPA and Ramsar[4] was established by Dorset Council in 2020.

6.0.5 The strategy introduces an approach to addressing the impacts of recreational pressure at Chesil and the Fleet by delivering a series of mitigation measures, following the advice of Natural England.

6.0.6 The mitigation includes additional wardening, signage and education for visitors, and support for the visitor centre.

6.0.7 A contribution of £191,673 per year is provided towards the implementation of these mitigation measures, taken from Dorset Council's CIL pot. This equates to a contribution of £499.73 for a dwelling or £340.73 for a flat.

6.0.8 Whilst the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating land for new development, it is necessary for the plan to include policy wording, perhaps as a criteria of policy L2, to explain the potential for impacts upon the Chesil and the Fleet SAC and the need for mitigation. This will prevent new development from resulting in an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Chesil and the Fleet SAC.

[4] Strategy can be viewed here at the time of writing: Interim Strategy for Mitigating the Effects of Recreational Pressure on the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SAC, SPA and Ramsar - Dorset Council

7 Conclusion

7.0.1 The HRA screening exercise considered the potential threats, pressures and activities which may affect the European sites within 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan.

7.0.2 The HRA screening identified a likely significant effect upon the Chesil and the Fleet SAC, the western most extent of which occupies the coastal area on the southern corner of the plan area, from recreational pressure. The Chesil and the Fleet SAC is characterised by a shingle bar which supports the perennial vegetation of stony banks and annual vegetation of drift lines habitats within this section of the SAC.

7.0.3 The Appropriate Assessment concluded that policy wording was required, perhaps as a change to the wording of policy L2, to highlight the need for a contribution towards the Interim Strategy for Mitigating the Effects of Recreational Pressure on the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SAC, SPA and Ramsar.

7.0.4 Providing that this mitigation is provided, then it can be concluded that the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan does not result in an adverse effect upon the integrity of a European site.

Date: 03 June 2026
Our ref: 549061

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T 0300 060 3900

[redacted]

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Oliver,

Habitats Regulations Assessment Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan May 206

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 18 May 2026.

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.

The Bridport Neighbourhood Plan area includes the Chesil and the Fleet Special Area of Conservation & Chesil Beach and the Fleet Special Protection Area, European designated sites (also commonly referred to as Natura 2000 sites), and therefore has the potential to affect their interest features. European sites are afforded protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). The site is also listed as the Chesil Beach and the Fleet Ramsar site and notified at a national level as the Chesil and the Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The HRA screening identified a likely significant effect upon the Chesil and the Fleet SAC, the western most extent of which occupies the coastal area on the southern corner of the plan area, from recreational pressure. The Appropriate Assessment concluded that a change to the wording of policy L2 was required, to highlight the need for a contribution towards the Interim Strategy for Mitigating the Effects of Recreational Pressure on the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SAC, SPA and Ramsar.

Providing that this mitigation is provided, then it can be concluded that the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan does not result in an adverse effect upon the integrity of a European site.

No objection
Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment of the proposal in accordance with regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Natural England is a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.

Your appropriate assessment concludes that your authority is able to ascertain that the proposal will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any of the sites in question. Having considered

the assessment, and the measures proposed to mitigate for all identified adverse effects that could potentially occur as a result of the proposal, Natural England advises that we concur with the assessment conclusions, providing that all mitigation measures are appropriately secured in any planning permission given.

Yours sincerely
Rosalind Tuck

Higher Officer,
Sustainable Development, Dorset
Wessex Area Team

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Appendix A: Details of European Sites within 20km of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan

Qualifying features	*Conservation Objectives*	*Threats*
Sidmouth to West Bay SAC		
The site is designated under Article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I: 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)	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; • 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 With regards AVDL, maintain in particular: • *Beta vulgaris maritima* (sea beet) - *Atriplex* (orache) communities; • *Honkenya peploides* (sea sandwort) – *Cakile maritima* (sea rocket)	• 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		
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): 1. Reefs 2. Submerged or partially submerged sea caves	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: • 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	• Fishing and harvesting aquatic Resources.

Qualifying features	*Conservation Objectives*	*Threats*
	and the habitats of qualifying species rely • the populations of qualifying species • the distribution of qualifying species within the site	
Beer Quarry and Caves SAC		
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): 1. Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii* 2. Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* 3. Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* 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: 1. Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (*important orchid sites)	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; • 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.	• Other human intrusions and disturbances • Other urbanisation, industrial and similar activities • Biocenotic evolution, succession • Other ecosystem modifications
Chesil and Fleet SAC		
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): 1. Coastal lagoon* 2. AVDL 3. Perennial vegetation of stony banks 4. Mediterranean and thermos-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (*Sarcocornetea fruticoia*) 5. Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) In addition to the qualifying features noted above, the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (JNCC, 2015) notes the following habitats as	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; • 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	• 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***
present on the site and provides an assessment for them: 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		
Annex I habitat: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates *Festuco-Brometalia* (* important orchid sites) *Annex II species:* Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*	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: • 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.	• 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		
Annex I habitats: Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae; Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae); and Old acidophilous oak woods with Quercus robur on sandy plains. Annex II species: Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia*; and Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*	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: • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;	• 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***
	• 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.	
River Axe SAC		
Annex I habitat: Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation Annex II: Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus;* Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri;* and Bullhead *Cottus gobio*	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: • 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.	• Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources) • Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions • Invasive non-native species
Brackets Coppice SAC		
Annex I Habitat: Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) *Annex II species:* Bechstein`s bat *Myotis bechsteinii*	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: • 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;	• Grazing • Air pollution, air-borne pollutants • Problematic native species

Qualifying features	*Conservation Objectives*	*Threats*
	• 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.	
Crookhill Brick Pit SAC		
Annex II: Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*	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: • 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.	• Biocenotic evolution, succession
Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA and Ramsar		
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): 1. Little terns *Sterna albifrons* (breeding) 2. Common terms *Sterna hirundo* 3. Ringed Plover *Charadive histicula* 4. Wigeon *Anas Penelope* (overwinter) 5. Pochard *Aythya farina* (overwinter) 6. Teal *Anas crecca* (overwinter) 7. Pintail *Anas acuta* (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; • 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	• 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***
8. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (overwinter) 9. Shoveler *Anas clypeata* (overwinter) 10. Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula* (overwinter) 11. Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (overwinter) 12. Mute swan *Cygnua olor* (overwinter) 13. Brent geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* (overwinter) The information sheet on the Ramsar Wetland lists the following criterion as justification of the designation: *Ramsar criterion 1*- 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. *Ramsar criterion 2*- 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. *Ramsar criterion 3* - The site is the largest barrier-built saline lagoon in the UK and has the greatest diversity of habitats and of biota. *Ramsar criterion 4* - The site is important for a number of species at a critical stage in their life cycle including post-larval and juvenile bass *Dicentrarchus labrax*. *Ramsar criterion 6* - Dark-bellied brent goose, *Branta bernicla* species/populations occurring at levels of international importance. Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* *Ramsar criterion 8* - The site is important as a nursery for bass *Dicentrarchus labrax*.	• The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.	