



Addendum to the HRA of the North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1) Submission Version



Durwyn Liley



Addendum to the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the
North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1), Submission Version

Date: 11th July 2014

Version: Final

Recommended Citation: Liley, D. (2014). Addendum to the Habitats Regulations Assessment of North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1), Submission Version. Footprint Ecology.

Summary

This addendum provides a screening for the likelihood of significant effects on European wildlife sites, arising from a change in housing allocation within the North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1). This addendum should be read in conjunction with the main Habitats Regulations Assessment report for the Local Plan.

The change in allocation removes one housing allocation to the west of Blandford, with a capacity for 150 dwellings, replacing it with a new allocation to the south of Blandford with a capacity for 300 dwellings.

Potential impacts on European sites are considered. In particular issues relating to recreational pressure on chalk grassland sites, water resources and water quality, and the management of Rooksmoor Common are checked.

It is concluded that, with the application of all mitigation measures already recommended within the main Habitats Regulations Assessment report with regard to these potential issues, the amendment to the plan can be screened out from the likelihood of significant effects. No further assessment is required.

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Amended allocation for housing at Blandford	3
3. Screening for the likelihood of significant effects	5
Recreational pressure on the Dorset Heaths	5
Impact of recreation on chalk grassland sites	5
Water resource and water quality impacts.....	6
Long-term management of Rooksmoor SAC.....	6
4. Conclusions	8

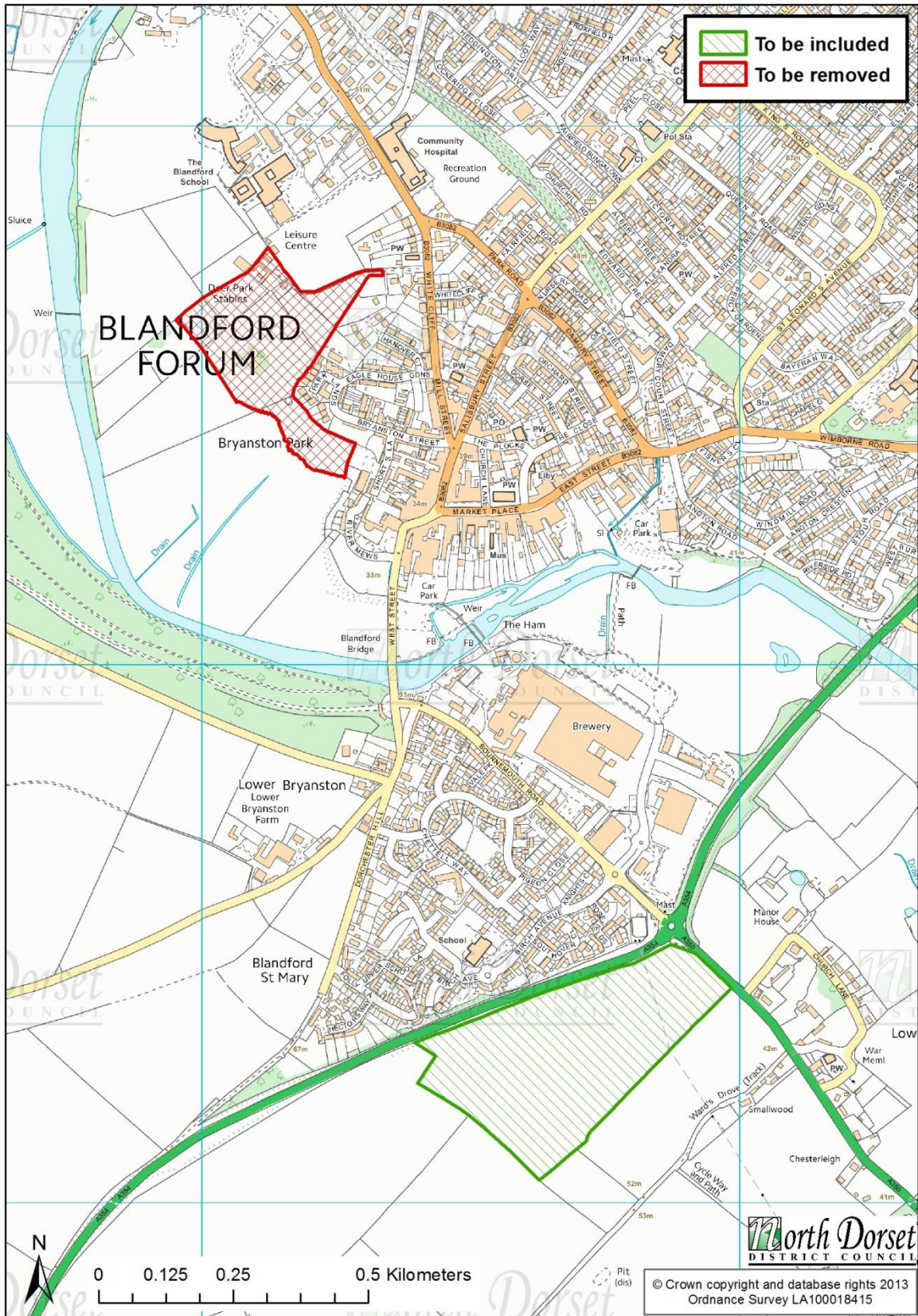
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an addendum to the main Habitats Regulations Assessment report for the North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1). This report should therefore be read in conjunction with the main document, which provides the background and legislative context for Habitats Regulations Assessment and details of all relevant European wildlife sites.
- 1.2 The Habitats Regulations Assessment was finalised in November 2013. The assessment was iterative, alongside the development of the Local Plan, informing policy options and recommending text amendments to secure adequate protection of European wildlife sites and their interest features. The final conclusions were that, subject to a number of minor amendments, the plan was compliant with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. This addendum provides a check on a subsequent amendment to the Local Plan in terms of a site allocation for housing. All other elements of the plan previously assessed remain the same.

2. Amended allocation for housing at Blandford

- 2.1 A housing allocation at West Blandford was included in the Local Plan, with a potential capacity for 150 dwellings. This site is now being excluded from the plan, and replaced with a new housing site to the south of Blandford, at Blandford St Mary. The new housing site runs alongside the A354, immediately south of the A354/A350 roundabout. The new site has a potential capacity for 300 new dwellings.
- 2.2 The site to be excluded and the new site to be added to the Local Plan are both shown on Map 1.

Map 1. Excluded and new housing sites at Blandford



3. Screening for the likelihood of significant effects

- 3.1 The main Habitats Regulations Assessment report proceeded through a screening for the likelihood of significant effects, and then a detailed appropriate assessment was made. These stages were revisited and updated as the plan progressed. A number of potential issues identified at the screening stage were subsequently ruled out from any possibility of adverse effects on site integrity as more detailed information was gathered at the appropriate assessment stage. These issues related to potential impacts to coastal sites and the New Forest. Additionally, consideration of potential air quality changes led to a conclusion of no adverse effects but comprehensive monitoring was recommended.
- 3.2 The proposed amendment to the one housing allocation at Blandford can be screened out from any such potential issues relating to coastal sites, the New Forest and air quality, for the same reasons that the main Habitats Regulations Assessment report found there to be no adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites. The main report should be consulted for the detailed assessment of these matters.
- 3.3 The following potential issues and the specific European sites to which they relate were also assessed in detail as part of the main appropriate assessment, and for these issues a number of recommendations were made:
- Potential impacts on the Dorset Heaths arising from recreation (Dorset Heaths SAC/SPA/Ramsar).
 - Potential impacts from recreation on chalk grassland sites (Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC and Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA)
 - Water issues were identified in terms of both the additional water demand and waste water discharges from sewage treatment works.
 - Management of Rooksmoor SAC, being bisected by two A-roads, was identified as an issue in light of traffic changes.
- 3.4 In terms of the change to the housing allocation at Blandford, it is these four issues that are checked to ensure that the likelihood of significant effects can be screened out.

Recreational pressure on the Dorset Heaths

- 3.5 The main Habitats Regulations Assessment report identifies a zone of influence, within which mitigation measures are required. The new site at Blandford is outside the zone of influence for impacts on the Dorset Heaths. The mitigation measures are therefore not revisited as it is the location of the housing site that enables it to be screened out from any likelihood of significant effects.

Impact of recreation on chalk grassland sites

- 3.6 The main Habitats Regulations Assessment advises that supporting text for Policy 4 recognises the issue but states that several measures are in place to control recreational pressure. The assessment therefore recommended that these measures

should be clarified or reference removed. It was also recommended that that the Council liaise with Natural England and site managers (Dorset Wildlife Trust/National Trust) in order to ensure monitoring is in place and that should any problems arise in the future, relating to increased recreational pressure from local users, mechanisms are in place to resolve the problems.

- 3.7 In screening the amended housing site, it is concluded that the same mitigation measures are applicable. It is noted that the new housing site lies further away from Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC than the site being removed from the plan, lying on the opposite side of Blandford to the European site to the north. The potential impacts arising from the new allocation are therefore no greater in likelihood or extent than the previous allocation.
- 3.8 With previous mitigation measures in place, the new allocation can be screened out from any further stages of assessment.

Water resource and water quality impacts

- 3.9 The main Habitats Regulations Assessment found that whilst it could be concluded that European sites will not be affected in terms of water resources or water quality, there is an evidence need to support the plan to provide certainty that this is the case.
- 3.10 It was recommended that urgent discussions take place between the Council and the Environment Agency and Wessex Water to build the necessary evidence to support the conclusion that the proposed growth over the plan period will not contribute to any impacts on European sites in terms of water quality and water resources. Additionally, it was identified that the plan needs to specifically refer to the Strategy for Managing Nitrogen for Poole Harbour and secure policy wording that commits development within the catchment area to adhering to the nitrogen neutral requirements, primarily within policy 4 but also in introductory sections describing overall growth for the plan period.
- 3.11 In screening the amended housing site, it is concluded that the same mitigation measures are applicable. Whilst the new site has a greater capacity for new dwellings, being a site for 300 houses rather than 150, it is concluded that the additional houses will be equally accommodated by the measures proposed. Unless consents for water abstraction and discharge are nearing capacity, the small increase will not be significant. The previous recommendation for gaining up to date evidence will identify if there are any such issues.
- 3.12 With previous mitigation measures in place, the new allocation can be screened out from any further stages of assessment.

Long-term management of Rooksmoor SAC

- 3.13 The appropriate assessment within the main report raised concerns regarding the long term management of Rooksmoor SAC and impacts of increased traffic levels. Early assessment during initial stages of plan preparation indicated that adverse effect on the integrity of the site could not be ruled out, due to possible traffic increases on the roads

bisecting Lydlinch Common. Subsequently the Secretary of State approved an application for fencing on Lydlinch Common. Additionally, Natural England has funded extensive scrub clearance on the common and this, combined with the fencing is allowing grazing to be reinstated. The fencing is approved to 2025. It was therefore highlighted within the main assessment that prior to 2025 it will be necessary for the management at Lydlinch Common to be reviewed.

- 3.14 Rooksmoor SAC lies to the north west of Blandford. Whilst the new housing site could potentially contribute to the identified impacts, the comprehensive on site measures now in place enable the site to be screened out from any further assessment.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The change in housing allocation at Blandford has been checked for the possibility of any significant effects on European wildlife sites. Relevant mitigation measures identified in the main Habitats Regulations Assessment have been revisited. It is concluded that, providing that all measures recommended within the main Habitats Regulations Assessment report are implemented in full, the new allocation can be screened out from the likelihood of significant effects. The allocation as part of the North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1) is compliant with the Habitats Regulations and no further assessment is required.