

Reviewing the Plan for Purbeck's future

Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review
Sustainability Appraisal Non-Technical Summary, January 2015



Thriving communities in balance
with the natural environment

Purpose of this report

This is a non-technical summary of the Sustainability Appraisal for the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review Issues and Options consultation document. This report will set out details of the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review, provide an overview of the SA process and set out the initial findings and recommendations.

What is sustainable development?

The most commonly accepted definition of sustainable development is: ‘...development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’

Source: Brundtland Commission, 1987

The UK government strategy for sustainable development ‘Securing the Future’ states that its aim is

To enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

The five guiding principles for sustainable development are:

- Living within Environmental Limits
- Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society
- Achieving a Sustainable Economy
- Promoting Good Governance
- Using Sound Science Responsibly

What is included in the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review Issues and Options?

The Issues and Options document represents the first stage of consultation on the Partial Review. The plan will address the following issues:

- The length of the plan period identified
- Housing levels
- Options for settlement extensions on smaller sites
- Options for potential larger sites for housing
- Green Belt

Some related issues are also addressed in the document including:

- Employment
- Retail
- Management of impact on internationally significant environmental designations
- Transport

The document also considers some other issues which include:

- Review of settlement boundaries
- Review of town and local centre boundaries
- Affordable housing delivery
- Self / custom build housing
- Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People
- Proposed country park at Morden
- Other open space
- Military needs
- Other planning policies

What are the stages of the SA process?

The table below sets out key stages of the SA for Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review Issues and Options.

Stage A: Develop a framework for the SA and an evidence base to inform it. We produced a Scoping Report in 2013. Specialist advisors (English Heritage, Environment Agency and Natural England) have made comments which have been taken into consideration during the preparation of the consultation document.



Stage B: Assess the Issues and Options. We prepared the Issues and Options SA report in January 2015 in order to show how we have done this.



Stage C: Preferred Options for the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review. We will later prepare an updated SA report to show our assessment, taking into account the comments made at the Issues and Options stage.



Stage D: Consult stakeholders. We will consult stakeholders on our SA report.



Stages B&C: Appraise any significant changes to the plan following consultation and produce revised SA report



Stage E: Monitor. We will monitor effects of the Swanage Local Plan

What are the SA objectives?

The eight SA objectives are set out below:

Does the Plan:	SA Objectives
	Meet as much of Purbeck's housing need as possible?
	Promote services and facilities where need is identified?
	Harness the economic potential of tourism and widen employment opportunities in Swanage?
	Help everyone access basic services, reduce the need to travel by car & encourage cycling, walking & use of public transport?
	Reduce vulnerability to flooding and coastal change, and adapt to climatic changes?
	Protect & enhance habitats and species and local geodiversity?
	Protect & enhance Purbeck's unique landscape & townscape, & cultural & historical assets?
	Minimise all forms of pollution and consumption of natural resources?

How was the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review Issues and Options document appraised?

The options were appraised against each of the SA objectives. In assessing the plan, account has been taken of a number of issues; including:

- Whether the effect is likely to be permanent or temporary
- The likelihood of the effect occurring
- The scale of the effect (e.g. whether it will affect one location or a wide area)
- Whether it will combine with the effects of other policies and proposals to generate a cumulative effect greater than the effect of each individual policy or proposal
- Whether there are policies elsewhere that will help to mitigate adverse effects occurring or support positive effects
- The current status and trends in the environmental, social and economic baseline or characteristics of the area affected
- Whether it is likely to affect particularly sensitive locations, e.g. those that are designated as international or national level, or where thresholds (e.g. air quality) might be breached.

To facilitate the appraisal process, a series of assessment matrices were produced, these matrices include:

- A commentary on significant impacts against the SA objectives;
- A score indicating the nature of the impact; and
- Recommendations as to how the proposals may be improved against the SA objectives including any mitigation or enhancements, which could be considered in the next steps of policy formation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment in Action (Therivel, 2004) states that greater weight should be given to longer-term impacts. While this would make sense, the question posed in this SA is “*how long is long term?*” There appears to be no definition and no guidance on this. Long-term effects are particularly difficult to predict, in particular with reference to how future technologies may assist in travel patterns, how climate change will occur, and how the changes will impact on human behaviour are almost impossible to predict in the long term. For example, an assumption is made that oil costs will rise and that much mechanised travel will still require the consumption of oil. However, should alternative technologies become available (and especially affordable), the results of some of the options would be somewhat different.

This SA is taking the definition of ‘long term’ to be towards the end of the plan period, rather than later. It has made an assumption that oil consumption will continue for some time, and that climate change will lead to more unpredictable weather patterns. Predicting long-term trends beyond the plan period is more difficult and has not been attempted.

How does the plan assist in the objective to meet as much of Purbeck's housing need as possible?

The Partial Review Issues and Options document includes options to meet the district's objectively assessed housing needs. These include delivering the assessed need in accordance with national guidance and delivering more than the assessed need. Both options would provide an opportunity to meet as much of Purbeck's housing need as possible. However, this will be subject to additional testing, for example to take into account the constraints posed by European protected habitats and transport infrastructure. This testing could see the overall amount of housing reduced or restrict housing delivery in specific areas of the district.

The Issues and Options document includes options to maximise the proportion of new housing that is affordable to local people. Market housing is still needed and essential to the delivery of affordable housing, with high land values supporting the contribution of affordable housing. Options that maximise the provision of affordable housing in new development proposals will be of benefit to local people who often find that new property continues to be unaffordable - due to high demand from in-migrants, retirees and second homes (all attracted by the quality of living in Purbeck).

The Issues and Options document includes options relating to the general location of development across the district and site-specific options. The site specific options are greenfield sites and these could offer an opportunity to provide a good supply of affordable housing along with a good mix in the size and type of housing to meet the district's needs. The document also includes options relating to the provision of self / custom building housing across the district which may be a particular need (although not necessarily affordable housing need).

Potentially significant beneficial effects: An increase in the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs. A good mix of provision in terms of the size and type of housing, including self / custom build to meet the district's needs.

Potentially significant negative effects: None identified.

How does the plan assist in the objective to promote services and facilities where need is identified?

The Partial Review Issues and Options document includes options to meet the district's objectively assessed retail needs. These include delivering the assessed need and delivering more than the assessed need. These options could help to create more self-containment and reduce some regular local travel out of the district.

The document also includes options to retain community and retail facilities in the current local centres. These options would ensure that such facilities are retained within walking distance of many people's homes allowing easy access to basic everyday needs.

Potentially significant beneficial effects: Options are included to provide additional retail provision in the district in accordance with, or above identified need. Whilst this option could help to increase the self-containment of communities and reduce the need to travel out of the district, it is unknown at this stage of the plan where such provision would be located and whether this would be in an area of need. The site-specific options could assist in the provision of community facilities and additional green space in the form of Green Infrastructure or SANGs. The options in relation to the current local centres would safeguard facilities and retail provision within walking distance for many residents into the future.

Potentially significant negative effects: None identified

How does the plan assist in the objective to harness the economic potential of tourism and widen employment opportunities in Purbeck?

The Partial Review Issues and Options document suggests a variety of different options to help meet employment needs across the District. The options include focusing additional employment development at existing key employment sites and providing employment at smaller sites across the District. The options relating to the provision of additional retail floor space could also assist in meeting this objective.

Potentially significant beneficial effects: Options are included to meet employment needs at existing key sites and smaller new sites. The options for new housing development are likely to attract families in employment and this may, in turn, attract additional employment to the area and support existing employers.

Potentially significant negative effects: None identified.

How does the plan assist in the objective to help everyone access basic services, reduce the need to travel by car and encourage cycling, walking, and use of public transport?

The Partial Review Issues and Options document includes options that support accessibility and self-containment. It includes options that promote development of communities (housing, employment and retail) in which residents and visitors can access basic services without the need to travel. Through the Purbeck Transport Strategy, alternative forms of transport are being promoted that should help to reduce future dependence on travel by the car. In particular, along the congested A351 transport corridor, new cycle routes, more frequent bus services and improvements to local rail links will all help to link the largest population centres with employment, shops and other facilities. Options for housing, retail and employment development at the district's towns and key service villages would also assist in achieving this objective.

Potentially significant beneficial effects: The options could provide opportunities to focus new housing, employment and retail development at the district's towns and key service villages. These locations would enable easy access to larger local populations and are most likely to be located on a bus route (thereby reducing the need to rely on the car to access services and facilities). There may also be opportunities to mitigate the impact of new development through the provision of improved cycling, bus and rail services.

Potentially significant negative effects: The options to disperse new housing around the district's smaller rural settlements or to those settlements without a settlement boundary score negatively, as these settlements are served by minimal services, facilities and employment opportunities. These options would be likely to see an increase in the need to travel by car to the district's key service villages and towns to access a wider range of facilities and services.

How does the plan assist in the objective to reduce vulnerability to flooding and coastal change and adapt to climatic changes?

The Partial Review Issues and Options document indirectly plans for climate change by including options that provide the opportunity to reduce the need to travel by promoting self-contained communities supported by improved public transport. The options also indirectly provide the opportunity to assist in carbon-fixing through the promotion of green infrastructure, green belt, local environmental designations and landscape designations. Continued liaison with the Environment Agency during the preparation of the plan to ensure no housing sites are allocated in the floodplain, or in areas that are affected by coastal erosion.

Potentially significant beneficial effects: Options could be supported by mitigation through the need for developers to demonstrate that new development can deal with surface water run-off.

Potentially significant negative effects: None identified.

How does the plan assist in the objective to protect and enhance habitats and species?

Purbeck is a bio-diverse district, where there will always be a challenge in balancing local housing needs with the protection of habitats and species from adverse effects. Natural England was heavily involved in the preparation of the Local Plan Part 1 and the identification of suitable mitigation. Natural England recommended a policy which does not permit residential development within 400m of heathland (PLP1 Policy DH) and a policy to help protect Poole harbour (PLP1 Policy PH). Natural England will continue to advise on issues such as identification of SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces) to support strategic housing sites, which should reduce visitor pressure on nearby protected sites. The advice of Natural England will be taken into account in developing the options included in the Partial Review. The site specific options include potential SANGS and will take account of existing constraints. The Partial Review will be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment throughout its preparation. The impact on the ecology of other sites will also be taken into account and, if relevant consultees raise concerns, these will be addressed during the preparation of the plan.

Potentially significant beneficial effects: The options provide opportunities to secure new open space and SANGS as mitigation. These could provide opportunities to link habitats and help avoid any increase in visitor pressure to protected sites. Impact on other nature conservation sites would require appropriate mitigation.

Potentially significant negative effects: SANGs are unproven, if these should be unsuccessful there could be a risk of negative impact from increased visitor pressure on protected sites.

How does the plan assist in the objective to protect and enhance Purbeck's unique landscape and townscape and cultural and historical assets?

All building in Purbeck will need to take into account policies relating to design, landscape and historic environment protection. The Partial Review Issues and Options document includes a wide range of options that could provide opportunities to balance the scale of new development and ensure that the setting of historic settlements is not compromised.

Potentially significant beneficial effects: The options offer potential for locally distinctive development - especially if applicants make reference to landscape character assessment, townscape appraisals and design guidance.

Potentially significant negative effects: None identified

How does the plan assist in the objective to minimise all forms of pollution and consumption of natural resources?

Pollution

Existing policies provide the opportunity to minimise pollution using Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) and groundwater protection. The range of options include an opportunity to concentrate new development at the district's towns and key service villages where there is already some light pollution, this would help to ensure that more rural areas remain relatively free from further levels of light pollution.

Consumption of Natural Resources

The range of options offered includes an opportunity to focus new development at the district's towns and key service villages which would assist in a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The fastest-growing area of emissions in Purbeck is through transport, and so a possible focus for Purbeck could be an increase in levels of self-containment and the provision of alternatives to car-dependency. The Purbeck Transportation Strategy is promoting alternative forms of transport to the car that could help reduce dependence on the car. In particular, along the congested A351 transport corridor new cycle routes, more frequent bus services and the reconnection of the local railway will help to link the largest population centres with employment, shops and other facilities.

Although Purbeck is not located within the driest part of the UK, water provision could increasingly become a problem through climate change, leakages and lack of water metering of existing housing stock. Future water efficiency will be addressed through promoting the incorporation of water efficiency measures and use of sustainable drainage systems.

Potentially significant beneficial effects: The options offer an opportunity to encourage water efficiency measures. The range of options offers an opportunity to focus development at the district's towns and key service villages and areas served by bus routes. The options may allow for mitigation of new development through the provision of improved cycling, bus and rail services.

Potentially significant negative effects: Some of the options are less accessible on foot or by public transport to everyday facilities and services, particularly the development options proposed for small villages, in the rural areas with few existing facilities and services and the proposed employment and tourism options in rural locations. The reluctance of people to switch from cars to public transport or cycling could continue to be an issue. The cumulative impact of additional development in Purbeck over the plan period could exacerbate noise and light pollution in particular.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Discussion of significant positive and negative effects

36. The SA of the Partial Review Issues and Options document has highlighted a variety of positive and negative effects. The positive effects include an improved ability to meet some of the SA objectives, such as meeting Purbeck's housing need, promoting services and facilities (where need is identified), improving access to basic facilities and reducing the need to travel by car. The negative effects relate to habitat protection, accessibility, pollution and natural resources. A number of negative effects can be addressed as the document progresses and options are refined during the next stages. This highlights the benefit of using the SA as an iterative process of preparing policy, highlighting weaknesses and potential mitigation measures that can be followed up and resolved.
37. At this early stage of document preparation, there is potential for some options to have significant negative effects, in particular the options that focus development in remote villages (which would not reduce the need to travel). The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will deal with potential negative effects on habitat and provide additional information to ensure that the Partial Review has sufficient mitigation for biodiversity impact.
38. Regarding problems of accessibility, it will be important that development options are as close as possible to existing facilities and services, that cycle routes and walking routes are in place and that there is additional public transport. Some options clearly present more difficulties than others do. The more sustainable options for development with significant positive effects are those located at existing towns and key service villages, key employment sites, and larger sites that create the opportunity for better on-site facilities and services, including employment provision and/or more transport options. Options that would see development in the countryside with poor access to services and facilities and reliance on the car score negatively.
39. In the short term, all development options score poorly for pollution and consumption of natural resources (see matrices in the main SA report for details). This factor reflects the impact of the construction phase (noise and impact on landscape). In the longer term, these effects lessen as the construction work is completed and planting and landscaping schemes can help to soften the impact of any new development.
40. The most significant negative effects of pollution and natural resources are caused by cumulative impact over the years. The SA identifies a number of options with significant negative effects in relation to pollution and consumption of natural resources. These include options for dispersed development around the district's local service villages, other villages without a settlement boundary, and the option for a criteria based policy to allow growth at other villages in the countryside without a

settlement boundary. These options score negatively in terms of impact on natural resources, initial pollution impacts from development in the countryside and the long-term impacts of traffic related pollution from increased vehicle movements - as residents travel to access all key services, facilities, employment, retail and other provisions. The options to prioritise site-specific development at a local service village and other villages with a settlement boundary, employment development and tourist accommodation in the countryside also identify a significant negative impact in relation to this objective.

41. Mitigation for the objective relating to pollution is similar to the mitigation for problems of accessibility: ensuring development options are close to existing facilities and services, that cycle and walking routes are in place, that there is additional public transport. All of these measures would help prevent an increase in traffic and associated traffic noise and light pollution, as well as minimising the use of natural resources.
42. Options that provide services and facilities that meet an identified need also have significant positive effects, in particular the provision of a strategic area of SANGs at Morden and an extension to the park and ride at Norden.
43. Most importantly, Purbeck has an adopted plan (Purbeck Local Plan Part 1) with policies already in place to protect landscape, biodiversity, flooding and other major issues across the District.
44. A summary of the main strengths and weaknesses is set out in section below. Mitigation measures follow.

Sustainability strengths of the Partial Review of the PLP1 Issues and Options document

- Some options are located close to existing services and facilities, which would reduce the need to travel.
- Options include additional retail provision, which, depending on the site location, may help to reduce car dependence.
- Options include some site-specific larger-scale development (rather than just dispersed sites) which would enable facilities and services to be focussed in specific areas.
- Options include additional employment provision could provide a wider range of employment opportunities across the district.
- Options are included to deliver the district's objectively assessed housing need and maximise the provision of affordable housing.
- The adopted policies in PLP1 will continue to be applied to all development across the district.

Sustainability weaknesses of the Partial Review of the PLP1 Issues and Options document

- Environmental constraints could mean that the options cannot meet the district's objectively assessed housing need, or maximise the amount of affordable housing.
- SANGs are currently unproven and there is a risk that these may not successfully remove pressure from the heathlands and other protected areas.
- Some of the site-specific options rely on infrastructure investment by the developer to provide services, facilities and employment in order to achieve sustainable communities.
- Housing growth, particularly within rural areas, is likely to have cumulative impact on the environment and on energy consumption, as well as noise pollution, light pollution and traffic related pollution. This may, in turn, impact negatively on the health and well-being of residents.
- Climate change could offset any enhancement to habitats and could lead to increased vulnerability to flooding.

Summary of mitigation measures

Mitigation measures set out in this SA would go some way to making the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review Issues and Options Document more sustainable. Mitigation measures set out in the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will also need to be carried out. The table below lists mitigation measures not included in the HRA and mitigation that is not included in adopted policies in the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1.

Mitigation proposed	How could mitigation be addressed?
Ensure housing and services/facilities come forward together	Through development briefs for the preferred sites
Ensure housing and services/facilities are close together	By promoting a smaller number of larger sites rather than a larger number of smaller sites Through development briefs for the preferred site(s)
Improve provision and frequency of public transport, especially if sites further away from the town centres of Wareham and Swanage are taken forward.	Through amendments to the Purbeck Transportation Strategy
Consider provision of live/work units and promotion of home working	Encourage landowner / developer to put forward such schemes by setting them out in development briefs.
Ensure that all flood risk data is up-to-date	Through annual updating of the SFRA

Monitoring

The SA monitoring of the Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review will follow the standard approach available at: <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/localplan/monitoring/purbeck>.

Additional recommendations for monitoring of SA objectives are as follows:

When housing completions for Purbeck are monitored, the results will need to be separated into housing for each spatial area. Housing that is built according to the housing allocations included as settlement extensions in Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 should be recorded separately. All affordable housing provision should be monitored in accordance with the relevant policies in Purbeck Local Plan Part 1.



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