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# Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

Swanage Town Council

March 2026

Delivering a better world

## Quality information

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| V0.1 | February 2026 | First draft for internal review | EB | Environmental Planner |
| V1.0 | March 2026 | Final | RC | Principal Environmental Planner |
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# Non-Technical Summary

## What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as the "Swanage NP"). This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan groups use SEA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to help avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects through the Neighbourhood Plan and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.

## What is the Swanage NP?

The Swanage NP has been prepared as a Neighbourhood Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012).

## Purpose of this Environmental Report

The Environmental Report, which accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Swanage NP, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (January 2024), which included information about the neighbourhood area's environment and community.

The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Swanage NP and alternatives.
- Provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.

The Environmental Report contains:

- An overview of the vision and objectives of the Swanage NP and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes.
- The SEA Framework of objectives against which the Swanage NP has been assessed.
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the Swanage NP.
- The preferred approach for the Swanage NP.
- The appraisal of the policies included in the Swanage NP.
- Conclusions and recommendations based upon the plan appraisal.
- The next steps for the Swanage NP and accompanying SEA process.

# Consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Swanage NP

In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include:

- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with.
- The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives appraised.

## Strategic factors (top-down considerations)

The strategic context is provided by the Purbeck Local Plan (PLP) 2018-2034 adopted in 2024; the Swanage Local Plan (SLP) 2017-2027 adopted in 2017; the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Waste Plan adopted in 2019; and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy reviewed in 2020.

Within the PLP, Policy V1/ H2 makes provision for around 91 new homes within Swanage. The wider PLP policy framework provides strategic direction for the area, supporting the delivery of Neighbourhood Plans to provide a local policy mix supported by local evidence.

The emerging Dorset Local Plan Review will replace the PLP and cover the plan period to 2043. Dorset Council held a Local Plan Options Consultation between August and October 2025, setting out opportunities for meeting development needs across the plan area.

The Options consultation document identifies that using the new Standard Method, the emerging Local Plan will need to plan for 3,246 homes a year, which equates to 55,182 homes in total between April 2026 and March 2043. The consultation document recognises that a significant amount and variety of land will need to be identified to meet this new target, and the settlement hierarchy identifies the towns and villages that will be the focus of new development.

Within the hierarchy, Swanage is identified as a Tier 2 settlement. This level (Towns and other main settlements) comprises the market and coastal towns across Dorset and other main settlements within the Green Belt, and close to the built-up area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Instead, it identifies over 240 opportunity sites across the Dorset Council area at Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, that together could deliver around 33,000 new homes. Of these 240 opportunity sites, seven are identified within Swanage. While the consultation document does not identify a specific need figure for further development within the neighbourhood area, these sites combined have the potential to deliver approximately 417 dwellings. However, following consultation, one site has been removed from consideration – reducing the number to approximately 343.

## Appraisal of site options (bottom-up considerations)

To understand the 'bottom up' considerations, AECOM undertook a Site Options Assessment (SOA) process, which was completed in November 2025. 24 sites in total were identified in the neighbourhood area through examining the 2024 Dorset SHLAA and through the 2024 Swanage Town Council Call for Sites. After initial sifting (reflecting site availability, removing sites that are already being brought

forward, and previous exclusions), 14 sites were taken forward for assessment - nine were assessed fully through the SOA and five were assessed through a review of the 2024 Dorset SHLAA outputs.

Of these 14 sites, the SOA concluded two as being suitable for development, nine have been identified as potentially suitable, and three have been identified as not suitable. However, following review, one of the three sites identified as not suitable has been brought back into consideration. These 12 sites, alongside two additional sites identified through the Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025, are listed in Table 5.1 of the main report, and taken forward for consideration through the SEA.

## Identification of reasonable alternatives

Individual assessments of each of the 14 sites has been carried out within the AECOM SOA and the Local Plan options consultation document. As such, the SEA seeks to focus on spatial strategy options for the Neighbourhood Plan.

As there is no strategic housing growth target for the Neighbourhood Plan, the short-listed sites provide the Town Council with an opportunity to either allocate within the settlement boundary (low growth), or within and outside of the settlement boundary (higher growth).

Exploring an option which focuses growth within the settlement boundary of Swanage would align strongly with the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, helping reduce potential impacts on key environmental constraints within the neighbourhood area. This includes (but is not limited to) the undeveloped parts of the Dorset National Landscape, the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site, and the St Albans Head to Durlston Head Special Area of Conservation. Additionally, focusing growth within the settlement boundary will help to deliver growth within more sustainable locations in relation to accessing community services, which include educational facilities, medical facilities, retail services, and entertainment facilities.

However, the Town Council felt it important to also test a high growth option which more closely meets the level of growth tested through the Local Plan Options consultation, unlocking positive effects in terms of housing mix and wider local infrastructure needs. These are also key priorities for the Neighbourhood Plan.

For clarity, the options are set out below and in Figure 5.1 of the main report:

- Option 1: sites within the settlement boundary (approximately 152 homes).
- Option 2: sites within and outside the settlement boundary (approximately 441 homes).

## Assessment of reasonable alternatives

The SEA has carried out an assessment of the two reasonable alternative spatial strategy options identified above. Detailed assessment findings are presented in **Chapter 6** of the main Report.

A summary of assessment findings is presented in Table NTS1 below. For each of the topics that form the SEA Framework, the columns to the right rank the two options in order of performance, and conclude whether the options are likely to have significant effects on the baseline.

### Table NTS1: Assessment findings – rankings and significant effects

| SEA theme | | Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Biodiversity and geodiversity | Significant effect? | No | No |
| | Rank | = | = |
| Climate change and flood risk | Significant effect? | No | No |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |
| Community wellbeing | Significant effect? | Yes – positive | Yes - positive |
| | Rank | 2 | 1 |
| Historic environment | Significant effect? | No | Yes - negative |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |
| Land, soil and water resources | Significant effect? | No | Yes - negative |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |
| Landscape | Significant effect? | No | Yes - negative |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |
| Transportation | Significant effect? | No | No |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |

## Establishing the preferred approach for the Swanage NP

Swanage Town Council will set out their justification for the selection and rejection of options explored through the SEA. However, this has not been established ahead of the finalisation of this Environmental Report.

# Appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Swanage NP

For each SEA theme scoped into the assessment, 'significant' effects of the policy framework within the Regulation 14 version of the Swanage NP on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations. For example, account it taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' have been described within the appraisal, as appropriate.

Detailed appraisal findings are presented in **Chapter 9** in the main body of this Environmental Report. A summary of the appraisal findings is presented below.

**Minor positive effects** are considered likely in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA theme. This reflects the focus on high quality design through new development and the safeguarding of green infrastructure and green spaces, to ensure biodiversity value and connectivity is maintained and enhanced. This also reflects the conclusions of the HRA, which indicate that no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites will arise from the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

**Minor positive effects** are also considered likely in relation to the community wellbeing SEA theme. The neighbourhood plan works well to deliver new growth, and support community wellbeing through maintained and enhanced green space, open space and recreation space. However, whilst the neighbourhood plan works to deliver housing growth to reduce the experienced deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services, it could also result in stress upon community infrastructure within Swanage.

**Minor positive effects** are further considered likely for the historic environment SEA theme. This is due to the site specific stipulations which work to maintain heritage settings and significance, and the wider plan policies which work to protect and enhance historic setting through protecting historic value and character.

**Broadly neutral effects** are considered likely in relation to the climate change and flood risk SEA theme. This is due to the level of growth proposed through the neighbourhood plan and the inevitable increase in emissions associated with it, and the stipulations included to help mitigate these emissions. It also reflects the focus on high quality development design to help reduce flood risk and effects.

**Minor negative effects** are considered likely under the transportation SEA theme. The level of growth proposed through the neighbourhood plan is likely to increase the number of private vehicles on the local road network, given there is limited sustainable transportation opportunities. The plan works to reduce effects by ensuring development is focused within the most sustainable parts of the neighbourhood area, to promote active travel access where possible.

**Minor negative effects** are considered likely under the landscape SEA theme. Policy SWAN3 allocates Land North of Prospect Way which will extend the settlement further west and further into the Dorset National Landscape. It is recognised that this is considered an exceptional circumstance, and the policy includes the need for a SANG in line with the draft Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31 mitigation hierarchy. Additionally, ensuring development is assessed against design stipulations through Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance is anticipated to further ensure development adopts high quality design that is

complementary of the Swanage neighbourhood area and the Dorset National Landscape. This, along with a focus on protecting green spaces and green infrastructure that contribute to the character of the neighbourhood area, is considered to reduce the potential for significant negative effects on the landscape. As such, **minor negative** effects are concluded at this stage, recognising there is a level of uncertainty in the absence of detailed design layout.

**Minor negative effects** are also considered likely for the land, soil and water resources SEA theme, reflecting the permanent loss of greenfield land. Due consideration is given to the approach taken through the policy framework to mitigate loss where possible by focusing growth in areas with lower quality agricultural soils. Additionally, the focus on promoting growth within the existing settlement and town centre boundaries, and the protecting of green infrastructure, is also anticipated to work towards protecting resources.

In relation to the landscape SEA theme, it is considered that development proposed through the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan is anticipated to have mixed effects. Where there is a focus on bringing forward development within the existing settlement boundary, this could lead to positive and/ or negative impacts upon townscape character. However, the allocation of greenfield site Land North of Prospect Way will extend the settlement further west into the Dorset National Landscape, with the potential for significant negative effects. It is recognised that this is considered an exceptional circumstance, and the policy includes the need for a SANG in line with the draft Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31 mitigation hierarchy. Additionally, high quality design is required through the policy framework, and in line with higher level planning policy. The wider policies within the Neighbourhood Plan also seek to mitigate overall effects through protecting green infrastructure and green space. **Minor negative** effects are concluded at this stage, recognising there is a level of uncertainty in the absence of detailed design and layout of new development.

# Next steps

## Plan finalisation

This Environmental Report accompanies the Swanage NP for Regulation 14 consultation.

Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council (DC), for subsequent Independent Examination.

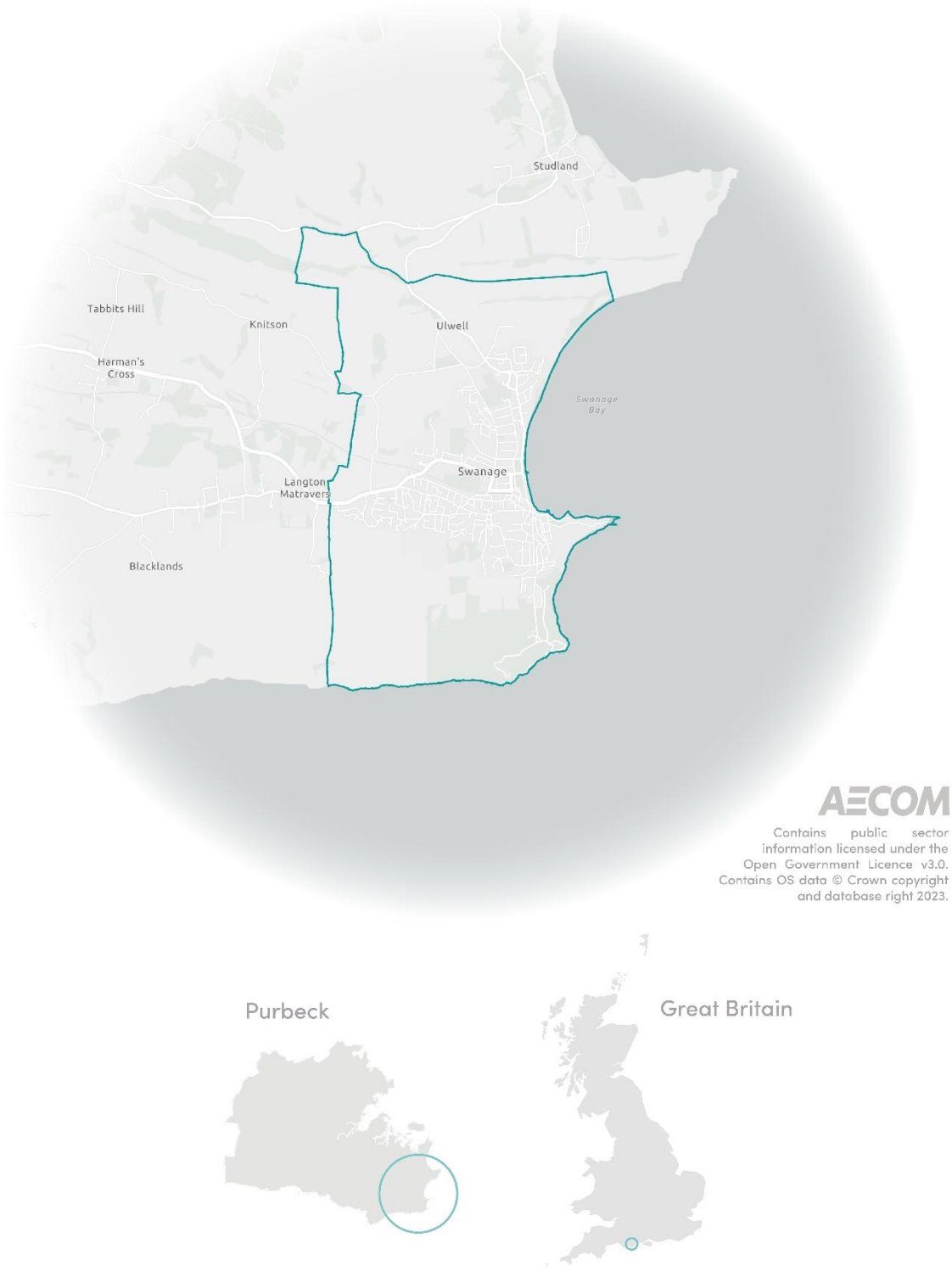
At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with local planning policy.

If the Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by DC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be ‘made’. Once made, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for Swanage.

# Monitoring

The SEA regulations require ‘measures envisaged concerning monitoring’ to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by DC as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant effects are considered likely in the implementation of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by DC.




## Figure 1.1: The Swanage neighbourhood area

# 1. Introduction

## Background

1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Swanage Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of Dorset Council.

1.3 The neighbourhood area (see above), designated in February 2022, covers the parish of Swanage. Swanage is a traditional seaside tourist resort located on the southeast coast of Purbeck. It is the largest town in Purbeck and includes a wide range of facilities, services and attractions, typical of a tourist town. Swanage is dissected by the railway which effectively splits the town into South and North Swanage.

## SEA screening

1.4 SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative effects and maximising potential positive effects.

1.5 The Swanage Neighbourhood Plan was been screened for SEA by Dorset Council in 2021. This was based on the predicted scope of the plan – given it was considered likely that site allocations would be included to provide growth, and reflecting the environmental sensitivities of the neighbourhood area and the surroundings. These conclusions also highlighted the likelihood of requiring a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

1.6 In light of the above, SEA is required to assess the potential for significant environmental effects.

## SEA explained

1.7 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations stipulate that a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes, and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*".[1] The report must then be considered when finalising the plan.

1.8 More specifically, the report can be structured to address requirements by answering the following three questions:

1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
    - including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.

[1] Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
    - i.e., in relation to the current draft plan.
3. What happens next?

# This Environmental Report

1.9 This report is the Environmental Report for the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission draft' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended). The report answers the three questions outlined above in turn, as discrete 'parts' of the report. However, before answering these questions, two further introductory sections are presented to further set the scene (Chapters 2 and 3).

# 2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

## Local Plan context for the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 The strategic context is provided by the Purbeck Local Plan (PLP) 2018-2034 adopted in 2024; the Swanage Local Plan (SLP) 2017-2027 adopted in 2017; the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Waste Plan adopted in 2019; and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy reviewed in 2020.

2.2 Consideration is also given to the emerging Dorset Local Plan. The Dorset Council Local Plan will cover the whole of the Dorset Council area. It is being produced by the newly formed Dorset Council unitary authority. Once adopted, the local plan will form part of the development plan alongside the adopted minerals and waste policy documents and any neighbourhood plans that have also been made part of the development plan.

2.3 The Dorset Local Plan most recently underwent a Regulation 18 options consultation (August 2025), which places Swanage within the South Eastern Dorset functional area as a Tier 2 Settlement. Tier 2 settlements "towns and other main settlements" include the market and coastal towns across Dorset, and 'other main settlements' within the Green Belt and close to the large built-up area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. The Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025 – Appendix A: Opportunity sites for housing[2] identifies six opportunity sites within Swanage for housing development. It is noted that opportunity sites are to be considered as 'areas of search' to be refined through the next stage of plan making.

2.4 Swanage Town Council seeks to identify sites for housing allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan process, with due consideration given to the strategic context of the emerging Local Plan.

## Swanage Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives

2.5 The vision for the Neighbourhood Plan is as follows:

> *"Swanage will keep its dual role as a centre for local residents and a seaside resort. The town will be enhanced through the provision of a range of facilities, services, shops and employment. It will therefore retain its status as one of Dorset's most self-contained settlements, whilst further enhancing its special historic character and its setting within the Dorset National Landscape and the Jurassic Coast.*
>
> *New family housing and, in particular affordable housing, will allow local people the opportunity to continue to live and work within Swanage. A diverse, thriving and prosperous economy will be secured through the promotion of a variety of business uses, the development of niche businesses that reflect the specific character and culture of the town, and a broad business portfolio that will ensure a strong economy beyond the traditional tourist season.*

[2] Dorset Council (2025). 'Dorset Council local Plan Options Consultation Appendix A: Opportunity sites for housing' can be accessed here.

*New development will be accompanied by areas of new green space that will improve access to the countryside. The town's role as a visitor destination will be enhanced through the provision of improved health and sports facilities and the creation of enhanced public spaces along the seafront."*

2.6 The vision is supported by the following three objectives:

i. Deliver genuinely affordable homes of the kind Swanage needs whilst contributing to meeting Dorset's housing needs.

ii. Improve and maintain a thriving and resilient local commercial, business and service sector, with the town centre at its heart.

iii. Ensure the special architectural and historic character of the town – in its buildings, spaces – are conserved and enhanced.

iv. Ensure development in the town conserve and enhances the natural beauty of the National Landscape and coastal habitats that surround it.

# 3. What is the scope of the SEA?

## Summary of SEA scoping

3.1 The SEA Regulations require that: “When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”.

3.2 In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England. These authorities were consulted on the scope of the SEA in January 2024.

3.3 The purpose of scoping was to outline the ‘scope’ of the SEA through setting out the following information:

- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Baseline data against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.
- The key sustainability issues for the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- An ‘SEA Framework’ of objectives against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.

3.4 Further information on the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, alongside the full SEA framework as consulted on, is presented in Appendix B.

3.5 The comments provided by the consultees on the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan SEA Scoping Report, and how they have been addressed, can also be read in Appendix B.

## Table 3.1: SEA scoping consultation responses

| Consultation response | AECOM response |
|---|---|
| ***Environment Agency – Response received 12th February 2024*** | |
| We consider there to be potential significant environmental effects associated with the<br><br>plan, based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee. These include the following:<br><br>1) Flood Zone 2 and 3<br><br>2) Statutory Main River<br><br>3) Multiple designated sites (SSSI, SAC, SPA, NNR, MCZ)<br><br>4) Source protection zones (SPZs)<br><br>5) Historic Landfill sites<br><br>The scope has been explored under a number of key environmental themes. The EA provides a comment under each theme where relevant. We hope the next stage of the SEA will incorporate our comments as set out below. | Noted with thanks. |
| In particular, we feel it is necessary to separate Climate Change and Flood Risk into their own themes respectively.<br><br>Please note the following should form a key part of the evidence base for the SEA with regards to flood risk: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1 (January 2018) which was prepared as part of the Purbeck Local Plan Review, and the Swanage Level 2 SFRA (2016) which formed part of the evidence for the last Swanage Local Plan. | Thank you for identifying the gap in the evidence base. The SFRA Level 1 and Swanage Level 2 SFRA have been referred to in the SEA process and used to consider the reasonable alternatives and the NP policies in the plan appraisal. |
| Climate change and Flood risk: From an EA perspective we would prefer to see flood risk and climate change considered as 2 separate themes within the SEA. While there is an inherent impact on flood risk from climate change, the NP area has some significant flood risk<br><br>constraints which need to be thoroughly considered in their own right. The importance of flood risk is to an extent diluted within this overall theme as demonstrated by the SEA objective. We would welcome a separate objective and assessment for flood risk within the SEA taking account of the following paragraphs.<br><br>As identified in the scoping report, the NP area has significant areas of flood zone 2 and 3 and includes a statutory main river (Swan) with 3 flood storage areas. These flood storage areas are critical to the flood defence of the town centre. Maps of fluvial and surface water flood risk are shown (Fig 5.1 & 5.2). The SEA should also consider tidal and coastal sources of flooding including storm surges and extreme events. Swanage has a long history of flooding events from these 3 sources and is at greatest risk when all 3 converge at the same time. A series of permanent and temporary coastal defences are in place to protect the town centre and beachfront.<br><br>A number of key evidence sources are identified for flood risk | Thank you for identifying the gap in the evidence base. The SFRA Level 1 and Swanage Level 2 SFRA have been referred to in the SEA process and used to consider the reasonable alternatives and the NP policies in the plan appraisal. |

| | |
|---|---|
| within the report, including the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. Excluded however, is the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1 (January 2018) which was prepared as part of the Purbeck Local Plan Review, and the Swanage Level 2 SFRA (2016) which formed part of the evidence for the last Swanage Local Plan. These are key documents for the assessment of flood risk in the NP area. The SEA should also be informed by Surface Water Management Plans and Shoreline Management Plans to reflect all flood risk sources in the NP area.<br><br>If the NP is proposing growth in flood risk areas, the Sequential Test must be suitably applied and development should be steered away from areas at increased risk of flooding to areas of lower risk. It should be noted that the plan may be found unsound if adequate justification for development in areas at increased risk of flooding is not provided.<br><br>The NP must ensure any residual risk can be adequately managed and mitigated, including the use of appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)<br><br>Assessment of flood risk should also consider the impacts from climate change and extreme weather events which will increase the risk and severity of fluvial and tidal flooding. Our latest Adaptation report, Living Better with a Changing Climate (Living better with a changing climate (publishing.service.gov.uk)), shows that England will inevitably face significant climate impacts, and that early action is essential to tackle the climate emergency. Flood resilience and climate adaption measures should be embedded into the NP where possible.<br><br>Further EA guidance on this theme is provided by the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (2020). | |
| Biodiversity and geodiversity: The report has identified the relevant nature conservation designations, protected habitats and species within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.<br><br>The government's 25 Year Environment Plan - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) sets a target to incorporate wider environmental net gain into planning decisions and strategic planning. In conjunction with the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) for planning applications from 12th February 2024, the SEA and NP should explore the opportunities for how these requirements can be met and preferably exceeded to deliver environmental net gains. The plan could also consider how the developing Local Nature Recovery Strategy can integrate into this approach.<br><br>The objective and assessment should include consideration of the marine as well as terrestrial environment and consider 'blue' as well as 'green' infrastructure networks.<br><br>This could include natural flood management approaches, river restoration including deculverting/naturalisation, and the protection of existing natural assets. | Comment noted. The supporting assessment questions have been updated to include a consideration for both green and blue infrastructure. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Land, soil and water resources: We are pleased to see water quality has been included in the SEA framework for this theme.<br><br>The report identifies the current 'poor' ecological status of the Swan river as assessed under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). An assessment of the potential impacts of the neighbourhood plan on this watercourse under WFD should be included within the SEA appraisal. Developments within or adjacent to this watercourse should not cause further deterioration and should seek to improve the water quality based on the recommendations of the Southwest River Basin Management Plan. Further information on the current status of this watercourse can be found on the England \| Catchment Data Explorer.<br><br>The NP area includes a number of Source Protection Zones (SPZs). These are defined areas around groundwater sources of drinking water, such as wells, boreholes and springs. SPZs show the level of risk to the source from contamination from pollution. The relevance of the designation and the potential implication upon development proposals should be considered with reference to our Groundwater protection guidance: Groundwater protection - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). The SEA should assess the potential for the NP to impact on these water supply resources. The NP should seek to protect all waterbodies, including groundwater from development with the potential to cause pollution and contamination.<br><br>There are a number of historic landfill sites to the south of Swanage, notably Swanage Refuse Tip. The SEA should assess the impact of any development in this vicinity, particularly with respect to contaminated land.<br><br>There are several permitted/waste related activities within the NP area which could impact on nearby development. We recommend that any housing sites are steered away from high risk facilities to ensure the sites are not vulnerable to impacts of odour, noise, dust emissions, air pollution or traffic movements. The SEA appraisal and site selection methodology should include proximity to regulated sites as a criteria. There should be appropriate buffer zones between regulated sites and any site allocations or proposed development. | Thank you for this comment. The Catchment Data Explorer has been used throughout the SEA process, and has proved most useful. The groundwater protection guides have also been a useful resource in the SEA process. The recommendation around waste infrastructure has been shared and considered. |
| Further advice and guidance: The Environment Agency, together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into your plan. This is available at: How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans - Locality Neighbourhood Planning. | |
| ***Historic England - Response received 14th February 2024*** | |
| This would appear to be our first involvement in the preparation of this Plan so we are not aware of the proposed schedule of policies which it proposes nor the detailed basis, | Comment noted with thanks. The linked document has been referred to during the SEA process and has proven most helpful. |

| | |
|---|---|
| arising from the 2021 SEA Screening, which determined that a full SEA would be required.<br><br>While acknowledging that there has been no need to involve us prior to this point in the Plan making process it would nonetheless have been helpful to have also received a copy of the current draft of policies (or even the Plan itself) as part of your consultation so that we could familiarise ourselves fully with the community's aspirations and identify more accurately any heritage and related issues which we felt the SEA process would benefit from devoting particular attention to.<br><br>As it is, we note that the Screening determined that a full SEA would be required due to the potential for impact on environmental assets arising from proposed site allocations, though it is not clear how much this conclusion was based on heritage considerations.<br><br>But we note and are pleased to see reference in Section 2 on Context, page 4, to our guidance on relevant heritage matters. To these we would strongly recommend the addition of our guidance on Site Allocations - https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/<br><br>While this is titled with emphasis on Local Plans it is equally applicable to the Neighbourhood Plan process, and will be of especial value given the Plan's aspiration to allocate sites for development.<br><br>Otherwise, there are no other comments we would wish to make at this time in association with the SEA process. But as part of the Plan making process overall we would encourage the community to explore with Dorset Council whether and how it could play a part in updating current Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans to help ensure an accurate heritage database upon which to inform policies and proposals.<br><br>We look forward to sight of the eventual SEA Environmental Report, supporting documents, and draft Plan at the next appropriate consultation stage. | |

***Natural England – no response received***

# Part 1: What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?

# 4. Introduction (to Part 1)

## Overview

4.1 The aim of this part of the report is to explain work undertaken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives. Whilst work on the Neighbourhood Plan has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work undertaken to date, but rather to discuss the evolution of the Neighbourhood Plan in association with the SEA process. More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to a particular issue that is of central importance to the plan, namely the broad location of development in the neighbourhood area.

4.2 Structure of this part of the report:

- Chapter 5 – explains the process of establishing reasonable alternatives
- Chapter 6 – presents the outcomes of assessing reasonable alternatives
- Chapter 7 – explains reasons for establishing the preferred option, in light of the assessment.

# 5. Establishing alternatives

## Introduction

5.1 The aim here is to explain the process that led to the establishment of reasonable alternatives, and thereby present “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with”.

## Strategic factors

5.2 The strategic context is provided by the Purbeck Local Plan (PLP) 2018-2034 adopted in 2024; the Swanage Local Plan (SLP) 2017-2027 adopted in 2017; the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Waste Plan adopted in 2019; and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy reviewed in 2020.

5.3 Within the PLP, Policy V1/ H2 makes provision for around 91 new homes within Swanage. The wider PLP policy framework provides strategic direction for the area, supporting the delivery of Neighbourhood Plans to provide a local policy mix supported by local evidence.

5.4 The emerging Dorset Local Plan Review will replace the PLP and cover the plan period to 2043. Dorset Council held a Local Plan Options Consultation between August and October 2025, setting out opportunities for meeting development needs across the plan area.

5.5 The Options consultation document identifies that using the new Standard Method, the emerging Local Plan will need to plan for 3,246 homes a year, which equates to 55,182 homes in total between April 2026 and March 2043. The consultation document recognises that a significant amount and variety of land will need to be identified to meet this new target, and the settlement hierarchy identifies the towns and villages that will be the focus of new development.

5.6 Within the hierarchy, Swanage is identified as a Tier 2 settlement. This level (Towns and other main settlements) comprises the market and coastal towns across Dorset and other main settlements within the Green Belt, and close to the built-up area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

5.7 Instead, it identifies over 240 opportunity sites across the Dorset Council area at Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, that together could deliver around 33,000 new homes. Of these 240 opportunity sites, seven are identified within Swanage. While the consultation document does not identify a specific need figure for further development within the neighbourhood area, these sites combined have the potential to deliver approximately 417 dwellings. However, following consultation, one site has been removed from consideration – reducing the number to approximately 343.

## Site options

### AECOM SOA

5.8 To understand the ‘bottom up’ considerations, AECOM undertook a Site Options Assessment (SOA) process, which was completed in November 2025.

24 sites in total were identified in the neighbourhood area through examining the 2024 Dorset SHLAA and through the 2024 Swanage Town Council Call for Sites. After initial sifting (reflecting site availability, removing sites that are already being brought forward, and previous exclusions), 14 sites were taken forward for assessment - nine were assessed fully through the SOA and five were assessed through a review of the 2024 Dorset SHLAA outputs.

5.9 Of these 14 sites, the SOA concluded two as being suitable for development, nine have been identified as potentially suitable, and three have been identified as not suitable.

5.10 The status of one of the three unsuitable sites, Kings Court Business Centre, has since been debated by the Town Council. This reflects change of use, and therefore has been brought back in for consideration.

5.11 Twelve sites are therefore being taken forward from the SOA for consideration though the SEA as reasonable alternatives.

### Local Plan opportunity sites

5.12 As set out in Section 5.5 above, the recent Local Plan options consultation identifies seven opportunity sites for residential development within Swanage. The Local Plan options document carries out a detailed individual site assessment which can be found here. Of these six sites, three have been considered through the SOA (and are therefore accounted for). Dorset Council have confirmed that of the remaining three, one is no longer available. The following two sites are therefore being taken forward through the SEA:

- LA/SWAN/005 – Land north of High Street.
- LA/SWAN/015 – Land to the west of Cauldron Barn Park.

## Establishing reasonable alternatives

5.13 In total, 14 sites have been identified as potential site options for exploring through the SEA reasonable alternatives. Presented in Table 5.1Table 5.1 below, this includes twelve sites from the AECOM SOA and two opportunity sites included in the Local Plan Options Consultation document.

**Table 5.1: Site options considered through the reasonable alternatives**

| Site reference | Site name | Size (hectares) | Indicative housing capacity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site A (SNP-1) | Former Post Office, Kings Road West and existing Sorting Office (behind on Kings Road) | 0.15 | 4 |
| Site B (SNP-3) | Former Police Station | 0.1 | 40 |
| Site C (SNP-4) | Land off Priests Way | 0.49 | 4 |
| Site D (SNP-5) | Harrow House, former International Language School, Harrow Drive, Walrond Road | 1.28 | 30 |
| Site E (SNP-6) | Purbeck View School, Northbrook Road | 0.79 | 18 |

| Site reference | Site name | Size (hectares) | Indicative housing capacity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site F (SNP-7) | Purbeck Cliffs (Boundary Close) | 0.53 | 12 |
| Site G (SNP-10) | Kings Court Business Centre | 0.24 | 20 |
| Site H (SNP-11) | Land north and northwest of allotments AND allotments (combined site) | 11.8 | 197 |
| Site I (SNP-12) | Land off Cauldron Barn Road | 0.39 | 11 |
| Site J (SNP-13) | Land on corner of Ulwell Road and Washpond Lane | 0.51 | 12 |
| Site K (SNP-15) | Former Greystone Garage and bungalow to the rear of the Texaco garage, Victoria Avenue | 0.15 | 10 |
| Site L (SNP-17) | Land at Priests Road | 0.13 | 3 |
| Site M (LA/SWAN/005) | Land north of High Street | 1.77 | 42 |
| Site N (LA/SWAN/015) | Land to the west of Cauldron Barn Park | 2.14 | 38 |

5.14 Individual assessments of each of the 14 sites has been carried out within the AECOM SOA and the Local Plan options consultation document. As such, the SEA seeks to focus on spatial strategy options for the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.15 As there is no strategic housing growth target for the Neighbourhood Plan, the short-listed sites provide the Town Council with an opportunity to either allocate within the settlement boundary (low growth), or within and outside of the settlement boundary (higher growth).

5.16 Exploring an option which focuses growth within the settlement boundary of Swanage would align strongly with the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, helping reduce potential impacts on key environmental constraints within the neighbourhood area. This includes (but is not limited to) the undeveloped parts of the Dorset National Landscape, the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site, and the St Albans Head to Durlston Head Special Area of Conservation. Additionally, focusing growth within the settlement boundary will help to deliver growth within more sustainable locations in relation to accessing community services, which include educational facilities, medical facilities, retail services, and entertainment facilities.

5.17 However, the Town Council felt it important to also test a high growth option which more closely meets the level of growth tested through the Local Plan Options consultation, unlocking positive effects in terms of housing mix and wider local infrastructure needs. These are also key priorities for the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.18 For clarity, the options are set out below and in Figure 5.1 overleaf:

- Option 1: sites within the settlement boundary (approximately 152 homes).

- Option 2: sites within and outside the settlement boundary (approximately 441 homes).

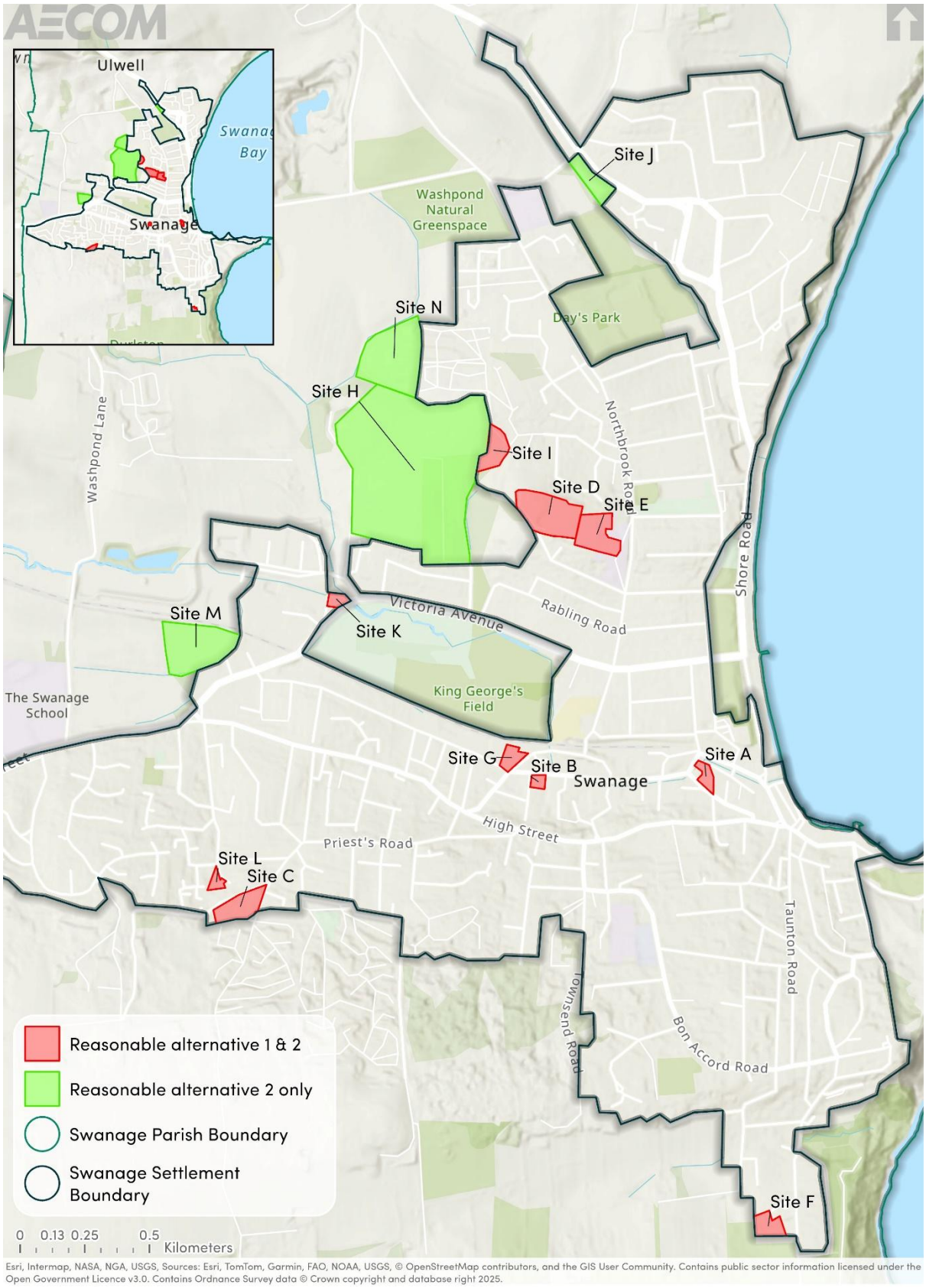



**Figure 5.1: Reasonable alternatives assessed**

# 6. Assessing reasonable alternatives

6.1 This section presents an assessment of the reasonable alternatives introduced above.

6.2 Utilising the SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SEA process, the appraisal has been presented via eight SEA themes as follows:

- Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Climate change and flood risk.
- Community wellbeing.
- Historic environment.
- Land, soil and resources.
- Landscape.
- Transportation.

6.3 The appraisal considers the relative sustainability merits of the two alternatives. Findings are presented as a commentary on effects. To support the appraisal findings, the scenarios have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SEA theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the relative performance of the seven scenarios in relation to each theme.

6.4 The assessment takes a 'policy off' approach, assessing the potential effects of the scenarios prior to any Swanage Neighbourhood Plan policy mitigation being implemented.

**Table 6.1: Assessment findings - rankings and significant effects**

| SEA theme | | Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Biodiversity and geodiversity | Significant effect? | No | No |
| | Rank | = | = |
| Climate change and flood risk | Significant effect? | No | No |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |
| Community wellbeing | Significant effect? | Yes – positive | Yes - positive |
| | Rank | 2 | 1 |
| Historic environment | Significant effect? | No | Yes - negative |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |
| Land, soil and water resources | Significant effect? | No | Yes - negative |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |
| Landscape | Significant effect? | No | Yes - negative |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |

| SEA theme | | Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation | Significant effect? | No | No |
| | Rank | 1 | 2 |

## Biodiversity and geodiversity

6.5 Both options would deliver a level of growth within proximity to the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a National Nature Reserve (NNR), through the inclusion of Site F. According to the Standard Data Form for the site[3], a threat to the site includes recreational activity – especially outdoor sports and leisure activities. Whilst Site F is previously developed land, it is possible that growth on the site could lead to increased recreational pressure on the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs designations, which could result in negative effects in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity.

6.6 Option 1 would focus development within the settlement boundary of Swanage. By focusing growth within the existing built environment, this option is likely to reduce the amount of land take in the undeveloped parts of the neighbourhood area, which could reduce pressure on local biodiversity and geodiversity value, and wider connectivity. This is due to undeveloped land having a higher likelihood of supporting habitats and species – as such, focusing growth within the settlement boundary in areas of previous development avoids potential impacts to greenfield sites. In contrast, Option 2 would bring forward growth within and outside of the settlement boundary. Whilst it is acknowledged that the sites would be adjacent to the settlement boundary, which would contribute towards reducing pressure on the biodiversity value of the wider landscape, it is still possible that development in these locations could result in negative impacts to biodiversity and geodiversity due to their undeveloped, greenfield nature. This is through the potential for impacts to the connectivity of the wider green infrastructure network in the neighbourhood area – recognising that none of the sites overlap with Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats.

6.7 However, it is also recognised that the built environment can also have biodiversity value – and as such, development solely within the settlement boundary could also have negative biodiversity and geodiversity impacts. This is likely to be linked to potential changes to biodiversity connectivity, given that development has the potential to disrupt species movement within the existing settlement and between development and the open countryside.

6.8 It is noted that both options have the potential to deliver biodiversity benefits. This is due to the overlap of some sites with Natural England's Network Enhancement Zone 2 and Network Expansion Zone, which indicate areas that are suitable for habitat restoration and connectivity. Given the greenfield nature of some sites included under Option 2, its potential to support biodiversity net-gains could be considered to be greater. This is due larger sites being included through Option 2, which could likely provide a level of new or improved green infrastructure, and embed biodiversity into the development design. However, it

[3] JNCC (2015). 'Natura 2000 – Standard Data Form: Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs' can be accessed here.

is recognised that any potential net-gains are linked to the development design taken forward.

6.9 Overall, Option 1 is considered more favourable in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity. This is due to the focus on redeveloping sites within the settlement boundary, which are likely to have a lower biodiversity value. As such, whilst growth through this option could disrupt biodiversity connectivity within the settlement and between the built environment and the natural environment, the impacts are considered likely to be lower than those associated with Option 2.

6.10 In conclusion, neither option would deliver growth that would overlap with important designations or habitats. However, it is noted that both options would result in growth within proximity to the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs designations and potentially increase associated recreational pressure. This is considered a threat to the significance of the designation. It is recognised that both options have the potential to support biodiversity benefits through the overlap of sites with Natural England's Habitat Network. Overall, no significant effects are anticipated in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity through either option, and minor negative effects are concluded pre-mitigation for both options.

## Climate change and flood risk

6.11 In relation to climate change mitigation, both options would result in an inevitable increase in emissions linked to an intensification of the built environment in Swanage. As such, it could be considered that Option 1 would be more favourable in this respect, due to a likely lower level of growth, which would lead to a lower increase in emissions in comparison to Option 2. Furthermore, whilst it is noted that both options would bring forward development within the settlement boundary, Option 2 would also focus growth on sites outside but adjacent to the settlement boundary. This could result in new growth being located further from important services and facilities, and whilst growth would be adjacent to the existing built environment and could access sustainable and active travel opportunities, it could also result in an increase in private transport use to access important infrastructure. In contrast, growth solely within the settlement boundary through Option 1 is anticipated to be located within closer proximity to important services and facilities, which could encourage a greater use in sustainable and active transport opportunities, thus reducing emissions linked to transportation.

6.12 With regards to climate change adaptation, the Swanage neighbourhood area is at risk of fluvial and surface water flooding. Several of the sites within the settlement boundary (Options 1 and 2) are within or adjacent to areas at greater risk. As such, growth solely through Option 1 could result in a greater proportion of new development being at risk of flooding. In contrast, growth through Option 2 could allow for lower development levels to come forward on sites with greater risk of flooding given more sites could be taken forward for development, thereby reducing impacts. However, it is important to recognise that the sites within the settlement boundary mostly comprise previously developed land – and as such, their redevelopment would be unlikely to result in an increase in flood risk and effects to their surrounding areas, given their already developed nature. Furthermore, it is important to consider that Option 2 could increase flood risk in the neighbourhood area, given it would likely

increase the built footprint of Swanage and therefore increase the potential for surface water runoff in the neighbourhood area. However, in line with national policy, development will need to include sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) – and it is recognised that opportunities to deliver green infrastructure through larger development sites (like Site H) will also help to mitigate flood risk.

6.13 Overall, Option 1 is considered the most favourable option in relation to climate change and flood risk. Whilst development solely on sites within the existing settlement boundary could result in a greater proportion of new development being at risk of flooding, focusing development on these sites is anticipated to have a lower impact on overall flood risk in the neighbourhood area. This is due to growth coming forward on previously developed land. Furthermore, growth through Option 1 will bring forward development in greater proximity to important services and facilities; thus encouraging an engagement with sustainable and active transport opportunities, and reducing the need to rely on private vehicles to access infrastructure. This is turn is anticipated to help reduce greenhouse gas and carbon emissions.

6.14 No significant effects are concluded for either option. Minor negative effects are considered likely pre-mitigation for both options.

## Community wellbeing

6.15 Both options will deliver growth that will contribute towards meeting local housing needs in Swanage. Whilst no specific housing number has been provided for the neighbourhood area, it is recognised that opportunity sites identified in the latest Dorset Local Plan consultation could support approximately 343 dwellings. As such, Option 2 will meet this identified level of growth; comparatively, Option 1 would not and would likely perform less positively in terms of meeting local housing needs.

6.16 It is noted that Swanage experiences higher levels of deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services. By encouraging housing development in more accessible locations, and providing a mix of housing types and tenures, it is anticipated that both Option 1 and Option 2 will deliver benefits in relation this theme. However, it could be argued that Option 2 will have a greater effect, given that developing sites adjacent to the settlement boundary will allow for a larger level of growth – which could be used to secure a wider variety of housing types and tenures. It is acknowledged that this is dependent on the design scheme taken forward.

6.17 Additionally, both options will deliver growth within proximity to community infrastructure – allowing for easier access to important facilities and services within the settlement boundary that support physical and mental health and wellbeing. However, it is possible that Option 2 could deliver further community infrastructure. Larger sites included within Option 2 (such as Site H) could deliver a level of community infrastructure to support growth outside of the settlement boundary. However, it is recognised that this will be dependent on detailed design and masterplanning, and as such a level of uncertainty exists at this stage.

6.18 Overall, both options will deliver growth that will help to reduce deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services in the neighbourhood area. However,

Option 1 is a lower growth option – and whilst focusing development within the settlement boundary will support sustainable growth and accessibility, it is unlikely to meet the needs of the area throughout the plan period. Comparatively, Option 2 would bring forward a greater amount of growth, and due to its inclusion of larger sites adjacent to the settlement boundary, it is likely it could bring forward a greater mix of housing types and tenures. Additionally, given the size of the sites and the potential level of growth, it is possible development through Option 2 could provide additional infrastructure to support community wellbeing, such as community infrastructure and green infrastructure. As such, Option 2 is the more favourable option of the two.

6.19 Significant positive effects are considered likely under both options, given they both seek to deliver new homes to meet local needs.

## Historic environment

6.20 Development through both Option 1 and Option 2 will deliver growth within and in proximity to designated and non-designated heritage assets, areas and features. This reflects the inclusion of sites under both options that are located within the settlement boundary and within the Swanage Conservation Area, as well as sites within proximity to historic parks and gardens, and the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

6.21 It is further noted that Option 2 would also deliver growth within proximity to the Herston Conservation Area through the inclusion of Site M to the west. This will deliver additional growth within proximity to a collection of Grade II listed buildings associated with the conservation area. The conservation area appraisal[4] indicates that the fields to the north (including Site M) allow for attractive panoramic views – and as such, development through Option 2 could impact upon the setting of the designation.

6.22 However, it is also recognised that both options have the potential to positively affect the historic environment in Swanage through the redevelopment of previously developed land within the settlement boundary. This is due to the potential redevelopment and regeneration has to positively change the setting of heritage assets, areas and features. For example, through bringing redundant sites back into use, and ensuring development is complementary of the surrounding historic context, regeneration could improve the physical setting of heritage assets and contribute towards interpretation and understanding. Nevertheless, it is recognised that this is largely dependent on the design scheme taken forward.

6.23 Overall, Option 2 is considered to perform least favourably in relation to the historic environment. Whilst both options are likely to deliver growth within and in proximity to designated and non-designated historic environment features, Option 2 also seeks growth adjacent to the settlement boundary. This is likely to result in growth coming forward to the north of the Herston Conservation Area through Site M, which could have an impact on the setting of the designation, given the fields to the north of the conservation area contribute towards panoramic views. Reflecting on this, significant negative effects are concluded for Option 2, and minor negative effects are concluded for Option 1.

[4] Dorset Council (2008). “Herston Conservation Area Appraisal Document’ can be accessed here.

## Land, soil and water resources

6.24 Option 1 will focus development solely within the settlement boundary of Swanage, on land classified as being in urban use. This reduces the potential for negative effects on land and soil resources, given that development will come forward in areas with no possibility of supporting agricultural activity. Option 2 would deliver growth outside but adjacent to the settlement boundaries, in the more open countryside of the neighbourhood area. This is likely to come forward within areas of provisional Grade 3 agricultural quality land, and as such development through this option could result in the loss of productive soils.

6.25 It is noted that both options include a brownfield development focus, given the inclusion of previously developed land within the settlement boundary. This demonstrates a sustainable use of resources by reducing greenfield land take and development. However, it is recognised that Option 2 does include a larger greenfield element due to the inclusion of sites adjacent to the settlement boundary. Whilst impacts are likely to be reduced through focusing on sites adjacent to the existing built environment as opposed to within the more open landscape, the loss of greenfield land cannot be mitigated.

6.26 Overall, Option 1 is considered more favourable than Option 2. This is due to the focus of development on previously developed land within the settlement boundary, which reduces the potential for loss of greenfield resources and productive agricultural soils, where they are available. Significant negative effects are considered likely through Option 2, and neutral effects through Option 1.

## Landscape

6.27 Growth through either option will lead to additional development within the Dorset National Landscape. Designated for its dramatic landform and views, environmental quality, and built heritage, development through either option has the potential to impact upon the special qualities and significance of the landscape designation due to changes to the baseline. Additionally, the neighbourhood area overlaps with several local character areas and the South Purbeck National Character Area (NCA), which could also be negatively impacted through growth under either option due to changes to landscape components that contribute to overall character. However, it is likely that impacts would be reduced through Option 1 in comparison to Option 2. This is due to the focus on regenerating / redeveloping previously developed land within the settlement boundary of Swanage. This prevents development coming forward that extends the settlement into the surrounding open landscape, thus reducing the potential for negative effects on landscape character and important views. In comparison, whilst Option 2 would deliver growth on brownfield opportunity sites within the settlement boundary of Swanage, it would also bring forward growth on greenfield sites outside but adjacent to the settlement boundary and into the open countryside of the Dorset National Landscape. There is an obligation for relevant authorities (including local planning authorities) to seek to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Dorset National Landscape[5]. Strategic growth within the Dorset National Landscape through Site H, Site M and Site N will lead to the extension of the

[5] Dorset National Landscape (no date). ‘Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31’ can be accessed here.

built environment. This is not in line with conservation and enhancement obligations, and growth could adversely impact upon the special qualities, setting and significance of the Dorset National Landscape.

6.28 It is also recognised that the regeneration of sites within the settlement boundary through Option 1 and Option 2 could present the opportunity to enhance landscape and townscape character. For example, this could be achieved through regenerating sites so that they positively contribute to views and the streetscene. This could further contribute towards recovering the Corfe Valley section of the Dorset National Landscape, which is currently considered to be in poor condition. However, it is noted that this is dependent on the development design taken forward.

6.29 Overall, Option 1 is the more favourable option when considering the landscape of the neighbourhood area. This is due to the focus of development within the existing built environment, which is considered to limit negative impacts to the open countryside of the neighbourhood area and its contribution to character and the Dorset National Landscape. It is also recognised that growth through Option 1 could contribute towards townscape character, though this is dependent on the design scheme taken forward.

6.30 Considering the above, minor negative effects are considered likely through Option 2, reflecting greenfield development adjacent to the settlement boundary and in the undeveloped Dorset National Landscape. Neutral effects are likely for Option 1, with the potential for minor positive effects depending on mitigation included within the development scheme.

## Transportation

6.31 With regards to transportation, growth through Option 1 would focus development within the settlement boundary. This would allow for new development to be in closer proximity to existing services and facilities, and closer to sustainable transportation opportunities, though it is noted that these are limited in the neighbourhood area (three bus services). This proximity could encourage greater engagement with transportation options that are viable alternatives to private vehicles, thus reducing the number of vehicles on the local road network. Whilst Option 2 would deliver growth within the settlement boundary, it would also deliver growth adjacent to the settlement boundary. Development through strategic scale sites such as Site H, Site M and Site N could include a low level of infrastructure, however this is unlikely to be significant and there is likely to be a continued reliance on private vehicles. Additionally, growth adjacent to the settlement boundaries will likely be a distance from key services and facilities, and the available sustainable transportation opportunities. Again, this is likely to encourage a greater use of private vehicles.

6.32 Overall, Option 1 is considered to be the most favourable option in relation to transportation. This is due to the likelihood of development solely on sites within the existing settlement boundary allowing for greater engagement with sustainable and active transportation opportunities. It also reflects the proximity of new development to existing services and facilities, thus reducing the need to travel and use private vehicles.

6.33 No significant effects are considered likely. Minor negative effects would be likely under Option 2, and neutral through Option 1.

# 7. Establishing the preferred approach

Swanage Town Council will set out their justification for the selection and rejection of options explored through the SEA. However, this has not been established ahead of the finalisation of this Environmental Report.

# Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

# 8. Introduction (to Part 2)

## Introduction

8.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current 'pre-submission' version of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan under the SEA theme headings; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

## Swanage Neighbourhood Plan policies

8.2 The draft Swanage Neighbourhood Plan puts forward a number of policies to guide development in the Neighbourhood Plan area. These are set out in Table 8.1 below

**Table 8.1 Neighbourhood Plan policies**

| Policy reference | Policy name |
|---|---|
| SWAN1 | A Spatial Plan for Swanage |
| SWAN2 | Housing Mix of Types |
| SWAN3 | Development Sites |
| SWAN4 | Town Centre |
| SWAN5 | Design Guidance |
| SWAN6 | Green Spaces and Recreation |
| SWAN7 | The Sandpit Field Stabilisation and Enhancement Scheme |
| SWAN8 | Local Infrastructure |
| SWAN9 | Dorset Heathlands |

## Methodology

8.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework.

8.4 Every effort is make to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make

assumptions, e.g., in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are make cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict ‘significant effects’, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.

8.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect ‘characteristics’ are described within the assessment as appropriate.

# 9. Appraisal of the draft Swanage Neighbourhood Plan

## Biodiversity and geodiversity

9.1 The Swanage Neighbourhood Plan contributes positively towards maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity in the neighbourhood area. Notably, Policy SWAN9: Dorset Heathlands is concerned with the protection of the Dorset Heathlands SAC, and requires potential impacts of proposed development to be screened for likely effects. Where there is a probability or risk of a significant effect, the policy indicates that any proposed development will need be subject to a HRA appropriate assessment. Additionally, development proposals will need to be accompanied by detailed design information, and will need to demonstrate how they will avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts to the integrity of the designation. This policy works well to protect the designated site and its contribution to biodiversity value and connectivity within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area, and across its designated area in Dorset.

9.2 The six sites allocated through Policy SWAN3: Development Sites are not located within proximity to the SACs present in the neighbourhood area. Reflecting this, the associated Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Neighbourhood Plan has concluded that no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites will arise from the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

9.3 All housing site allocations within Policy SWAN3 are removed from SSSIs in the neighbourhood area, and as such most sites do not overlap with SSSI IRZs linked to the types of development coming forward. The exception is Land North of Prospect Way; given it seeks to allocate up to 170 dwellings, consultation with Natural England would be required. None of the site allocations overlap with BAP Priority Habitats – reflecting the largely brownfield nature of the sites, with the exception of Land North of Prospect Way, and Land off Ulwell Road (though it is recognised that the latter presents an infill opportunity in the surrounding built environment). In relation to Natural England's Habitat Network, only Land North of Prospect Way overlaps with the network – it is mostly within the Network Expansion Zone. This indicates the site has the potential to expand, link or join networks across the wider Dorset area.

9.4 Policy SWAN3: Development Sites requires that all six site allocations must be accompanied by detailed information to allow for an appropriate assessment to be undertaken, in line with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (amended). Additionally, the policy indicates that development will need to demonstrate how it will avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts to the integrity of sites in the national site network. This is considered a benefit in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, as it helps to ensure that growth will not adversely impact upon biodiversity designations, habitats, species or biodiversity connectivity – both within the neighbourhood area and within the wider Dorset area.

9.5 Furthermore, the site-specific details under Policy SWAN3: Development Sites are also anticipated to contribute towards maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity. For example, development of The Former Purbeck View School for 50 homes within the settlement boundary will need to retain existing green features that are within the site boundaries (Policy SWAN3: Development Sites – The Former Purbeck View School, off Northbrook Road). This will help to protect and enhance biodiversity value and connectivity through maintaining features that contribute to the biodiversity network. Additionally, development of the Land off Ulwell Road site includes the need for compensation for vegetation loss, by providing for additional planting on the site boundaries (Policy SWAN3: Development Sites – Land off Ulwell Road). This is also anticipated to contribute towards maintaining and enhancing biodiversity value and connectivity, by contributing to the network in the neighbourhood area. Whilst development of this site would result in the loss of greenfield land, and the potential for effects to biodiversity value and connectivity, it is recognised that the site is considered an infill opportunity due to the built environment around the site. As such, its development for approximately ten homes is not anticipated to have significant negative effects on biodiversity and geodiversity.

9.6 The development of Land North of Prospect Way for approximately 170 homes could lead to negative effects in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, given its greenfield nature and its position outside by adjacent to the existing settlement boundary. Development could have a negative effect on biodiversity value and connectivity – reflected in its overlap with Natural England's Network Expansion Zone. However, Policy SWAN3: Development Sites – Land North of Prospect Way requires the development to integrate greenspace into the development design. This will likely help mitigate potential negative effects, as space will remain undeveloped to support biodiversity value and connectivity within the site and the wider neighbourhood area.

9.7 The wider plan policies are also considered to have effects on biodiversity and geodiversity in the neighbourhood area. By defining a settlement boundary through Policy SWAN1: A Spatial Plan for Swanage, the neighbourhood plan works to encourage development to come forward within and adjacent to the existing built environment. This is anticipated to help reduce development in the undeveloped parts of the neighbourhood area, which could have greater biodiversity value (for example, areas with greater natural habitat coverage).

9.8 Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance seeks to ensure the design of development fully considers the benefits of green infrastructure. requiring development to be in line with the Purbeck District Design Guide, which includes (but it not limited to) ensuring features providing habitats for wildlife are incorporated into the development design, compensating any negative impacts upon existing ecology, and incorporating existing trees into development schemes. It also includes securing biodiversity benefits through safeguarding and enhancing the network of multi-functional green space in the neighbourhood area, in line with the Swanage Green Infrastructure Strategy. This is linked to Policy SWAN6: Green Spaces & Recreation, which seeks to designate sites as local green spaces and protect open spaces and recreational areas. It is also linked to Policy SWAN7: The Sandpit Field Stabilisation and Enhancement Scheme, which seeks to stabilise and enhance the Sandpit Field without resulting in the net loss of greenspace and achieving biodiversity net gain. These policies work

to protect sites that contribute towards biodiversity connectivity and value in the neighbourhood area.

9.9 In conclusion, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan works well to reduce potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity. This is achieved through avoiding development coming forward within proximity to important designations and habitat areas, and including stipulations that seek high quality design that avoids or mitigates negative effects. This includes site specific stipulations relating to the protection of existing green features and green infrastructure, and wider plan policies which seek to protect features that contribute to the biodiversity network in the neighbourhood area. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan includes a large scale site for residential development, which could impact upon biodiversity connectivity and value in the neighbourhood area, it is considered that greenspace integration will help to mitigate any adverse impacts. Overall, the plan is anticipated to contribute towards securing benefits for habitats and species within the neighbourhood area. As such, **minor positive effects** are concluded likely.

# Climate change and flood risk

9.10 The Swanage Neighbourhood Plan allocates (through Policy SWAN3) six sites for approximately 350 dwellings throughout the plan area. This is anticipated to lead to an increase in carbon and greenhouse gas emissions– linked to an increase in domestic activity associated with new homes, and likely increase in transportation linked to increased movement/ travel. However, Policy SWAN3 sets site specific provisions in relation to mitigating climate change and its associated effects. For example, Land North of Prospect Way adjoins the settlement boundary to the west, and has been allocated for a major residential scheme of approximately 170 homes and suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG). The delivery of SANG alongside development will lead to positive effects in relation to climate change mitigation, providing a range of ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and habitat provision. Additionally, the Former Purbeck View School, off Northbrook Road is allocated through Policy SWAN3 for approximately 50 homes within the settlement boundary, and requires the retention of green features within the site boundaries. This is anticipated to protect existing ecosystem services on the site. Furthermore, Land off Ulwell Road is allocated for approximately 10 homes, with policy requirements including compensation for vegetation loss, for example by providing additional planting. The delivery of planting will help to offset ecosystem system service loss associated with development at this location.

9.11 The wider neighbourhood plan policies also have a focus on mitigating the effects of climate change. Policy SWAN1: A Spatial Plan For Swanage seeks to define a settlement boundary for Swanage. By establishing this settlement boundary, the plan works well to deliver new development that has good access to key infrastructure within the neighbourhood area. This is further reiterated through Policy SWAN4: Town Centre, which seeks to define a town centre boundary for Swanage. Again, this helps to ensure that future services and facilities are located in sustainable locations. Additionally, Policy SWAN6: Green Spaces & Recreation seeks to designate local green spaces and open spaces and recreational areas. This is anticipated to contribute towards climate

change mitigation by safeguarding areas of green space and green infrastructure that can deliver a range of nature based solutions. It is recognised that Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance also contributes towards climate change mitigation. By assessing design quality of proposals against the Purbeck District Design Guide, the policy works to ensure development minimises energy consumption during construction and use, takes opportunities to generate renewable energy, and incorporate natural heating and cooling methods. This is anticipated to help reduce emissions linked to the domestic sector.

9.12 In terms of climate change adaptation, it is recognised that a number of the site allocations are vulnerable to flood risk. Policy SWAN3: Development Sites allocates the Former Police Station, Argyle Road for redevleopemnt of a brownfield site for up to 20 homes, and requires development to address the risk of flooding from various sources on parts of the site. Policy SWAN3 also makes stipulations in relation to climate change adaptation, namely adapting to the risk and effects of flooding. Similarly, Policy SWAN3allocates brownfield site Kings Court Business Centre & Town Depot, Kings Road West for mixed use development. Policy SWAN3 requires the development scheme layout and design to reflect the vulnerability of the proposed different uses to the risk of flooding on part of the site. Furthermore, Policy SWAN3designates greenfield site Land off Ulwell Road for up to ten dwellings, as part of an infill scheme. The policy outlines that development will need to address the risk of flooding on the perimeters of the site. These design stipulations are anticipated to help ensure the design schemes for these sites are considerate of the flood risk, and do not exacerbate flood risk within the site perimeters or in the wider neighbourhood area.

9.13 The wider plan policies also make stipulations with regards to adapting to the effects of climate change. Policy SWAN4: Town Centre requires proposals for the redevelopment of the former post office and existing sorting depot to reflect the risk of flooding in the development area. This is anticipated to contribute positively towards climate change adaptation, as by considering and reflecting the flood risk in development design, growth should help to reduce the risk of flooding on the two sites. Furthermore, Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance outlines that development proposals will be assessed against the Purbeck District Design Guide, to ensure their design quality is in line with the wider Purbeck area. This includes reflecting drainage and flooding stipulations outlined in the document – such as incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems where practical, and ensuring areas of hard standing are sufficiently permeable to avoid surface water runoff. This is anticipated to contribute towards climate change adaptation by ensuring sites are designed to reduce flood risk within site boundaries and in the surrounding area.

9.14 In conclusion, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan will lead to an inevitable increase in carbon and greenhouse gas emissions released in the neighbourhood area, due to the number of homes likely to come forward and activity associated with the level of growth. However, the site-specific policies work well to mitigate potential effects – largely through protecting existing levels of ecosystem services through safeguarding and enhancing green features and green infrastructure. Furthermore, the plan includes wider policies that will work to deliver growth in the most sustainable locations in the neighbourhood area, and safeguard and enhance ecosystem service provision. With regards to

climate change adaptation, the plan works well to address flood risk where it is present within the site allocation policies, by ensuring development respects flood vulnerability and does not exacerbate effects. The wider neighbourhood plan policies also include stipulations in relation to climate change adaptation – ensuring that development is designed well to reduce flood risk and effects in line with the Purbeck District Design Guide. Overall, **broadly neutral effects** are considered likely in relation to climate change and flood risk, reflecting the provisions in place to reduce impacts.

# Community wellbeing

9.15 The Swanage Neighbourhood Plan has a great focus on community wellbeing. For example, housing needs are addressed through the individual site codes under Policy SWAN3: Development Sites. This includes working to deliver up to 170 homes within the settlement boundary, and up to an additional 170 homes at Land North of Prospect Way and approximately 10 homes at Land off Ulwell Road, both of which are adjacent to the settlement boundary. While it is recognised that no formal housing need figure has been provided for Swanage by Dorset Council at this stage, the 350 total homes proposed through Policy SWAN3 broadly aligns with the level of growth consulted on at opportunity sites through the latest Local Plan options consultation. This is anticipated to deliver significant positive effects in relation to the community wellbeing SEA theme; providing a homes to meet local needs.

9.16 This is furthered through Policy SWAN2: Housing Mix of Types, which seeks to ensure that an appropriate mix of housing types comes forward through development to meet the identified local housing need. This includes larger homes (four bedrooms or more) to encourage larger families into the area, and the delivery of houses and bungalows to allow for downsizing and meet the needs of older residents. As such, it is considered that Policy SWAN2: Housing Mix of Types will contribute towards community wellbeing, by encouraging and supporting a diverse population.

9.17 Community wellbeing is also embedded in the wider neighbourhood plan policies. By defining a settlement boundary through Policy SWAN1: A Spatial Plan For Swanage, the plan works well to deliver growth within the most accessible and sustainable parts of the neighbourhood area. This includes supporting development sites within the settlement boundary, which is anticipated to provide good access to key services and facilities, and support a sense of community cohesion and togetherness.

9.18 Where development is allocated outside of the settlement boundary, it is located adjacent to it – to allow for good access to key services and facilities (notably Land off Ulwell Road). Land off Ulwell Road is a small site allocated through Policy SWAN3 for 10 homes outside of the settlement boundary but surrounded by the existing built environment. Policy SWAN3 also allocates Land North of Prospect Way outside of the settlement boundary for approximately 170 dwellings. Policy SWAN3 does not include stipulations for the delivery of community infrastructure, which could support growth and mitigate any adverse effects predicted, for example in relation to existing services and facilities.

9.19 Policy SWAN4: Town Centre is considered to deliver similar benefits by further defining a town centre boundary – again, this is anticipated to help focus development that supports community wellbeing to the most accessible locations. Additionally, Policy SWAN4: Town Centre is further considered likely to have positive effects in relation to community wellbeing by providing space for commercial or business use classes. This is anticipated to provide additional employment and economic opportunities, which further contributes to community wellbeing by generating additional revenue in the neighbourhood area.

9.20 A number of the site allocation policies include further stipulations that are anticipated to positively contribute towards community wellbeing. For example, Policy SWAN3: Development Sites – The Former Harrow House School, off Walrond Road is put forward for residential development of approximately 80 homes, and outlines support for development where it retains the existing open space on the site, maintaining it as a public open space. Additionally, Policy SWAN3: Development Sites – Land North of Prospect Way stipulates that part of the site will need to accommodate a new SANG. These site allocation stipulations contribute towards community wellbeing by providing space that allows for engagement with active lifestyles, which benefits physical and mental health. The wider plan policies also have a focus on the physical environment. Policy SWAN6: Green Spaces & Recreation seeks to safeguard local green spaces, and open spaces and recreation areas in the Swanage neighbourhood area. This is anticipated to contribute to both physical and mental health and wellbeing by promoting active lifestyles and community cohesion. Additionally, Policy SWAN7: The Sandpit Field Stabilisation And Enhancement Scheme seeks to protect and enhance an important public open space on the seafront. The policy indicates that development proposals to stabilise and enhance the open space will be supported where they improve ground stability and site accessibility, to maximise the public enjoyment of the area. This is underpinned by higher level local plan policies relating to safeguarding facilities and tourism.

9.21 The Swanage Neighbourhood Plan also identifies local infrastructure priorities for the plan period. This includes community-led housing development, town centre management, and sports, leisure and cultural facility improvements through Policy SWAN8. This is also considered to have positive effects in relation to community wellbeing, by ensuring that important facilities and services are safeguarded and added to.

9.22 In conclusion, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan seeks to deliver up to 350 dwellings across six sites over the plan period. This is anticipated to bring forward positive effects in relation to community wellbeing by delivering homes to reduce deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services. Additionally, this level of growth is likely to support a range of housing types and tenures, to further contribute to community wellbeing by promoting diversity in the population of Swanage (e.g., homes for families and homes for older residents). However, it is recognised that this level of growth has the potential to put pressure on existing services and facilities in the neighbourhood area, given that none of the site allocation policies include infrastructure stipulations. The site allocation policies do work to deliver community benefits through protecting open spaces and delivering new greenspace. This is reiterated through the wider plan policies, which recognise the importance of open space for supporting community health and wellbeing and work to safeguard and

enhance green and recreational spaces. Overall, **minor positive effects** are considered likely. This reflects the level of growth and its potential to reduce deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services; while also potentially placing stress on existing community infrastructure with significant growth focused outside of the settlement boundary.

# Historic environment

9.23 The Swanage neighbourhood area has a number of assets, areas and features that contribute towards the historic environment. This includes an overlap with the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site along the eastern and southern neighbourhood boundaries, 154 listed buildings, four scheduled monuments, and two conservation areas. In addition to these, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan seeks to designate Areas of Special Character in the neighbourhood area through Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance. This reflects the distinct historic value of four areas within Swanage, originally designated as Areas of High Townscape Value or Areas of Distinctive Local Character under the Swanage Local Plan. It is anticipated that the designation of these areas will help to ensure new development coming forward is considerate of their heritage value and historic character – for example, ensuring development within the Ballard Estate and Ballard Lee area seeks to preserve the dominant single storey character.

9.24 The neighbourhood plan works well to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment of the neighbourhood area. This includes through a number of the site allocations under Policy SWAN3: Development Sites. Notably Policy SWAN3: Development Sites requires the redevelopment of The Former Police Station, Argyle Road for up to 20 new dwellings to incorporate the distinctive concrete moulded name plate on the existing building, to ensure that the previous use of the site as a police station is remembered. This is considered a positive impact, as redevelopment of the site will contribute to improved access to, and understanding of, the local historic environment. Additionally, Policy SWAN3: Development Sites requires residential development proposals at the Former Harrow School to consider the listed Cauldron Barn and Farmhouse to the north-west of the site – ensuring new growth does not come into closer proximity to the heritage asset than existing surrounding development. Furthermore, screening will need to be implemented between the heritage asset and the site. This helps to ensure that the setting of the heritage asset is maintained through development, and associated views and visual quality is not reduced.

9.25 Policy SWAN7: The Sandpit Field Stabilisation And Enhancement Scheme seeks to support development proposals that stabilise and enhance the public open space in line with local planning policy. The Sandpit Field is an important space for the local community and visitors to the neighbourhood area, and as such proposals will be supported where high-quality design will improve the appearance of the area and positively contribute towards the setting of the Swanage Conservation Area.

9.26 The wider neighbourhood plan policies are also considered to have a focus on the historic environment. By designating a settlement boundary through Policy SWAN1: A Spatial Plan For Swanage, the plan focuses growth towards areas that are already developed. This helps to reduce the likelihood of growth

coming forward within heritage-sensitive parts of the neighbourhood area that are undeveloped; avoiding direct impacts to scheduled monuments and parts of the World Heritage Site. However, it is noted that this directs growth towards heritage within the built environment. It is anticipated that the potential for adverse effects will be mitigated through assessing the design quality of development proposals against the Swanage Townscape Character Assessment, including a number of townscape character types, in line with Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance. This will contribute to the historic environment by ensuring growth is in keeping with the surrounding built environment; for example, ensuring building densities and heights are similar in order to protect key views of heritage and safeguard historic settings. Additionally, safeguarding green spaces and recreational spaces through Policy SWAN6: Green Spaces & Recreation is further anticipated to contribute positively towards the historic environment by maintaining heritage settings.

9.27 In conclusion, the Swanage neighbourhood area has an extensive historic environment that has helped to shape the settlement and the character of the neighbourhood area. The importance of the historic environment is reflected through the site-specific policies, which work to ensure the contribution of sites to the historic environment is maintained through development. Wider plan policies also include a historic environment focus. This is largely demonstrated through Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance, which seeks to protect historic value and character in the neighbourhood area by securing high-quality design and designated Areas of Special Character. These considerations, alongside wider plan considerations which seek to maintain and enhance green spaces and focus growth in sustainable locations, are considered to positively impact upon the historic environment. This is through protecting the historic setting of heritage assets, areas and features. Overall, **minor positive effects** are considered likely.

## Land, soil and water resources

9.28 The policy framework of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan also includes considerations in relation to land, soil and water resources. This is demonstrated through the focus of development on largely brownfield sites through Policy SWAN3: Development Sites. This promotes the most sustainable use of land resources, as redeveloping existing developed land reduces the pressure and potential for growth on greenfield sites. However, it is noted that there is a greenfield element to the proposed development strategy. Land North of Prospect Way is a large greenfield site allocated through Policy SWAN3 for up to 170 homes and a SANG. Its development will result in the loss of greenfield land; however, it is recognised that the site is underlain with provisional Grade 4 agricultural quality land. As such, the site has a low potential of being underlain with high quality soils that could support agricultural activity. Additionally, the inclusion of the SANG is anticipated to help protect some underlying soils in the site perimeter. Land off Ulwell Road is also a greenfield site allocated for 10 homes. However it is considered that the site presents an infill opportunity, as it is surrounded by existing development. Whilst it is partially underlain by provisional Grade 3 agricultural quality land, development of the site is not anticipated to result in the significant loss of soils – given the size of the development proposed and the surrounding built environment.

9.29 It is recognised that site allocation Policy SWAN3 places focus on protecting land and soil resources, for example School, off Walrond Road any development at the Former Harrow House is required to protect an existing open space on the site. Additionally, development at the Former Purbeck View School is required to retain the mature tree and hedge boundary, and any development at Land North of Prospect Waymust accommodate a new SANG. These provisions are considered likely to deliver positive effects in terms of safeguarding soils underlying green spaces, green features, and green infrastructure.

9.30 The wider plan policies also include stipulations related to protecting important land, soil and water resources. By defining a settlement boundary through Policy SWAN1: A Spatial Plan for Swanage, the plan works to encourage development to come forward within and adjoining the existing built-up area. This helps to protect underlying soils in undeveloped parts of the neighbourhood area, as growth will be focused on areas with a lower likelihood of having high quality and productive soils. The protection of green spaces and open and recreational spaces through Policy SWAN6: Green Spaces & Recreation is also considered likely to positively contribute towards safeguarding land and soil resources by protecting soils underlying these spaces from development. This will help to protect their quality. Similar effects are anticipated under Policy SWAN7: The Sandpit Field Stabilisation and Enhancement Scheme, which seeks to stabilise and enhance Sandpit Field. By maintaining its area and achieving a biodiversity net gain on the site, it is anticipated that underlying soil quality will be retained, due to safeguarded green space and an increase in green infrastructure on the site.

9.31 In conclusion, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan seeks to prioritise growth utilising previously developed land. It is noted that the plan does seek to promote growth on two greenfield sites – and the loss of greenfield land cannot be mitigated against. However, it is also recognised that the potential of these two sites to support agricultural activity is low, given their reduced provisional agricultural land classifications. As such, the plan works to direct growth to areas within Swanage that will have a reduced negative impact on land, soil and water resources. The wider plan policies also consider natural resources, as demonstrated through the focus on promoting growth in the most sustainable locations within the existing built environment, and protecting green features, green space and open space. As such, **minor negative effects** are concluded likely.

# Landscape

9.32 The Swanage neighbourhood area is within the Dorset National Landscape. Designated for its dramatic landform and views, environmental quality, and built heritage, development through the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to impact upon its special qualities. As such, landscape is a key consideration of the neighbourhood plan, specifically for its site allocations. Policy SWAN3: Development Sites indicates that many of the sites have a brownfield component. Immediately this is considered to have a positive effect in relation to landscape, as redevelopment of brownfield sites provides an opportunity to bring forward growth that is complementary of the 19 distinct townscape characters identified in Swanage. Given this, the Swanage Townscape Character Assessment will be a key document, as it outlines key

features, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each character area. As such, assessing the design quality of development proposals against the Swanage Townscape Character Assessment, the Purbeck District Design Guide (until it is replaced by the Dorset Design Guide), and the Swanage Green Infrastructure Strategy under Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance will help to ensure growth reflects the distinct character and quality of the neighbourhood area.

9.33 Safeguarding and enhancing landscape and townscape character and quality is reiterated through stipulations for each of the individual site codes Notably Policy SWAN3 sets design requirements for the redevelopment of the Former Police Station, Argyle Road and Land at Kings Court Business Centre & Town Depot, Kings Road West .. This is to ensure that architectural interest is maintained and enhanced, to protect important views and the visual amenity of the existing built environment surrounding the site. Additionally, in relation to the Former Harrow House School and the Former Purbeck View School, Policy SWAN3 requires building forms to compromise a variety of pitched and hipped roofs to create a roofscape that blends into the character of the Northbrook Road area, to protect the visual amenity of the area.

9.34 In relation to Land off Ulwell Road, Policy SWAN3 requires the design scheme layout to comprise buildings that follow the predominant building line. This is anticipated to help new development to blend into the existing built environment. Stipulations such as these, alongside Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance which requires development proposals to be assessed against the Swanage Townscape Character Assessment, are considered to help ensure new growth is considerate of the existing landscape and townscape character and quality of the neighbourhood area.

9.35 The most significant of the site allocations is Land North of Prospect Way, allocated through Policy SWAN3 for up to 170 homes outside but adjacent to the settlement boundary. This level of growth has the potential to adversely impact upon landscape character and quality, for example through changing the built form of Swanage, and encroaching into the Dorset National Landscape. The policy requires the layout and landscape scheme of the development to provide for an effective transition towards the National Landscape designation to the west, and building forms will need to include a variety of pitches and dipped roofs to create a roofscape that blends into the surrounding suburban character. This is anticipated to help reduce visual effects and help development to visually integrate with the existing built environment. Additionally, Policy SWAN3 requires any development proposal on the site to provide a SANG as part of the development. This reflects the nature of the proposal, as a significant community-led affordable housing project in a constrained location outside of the settlement boundary.

9.36 The SEA notes the importance of engagement with relevant consultation bodies and stakeholders in this respect, as well as consideration of higher level planning policy. Specifically, the draft Dorset National Landscape Management Plan indicates that development that does not conserve and enhance the National Landscape will only be supported if it is necessary and in the public interest, with major proposals subject to detailed consideration of exceptional circumstances and public interest grounds.[6] It is considered that this

[6] Dorset National Landscape (no date). 'Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31' can be accessed here

development is an exceptional circumstance – and the delivery of the SANG will likely help to further reduce visual impacts and contribute towards the character of the National Landscape. This is through providing a positive contribution to green infrastructure in line with the mitigation hierarchy outlined in the draft Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31.

9.37 The wider policy framework of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan also includes stipulations in relation to landscape in the neighbourhood area. For example, by defining a settlement boundary through Policy SWAN1: A Spatial Plan For Swanage, the policy works to deliver additional growth within and in proximity to the existing built environment. Whilst this has the potential to impact upon townscape character and quality, it reduces pressure on the wider landscape in the neighbourhood area – protecting the setting of the Dorset National Landscape, as well as undeveloped areas, local landscape character, and key landscape components, such as important views. This is also reiterated through Policy SWAN4: Town Centre, which seeks to define a boundary for the Swanage Town Centre. Additionally, Policy SWAN4: Town Centre provides stipulations in relation to proposals for the redevelopment of the former Post Office and the existing Sorting Depot, design requirements that are anticipated to reduce the impact of development on landscape and townscape character and quality. This includes ensuring that new development complements existing development in relation to layout, streetscene and rooflines. This is anticipated to ensure redevelopment reflects and does not detract from surrounding character and visual amenity.

9.38 It is noted that policies that work to safeguard and enhance green features are also likely to have landscape benefits. For example, by safeguarding green spaces through Policy SWAN6: Green Spaces & Recreation, the policy framework works to protect features that prevent the coalescence of the built environment. This helps to keep distinct areas separate from one another. Furthermore, it is recognised that Policy SWAN7: The Sandpit Field Stabilisation And Enhancement Scheme seeks to safeguard and enhance the important public space, supporting proposals where they use high quality design to improve the appearance of the area in keeping with the Dorset National Landscape. This is anticipated to positively contribute towards landscape by ensuring the special qualities of the National Landscape are not adversely impacted by development.

9.39 In conclusion, it is considered that development proposed through the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan is anticipated to have mixed effects in relation to landscape. Where there is a focus on bringing forward development within the existing settlement boundary, this could lead to positive and/ or negative impacts upon townscape character. However, it is considered that the specific site policies work to reduce negative effects through including stipulations to ensure development is in-keeping with the surrounding built environment.

9.40 The plan also seeks to allocate a large greenfield site Land North of Prospect Way adjacent to the settlement boundary, which will extend the settlement further west into the Dorset National Landscape. It is recognised that this is considered an exceptional circumstance, and the policy includes the need for a SANG in line with the draft Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31 mitigation hierarchy. Additionally, ensuring development is assessed against design stipulations through Policy SWAN5: Design Guidance is

anticipated to further ensure development adopts high quality design that is complementary of the Swanage neighbourhood area and the Dorset National Landscape. This, along with a focus on protecting green spaces and green infrastructure that contribute to the character of the neighbourhood area, is considered to reduce the potential for significant negative effects on the landscape. As such, **minor negative** effects are concluded at this stage, recognising there is a level of uncertainty in the absence of detailed design layout.

# Transportation

9.41 It is considered that sustainable transportation is relatively limited in the neighbourhood area – consisting of bus services and two heritage railway services. As such, it is likely that the development of up to 350 homes through the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan will lead to an increase in private vehicles on the local road network. The site specific policies consider transportation through including access stipulations under Policy SWAN3: Development Sites. For example, Policy SWAN3 requires design schemes for the Former Police Station, Argyle Road to include car parking at the rear of the site, to be accessed from Argyle Road. Similarly, Land at Kings Court Business Centre & Town Depot, Kings Road West also include car parking stipulations – requiring facilities to be provided to the rear of the site and accessed via Kings Road West or Court Road. Additionally, proposals for the Former Purbeck View School, off Northbrook Road will be required to ensure vehicle access to the site is provided by existing access points from Northbrook Road to the north. Pedestrian and cycle access will be established at the junction of Northbrook Road and Walrond Road to the south. Policy SWAN3 also provides vehicle access stipulations for Land North of Prospect Road (from Prospect Way only), and requires the safeguarding of the existing public rights of way (two footpaths) across the site. These stipulations are considered to help support the safeguarding of existing pedestrian access and vehicle access of the sites.

9.42 Whilst it is recognised that the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan requires development to embed National Design-Making Policies into design, Policy SWAN3: Development Sites could be improved to provide specific references to active travel opportunities alongside new development. For example, this could include integrating cycle parking facilities into new development, to help encourage cycling as an alternative transportation option to the private vehicle. This reflects the relatively limited access to sustainable transport in Swanage, and the high reliance on private vehicles.

9.43 Wider plan policies are also anticipated to contribute towards transportation. By defining a settlement boundary for Swanage under Policy SWAN1: A Spatial Plan For Swanage, and defining a town centre boundary under Policy SWAN4: Town Centre, the plan works to focus future growth in areas that support sustainable development and improved accessibility. This is anticipated to help reduce the need for private vehicles, as important infrastructure and growth will be within close enough proximity to use active and sustainable modes of transport.

9.44 In conclusion, the policy framework includes clear access requirements within the individual site policies, to enable safe access into and out of new development. Whilst sustainable transportation opportunities are limited in the

neighbourhood area, it is considered that including specifics in relation to cycle parking infrastructure could help to reduce private vehicles on the local road network. The wider policies are considered to have a transportation effect – largely through their focus on delivering growth within the most sustainable locations in the neighbourhood area, allowing for easier access. However, given the relatively limited sustainable transportation infrastructure in the neighbourhood area, it is considered that the growth of up to 350 dwellings will lead to additional private vehicles on the local road network. As such, **minor negative effects** are concluded likely.

# Conclusions and recommendations

## Conclusions

9.45 **Minor positive effects** are considered likely in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA theme. This reflects the focus on high quality design through new development and the safeguarding of green infrastructure and green spaces, to ensure biodiversity value and connectivity is maintained and enhanced. This also reflects the conclusions of the HRA, which indicate that no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites will arise from the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

9.46 **Minor positive effects** are also considered likely in relation to the community wellbeing SEA theme. The neighbourhood plan works well to deliver new growth, and support community wellbeing through maintained and enhanced green space, open space and recreation space. However, whilst the neighbourhood plan works to deliver housing growth to reduce the experienced deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services, it could also result in stress upon community infrastructure within Swanage.

9.47 **Minor positive effects** are further considered likely for the historic environment SEA theme. This is due to the site specific stipulations which work to maintain heritage settings and significance, and the wider plan policies which work to protect and enhance historic setting through protecting historic value and character.

9.48 **Broadly neutral effects** are considered likely in relation to the climate change and flood risk SEA theme. This is due to the level of growth proposed through the neighbourhood plan and the inevitable increase in emissions associated with it, and the stipulations included to help mitigate these emissions. It also reflects the focus on high quality development design to help reduce flood risk and effects.

9.49 **Broadly neutral effects** are further considered in relation to the landscape SEA theme. Whilst development will result in growth on a large site adjacent to the settlement boundary, it is considered an exceptional circumstance and includes mitigation in the form of a SANG, in line with Dorset National Landscape's mitigation hierarchy. Additionally, wider plan policies work to ensure high quality design comes forward that respects the landscape and townscape character of the neighbourhood area.

9.50 **Minor negative effects** are considered likely under the transportation SEA theme. The level of growth proposed through the neighbourhood plan is likely to increase the number of private vehicles on the local road network, given there is limited sustainable transportation opportunities. The plan works to reduce effects by ensuring development is focused within the most sustainable parts of the neighbourhood area, to promote active travel access where possible.

9.51 **Minor negative effects** are also considered likely for the land, soil and water resources SEA theme, reflecting the permanent loss of greenfield land. Due consideration is given to the approach taken through the policy framework to mitigate loss where possible by focusing growth in areas with lower quality

agricultural soils. Additionally, the focus on promoting growth within the existing settlement and town centre boundaries, and the protecting of green infrastructure, is also anticipated to work towards protecting resources.

9.52 In relation to the landscape SEA theme, it is considered that development proposed through the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan is anticipated to have mixed effects. Where there is a focus on bringing forward development within the existing settlement boundary, this could lead to positive and/ or negative impacts upon townscape character. However, the allocation of greenfield site Land North of Prospect Way will extend the settlement further west into the Dorset National Landscape, with the potential for significant negative effects. It is recognised that this is considered an exceptional circumstance, and the policy includes the need for a SANG in line with the draft Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31 mitigation hierarchy. Additionally, high quality design is required through the policy framework, and in line with higher level planning policy. The wider policies within the Neighbourhood Plan also seek to mitigate overall effects through protecting green infrastructure and green space. **Minor negative** effects are concluded at this stage, recognising there is a level of uncertainty in the absence of detailed design and layout of new development.

# Recommendations

9.53 It is recognised that Policy SWAN3 works well to outline specific design stipulations relating to each individual site allocated through the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan. However, it is recommended this policy is revisited to separate these policies further, for ease of reading and referencing. For example, Policy SWAN3: Site Code 03 could become Policy SWAN3a. This will likely make it easier to refer to each site individually.

9.54 Whilst it is recognised that the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan requires development to embed National Design-Making Policies into design, it is recommended that Policy SWAN3 is revisited to add specific stipulations relating to active and sustainable transport access and opportunities. This is likely to help encourage a mix of transportation options that better reflect the access needs of the neighbourhood area.

# Part 3: What are the next steps?

# 10. Next steps and monitoring

10.1 This part of the report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

## Next steps

10.2 This Environmental Report accompanies the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan for Regulation 14 consultation.

10.3 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council (DC), for subsequent Independent Examination.

10.4 At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with local planning policy.

10.5 If the Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by DC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for Swanage.

## Monitoring

10.6 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

10.7 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by DC as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant effects are considered likely in the implementation of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by DC.

10.8 Though significant positive effects are predicted in relation to Community Wellbeing, it is considered that the existing monitoring framework within the DC AMR includes sufficient indicators to monitor such effects.

10.9 Monitoring arrangements will be confirmed in an SEA Statement, which is prepared once a plan is 'adopted'.

# Appendix A Regulatory Requirements

As discussed in Chapter 1 above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. Table AA.1 overleaf links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst Table AA.2 explains this interpretation. Table AA.3 identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have/ will be met.

**Table AA.1 Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements**

| Environmental Report question | | In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include…[7] |
|---|---|---|
| What's the scope of the SEA? | What is the plan seeking to achieve? | • An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan. |
| | What is the sustainability 'context'? | • Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.<br>• The relevant environmental protection objectives established at international or national level.<br>• Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. |
| | What is the sustainability 'baseline'? | • The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan.<br>• The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.<br>• Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. |
| | What are the key issues and objectives? | • Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment. |
| What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point? | | • Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with.<br>• The likely significant effects associated with alternatives.<br>• Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan. |
| What are the assessment findings at this stage? | | • The likely significant effects associated with the submission version of the plan.<br>• The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the submission version of the plan. |
| What happens next? | | • The next steps for the plan making /SEA process. |

[7] NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

## Table AA.2 'Checklist' of how (throughout the SA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements have been, are and will be met.

| Regulatory requirement | Discussion of how requirement is met |
|---|---|
| **Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the SA Report** | |
| 1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes; | Chapter 2 ('What is the plan seeking to achieve') presents this information. |
| 2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;<br>3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;<br>4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.; | These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. The 'SEA framework' – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 ('What is the scope of the SEA?') and Appendix B. |
| 5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been considered during its preparation; | The SEA framework is presented within Appendix B. Also, Appendix B presents key messages from the context review.<br>With regards to explaining "how...considerations have been taken into account", Chapter 7 explains the Town Council's 'reasons for supporting the preferred approach', i.e., explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives appraisal. |
| 6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects); | Chapter 6 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a 'stand-out' plan policy area).<br>Chapters 9 presents an appraisal of the plan.<br>With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale. |
| 7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme; | The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan. Also, specific recommendations are made in Chapter 10. |
| 8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information; | Chapter 5 deals with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options.<br>Also, Chapter 7 explains the Town Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in-light of alternatives assessment). |
| 9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10; | Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings | The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report. |
| **The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations** | |
| authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2) | This draft Environmental Report is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 14 consultation. |
| **The SA must be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.** | |
| The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure. | This Regulation 14 Environmental Report, alongside consultation responses, will inform plan finalisation. |

# Appendix B SEA Scoping

## Introduction

This appendix presents additional information on the SEA scope, namely key issues under each of the SEA framework headings. As set out in the Scoping Report, these key issues were identified following a review of the context and baseline.

Additionally, this appendix presents a summary of responses received as part of the scoping consultation, followed by the SEA Framework.

**Air quality**

- The two AQMAs within Dorset are far removed from the neighbourhood plan area. The closest AQMA in relation to the neighbourhood plan area is the Poole AQMA, located approximately 10km north.
- Given the distance of the neighbourhood plan area from AQMAs, and that the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to deliver a significant level of development, the potential for the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan to lead to significant negative effects in relation to air quality is negligible. In combination with the fact that no air quality exceedances have been recorded within the neighbourhood plan area, this theme is **SCOPED OUT of the SEA**.

**Biodiversity**

- The emerging Swanage NP should seek to protect the internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity sites within and surrounding the neighbourhood area, utilising opportunities for biodiversity net-gain to recover these designations.
- There are areas within the Swanage neighbourhood area that present an opportunity to enhance biodiversity value and connectivity. The NP should take advantage of these opportunities where possible to secure biodiversity net-gain in line with national policy.
- The NP presents an opportunity to improve biodiversity and geological quality in the neighbourhood area by encouraging development to incorporate biodiversity net-gain techniques and features. Furthermore, the NP could encourage the creation and / or recovery of habitats in identified Network Enhancement Zones and Network Expansion Zones, which will bring biodiversity benefits to the neighbourhood area and within its setting.

**Climate change**

- Small sections of the neighbourhood area, specifically those adjacent to water bodies are at high risk of flooding, falling into Flood Zone 3. However, these are largely concentrated to the areas adjacent to rivers, as well as central Swanage and the coast, which is to the east of the neighbourhood area. New development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to exacerbate flood risk if it is built within and in proximity to areas at higher risk of fluvial and surface water flooding. Development should be focused away from these areas where possible.

- There is a need to consider flood risk, avoiding vulnerable development in areas of high fluvial flood risk, and managing, and where possible, improving drainage rates. The neighbourhood plan area could benefit from the installation of SuDS to help mitigate flood risk and effects.
- As with much of the country, extreme heat events are likely to occur more frequently in the future. In addition to this, drought is likely to become an increasing issue in summer, whilst surface water / groundwater flooding is likely to increase during winter months. In this respect, climate change resilience should form an integral part of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan policy framework.
- $CO_2$ emissions associated with the transport sector remain higher than other sectors in Dorset. This highlights the importance of accessible development and the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure. The Swanage NP can seek to address this locally, particularly by strengthening active travel routes and opportunities to increase self-containment.

**Community wellbeing**

- The neighbourhood area experiences higher levels of deprivation with regards to the barriers to housing and services deprivation domain. The Swanage NP presents an opportunity to reduce this type of deprivation by encouraging housing development in more accessible locations and supporting increased affordable housing.
- There is an issue in the neighbourhood area with second homes linked to tourism, which is likely to contribute to the barriers to housing and services deprivation that the area faces. The Swanage NP is an opportunity to manage this challenge that the area faces by encouraging a second homes policy and promoting housing for locals first.
- New housing development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase pressure on existing community infrastructure if this is not improved alongside development. This could lead to negative impacts in the longer term, for example if the capacity of health facilities is not increased to cater for the growing population.

**Historic environment**

- The numerous historic environment assets in the neighbourhood area present a constraint to future development within the neighbourhood area. The Swanage NP can help overcome this by ensuring any development that comes forward during the plan period is sensitive to the historic setting of the neighbourhood area in terms of design and layout. This is especially important when considering the Dorset and East Devon WHS and the four conservation areas within the neighbourhood area. Ensuring efforts are made to improve the condition of these areas will help to reduce the potential for adverse effect on character, intrinsic qualities and setting and will improve the wider historic landscape of the neighbourhood area. It could also help to improve heritage interpretation and understanding in the neighbourhood area – which will benefit other historic environment features.
- The neighbourhood area has a unique heritage that is represented by its former land uses. Encouraging opportunities to preserve this heritage

through the Swanage NP should be taken where appropriate, which will allow for the historic environment to continue to contribute to Swanage's unique character.

- Further, the current (and proposed) Conservation Areas, as well as proposed character areas, should be taken into consideration when developing the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to protect and enhance these areas.

**Land, soil and water resources**

- Allocating land for development could influence changes to land, soil and water resources. It will be important for development to be focused away from BMV land and consider potential impacts on the overlapping waterbody catchments and water quality. This could include implementing mitigation measures to ensure water pollution does not occur throughout the development phases.
- The Swanage NP could be an opportunity to improve and protect the ecological status of the waterbody in the neighbourhood area. It is also an opportunity to protect the integrity of the Purbeck Stone quarrying sites and industry within the neighbourhood area.

**Landscape**

- It will be important that the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect and enhance the local landscape in future development, including its coherence and characteristics. This is likely to be delivered through an appropriate spatial strategy and requirement for suitable design and layout in line with higher level policy.
- The Dorset AONB Landscape Character Assessment highlights the poor condition of the Corfe Valley area, which pertains to Swanage. The Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to enhance and protect this area, as per the management guidance.
- Although development within the neighbourhood plan area will not have direct impacts on Dorset NL, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan should have regard to its setting, and to the aims and objectives of the Dorset AONB Management Plan, particularly in relation to the obstruction of key views into this designation.

**Transportation**

- Car use in the neighbourhood plan area is significantly higher that the district and the region. Given the rural nature of the neighbourhood plan area, and limited access to sustainable transport, Swanage will likely continue the reliance on the private vehicle for travel.
- Future development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase the number of private vehicles on local roads, given the limited public transportation opportunities within the neighbourhood area. This could exacerbate existing traffic and congestion, seeing as a number of the roads in Swanage are designated as 'Traffic Sensitive Streets' already and potentially lead to parking issues in the neighbourhood area.

- Sustainable transport in Swanage is poor, bus services are relatively infrequent, and there are no functional railway stations located in the vicinity of the neighbourhood plan area, and no safe cycle routes identified. Whilst the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to encourage improvements to current bus services and encourage improvements to the PRoW network, this is unlikely to make a significant difference to the modal split and reliance on the private car.

# SEA framework

### Table AB.1: The proposed SEA Framework

| SEA theme | SEA objective | Supporting assessment questions |
|---|---|---|
| Biodiversity and geodiversity | Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity. | • Protect and enhance internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites?<br>• Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species, including ancient woodland?<br>• Follow the mitigation hierarchy and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks?<br>• Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks?<br>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks and improvements to the neighbourhood plan area's Network Enhancement Zones?<br>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity? |
| Climate change and flood risk | Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change. | • Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?<br>• Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and EV infrastructure?<br>• Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? |

| SEA theme | SEA objective | Supporting assessment questions |
|---|---|---|
| | | • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?<br>• Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change?<br>• Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area?<br>• Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing runoff where possible?<br>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks? |
| Community wellbeing | Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities. | • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing?<br>• Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?<br>• Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?<br>• Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population?<br>• Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?<br>• Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities?<br>• Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements, including improved access to open space?<br>• Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?<br>• Improve / encourage local employment opportunities? |
| Historic environment | Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. | • Protect the integrity of the Dorset and East Devon WHS, and work with / to the guidelines included the Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan?<br>• Protect the integrity of the historic setting of the four conservation areas?<br>• Conserve and enhance nationally designated heritage assets? |

| SEA theme | SEA objective | Supporting assessment questions |
|---|---|---|
| | | • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, and their settings?<br>• Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?<br>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?<br>• Protect the integrity of the current and proposed Conservation Areas of the neighbourhood area? |
| Land, soil, and water resources | Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner. | • Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible?<br>• Identify and avoid the development of BMV agricultural land?<br>• Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?<br>• Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality?<br>• Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development?<br>• Protect waterbodies from pollution?<br>• Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling?<br>• Avoid any negative impacts on mineral and waste infrastructure, including the Purbeck Stone quarries? |
| Landscape | Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape. | • Protect and / or enhance local landscape character and quality of place?<br>• Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?<br>• Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place?<br>• Improve, enhance and protect the Corfe Valley landscape area?<br>• Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the neighbourhood area's rural setting, including trees and hedgerows? |

| SEA theme | SEA objective | Supporting assessment questions |
|---|---|---|
| Transportation | Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel. | • Encourage a modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable active travel enhancements?<br>• Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?<br>• Facilitate local employment opportunities and working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?<br>• Improve road safety, particularly through measures to reduce speeding and facilitate safer crossings on key roads?<br>• Protects the integrity of Traffic Sensitive Streets? |