



Dorset
Council

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

December 2023

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Legislative background to Habitats Regulations Assessment	4
3	The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process	6
3.1.	Task 1: HRA Screening.....	6
3.2.	Task 2: Appropriate Assessment.....	6
3.3.	Task 3: Mitigation.....	6
4	The Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review.....	8
5	Habitats Regulations Assessment: Screening	10
5.1.	Water Pollution.....	13
	Dorset Heathlands Ramsar	13
	West Dorset alder Woods SAC.....	13
5.2.	Air Pollution - Cerne & Sydling Downs SAC, Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC, Rooksmoor SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA, SAC and Ramsar	14
5.3.	Sport, leisure and recreational activities	16
	Cerne & Sydling Downs SAC, Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC	16
	Dorset Heaths SAC	17
5.4.	Public access, disturbance and other human intrusion.....	18
	Dorset Heathlands SPA	18
5.5.	Habitat Fragmentation.....	19
	Dorset Heaths SAC	19
6	Conclusion.....	21
	Appendix A: Details of European Sites within 20km of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review	22

1 Introduction

- 1.0.1 This document provides a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review.
- 1.0.2 The main purpose of the HRA process is to prevent a plan or project from adversely affecting the integrity of a European Site, which are areas of exceptional importance for rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats or species. Extensive areas of Dorset and surrounding areas are occupied by European sites, reflecting the importance of the region for wildlife and habitats.
- 1.0.3 The HRA process involves several distinct stages of assessment which must be undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). This is explained in more detail in Chapter 3.
- 1.0.4 The first of these stages is the HRA screening stage. The main purpose of the HRA screening is to assess whether a plan is likely to have a significant negative effect on a European Site, and hence whether the subsequent steps of the HRA process are required.
- 1.0.5 If the HRA screening concludes that there would be no likely significant effect on a European Site, then the plan may proceed without further assessment.
- 1.0.6 However, if it is found that the plan would have a likely significant effect on a European Site then further assessment is required through the subsequent stages of the HRA process, to ensure that the plan does not result in adverse effects upon the integrity of a European site.
- 1.0.7 The HRA screening report firstly explains the legal basis for HRA (Chapter 2) and explains the HRA process (Chapter 3), before setting out the scope of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review. (Chapter 4). Following this, consideration is given to whether the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review is likely to have a significant effect upon a European site in the HRA screening exercise (Chapter 5).

2 Legislative background to Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.0.1 EU Directive (92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ('the Habitats Directive') led to the establishment of a network of 'European sites', collectively known as Natura 2000, which are areas of exceptional importance with respect to rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats or species. European Sites consist of the following ecological designations:

- Special Protection Areas (SPAs): Classified under the EU Directive (79/409/EEC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('the Birds Directive'), with the objective of protecting and managing areas which are important for rare and vulnerable birds as they are important grounds for breeding, feeding, wintering or migration; and
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs): Classified under the Habitats Directive, these areas provide rare and vulnerable animals, plants and habitats with increased protection and management.

2.0.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 181) states that the following sites should be afforded the same protection as European Sites:

- Potential Special Protection Areas (pSPA): Potential Special Protection Areas, are sites on which the Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a Special Protection Area;
- Possible Special Areas of Conservation (pSAC): Possible Special Areas of Conservation are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a candidate Special Area of Conservation;
- Ramsar sites (and listed/proposed Ramsar sites): Wetlands of international importance designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention, and proposed Ramsar sites are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for a Ramsar site; and
- Sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites and Ramsar sites: Sites which are included as compensation in schemes to mitigate adverse impacts upon European and Ramsar sites.

2.0.3 The requirement to undertake an assessment of plans or projects that are likely to have an effect upon European sites is given in Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

2.0.4 The Habitats Directive is transposed into UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations implements Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and requires the competent authority to complete an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives before deciding to undertake a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. Regulation 105 applies to land use plans, with Regulation 106 pertaining to Neighbourhood Development Plans specifically.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

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

3 The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

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

3.1. TASK 1: HRA SCREENING

- 3.1.1 The HRA screening stage involves consideration of whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, either alone and in combination with other plans or projects.
- 3.1.2 A 'likely significant effect' may be defined as a 'possible significant effect; one whose occurrence cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information'.
- 3.1.3 The HRA screening stage firstly involves gathering information on the European sites that may be affected, through geographical proximity or a potential impact pathway which links the plan to an effect on a European Site.
- 3.1.4 Following this, the HRA considers whether the plan is likely to result in a significant effect upon these European sites, either alone or in combination with other projects and plans, through the test of likely significant effect.
- 3.1.5 Measures which have been specifically added to achieve the purpose of avoiding or reducing the harmful effects of a plan upon a European site, known as mitigation measures, should not be considered at the screening stage.
- 3.1.6 If the HRA screening concludes that there is no likely significant effect on a European site, then further assessment is deemed unnecessary.
- 3.1.7 However, if it is found that the plan would have a likely significant effect on a European site then the next stage of assessment, known as the Appropriate Assessment stage, is required.

3.2. TASK 2: APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

- 3.2.1 If a proposed plan or project is considered likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, then an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site, in view of the site's conservation objectives, must be undertaken.
- 3.2.2 The scope and content of an appropriate assessment will depend on the nature, location, duration and scale of the proposed plan and the European sites which may be affected. However, the assessment needs to be proportionate and sufficient to support the task of determining whether the plan will adversely affect the integrity of a European site.

3.3. TASK 3: MITIGATION

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

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

- 3.3.2 Where it cannot be concluded that there will be no adverse effects on a site's integrity, there is a need to consider potential mitigation.
- 3.3.3 Mitigation measures are protective measures forming part of a project and are intended to avoid or reduce any direct adverse effects that may be caused by a plan or project, to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.
- 3.3.4 Any measures used to inform the decision about the effects on the integrity need to be sufficiently secured and likely to work in practice.

4 The Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

- 4.0.1 The Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area occupies approximately 9.76 km² (976ha), comprising seven separate hamlets of Kingston, Wonston (and Pleck), Pidney, Partway, Woodrow, Droop and Park Gate, with open fields between them.
- 4.0.2 The neighbourhood plan area has an estimated population of 1074 and contains 474 households¹.
- 4.0.3 The Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan 2018 to 2031 was adopted by North Dorset District Council on 8 March 2019.
- 4.0.4 The Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan includes a range of policies which aim to address the following:
- to safeguard the intrinsic beauty of our countryside, its character, important green spaces, key views, and local wildlife areas;
 - to make sure new development is in keeping with local building styles and materials, and retain the distinct differences between the various hamlets;
 - to protect the key community facilities that are so important to local residents, and try to make sure that these continue to thrive;
 - the allocation of three housing sites to deliver the housing needed over the next decade, plus an employment site with duty manager's accommodation; and
 - a project to improve road signs and other measures to encourage slower traffic speeds, which could be part-funded by development allowed through the Plan.
- 4.0.5 The purpose of the Review of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan is to take account of changes in national or local policy, changing needs within the Parish and to address the issues identified through the monitoring. The review does not propose changes to the Plan period or site allocations.
- 4.0.6 The main policy changes in the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review are as follows:
- **Policy HB2. Protecting and Enhancing Local Biodiversity:** updates to the map to use latest available ecology data, and amendments to the policy and supporting text to reflect the latest changes on mitigation being progressed through the Dorset Biodiversity Protocol and Levelling Up Bill;
 - **Policy HB5. Locally Distinctive Development:** updates to reference climate mitigation measures – i.e. measures to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, minimise waste, conserve water resources, and incorporate green infrastructure and

¹ Source: 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

sustainable drainage, and the need to consider electric vehicle charging points and sustainable drainage;

- **Policy HB13. Settlement Boundaries and Important Gaps:** adjustment to the extent of the gap between Wonston and Droop (to reflect the findings of the Churchfoot Lane appeal decision) and between Partway and Woodrow (to exclude the now developed area that was permitted prior to the making of the plan);
- **Policy HB15. Meeting Housing Needs – Amount and Location of New Dwellings:** updated supporting text to reflect the most up-to-date situation on housing needs, and minor changes to policy wording for clarity;
- **Policy HB17. Site 11 – Martin Richard's Tractors UK site, Back Lane, Kingston:** minor change to reflect latest information on groundwater levels, and delete reference to possible contamination (as confirmed not applicable);
- **Policy HB18. Site 7 – Former Frank Martin's Agricultural Depot:** minor change to reflect latest information on groundwater levels;
- **Policy HB20. Economic Development Opportunities:** minor changes to map to remove sites approved for dwellings and better reflect employment area footprints; and
- **Policy HB21. Site 12 – Land adjoining King Stag Mill, The Common:** minor changes to reflect the approved planning consent (deleting reference to flood risk as no longer applicable, and vehicular access which has been built.

5 Habitats Regulations Assessment: Screening

- 5.0.1 The first stage of the HRA process is the screening stage, the purpose of which is to determine whether the plan is likely to result in a significant effect upon a European Site.
- 5.0.2 In order to determine whether the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review is likely to result in a significant effect upon a European Site, it is first necessary to identify those European Sites which may be affected by the plan. This involves gathering information about the European Sites within the neighbourhood plan area and its vicinity.
- 5.0.3 The European Sites are within approximately 20km of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area, to within approximately 20km of the plan area are shown in Figure 5.1. Further details of these European Sites are presented in Appendix A.

Figure 5.1: European sites within 20km of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area

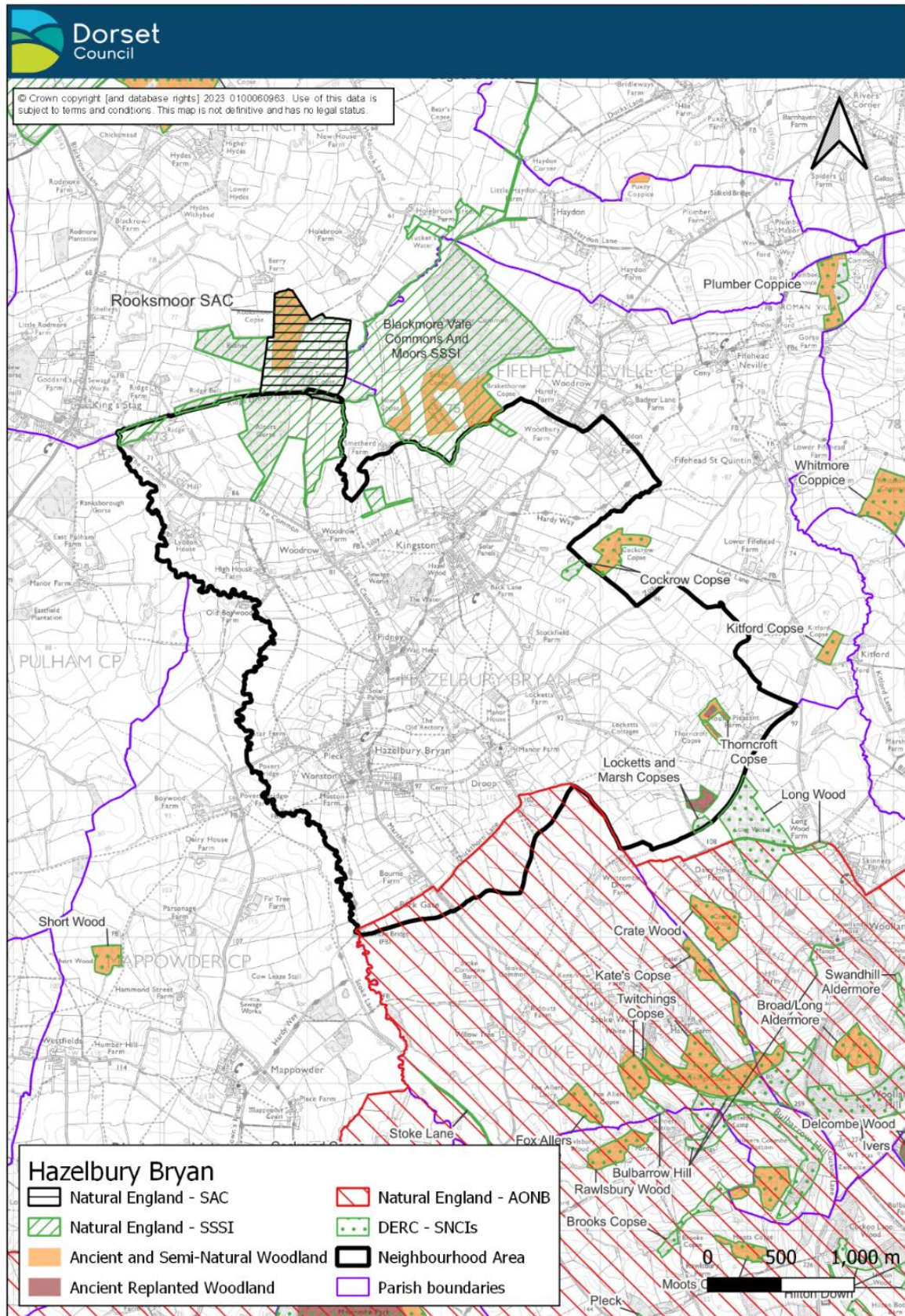
European Site	Designation	Approx. Distance/orientation from Neighbourhood Plan area (km)
Rooksmoor	SAC	Adjacent to the north
Holnest	SAC	6km to the west
Cerne and Sydling Downs	SAC	8km to the southwest
Fontmell & Melbury Downs	SAC	13km to the northeast
West Dorset Alder Woods	SAC	15km to the southwest
Dorset Heaths	SAC, SPA, Ramsar	15km to the southeast

- 5.0.4 A map showing the location and extent of the parcel of the Rooksmoor SAC, which is situated adjacent and to the north of the plan area, is shown in Figure 5.2.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

Figure 5.2: Environmental designations within the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area



Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 5.0.5 Having identified the characteristics of the European sites within approximately 20km of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review boundary, it is now possible to identify those European Sites which may be linked to the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review through a known 'pathway'.
- 5.0.6 A 'pathway' may be defined as the means by which a change in activity leads to an effect. In this instance, a pathway may be defined as the means by which a change in activity due to the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review leads to an effect on a European Site.
- 5.0.7 At the initial stage of the screening, all of the potential pathways were identified by considering the potential threats, pressures and activities to the European Sites provided in the official citation which are relevant given the scope of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review. Those potential threats, pressures and activities that were not considered to be linked to the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review through a pathway were discounted from further consideration.

Figure 5.2: The potential threats, pressures and activities to European sites within 20km of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area

Potential threat, pressure or activity	European Site
Water pollution	Dorset Heathlands Ramsar West Dorset Alder Woods SAC
Air pollution	Cerne & Sydling Downs SAC Dorset Heathlands SAC, SPA and Ramsar Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC Rooksmoor SAC
Public access, disturbance and other human intrusion	Dorset Heathlands SPA
Sport, leisure and recreational activities	Cerne & Sydling Downs SAC Dorset Heaths SAC Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC
Habitat Fragmentation	Dorset Heathlands SPA

- 5.0.8 Following the identification of all of the possible pathways, the habitats regulations assessment screening then considered these possible pathways in more detail to determine whether or not they represent a credible or plausible pathway.
- 5.0.9 The following sections of this chapter explores each of the potential pathways which have been identified according to the threat, pressure or activity.

5.1. WATER POLLUTION

DORSET HEATHLANDS RAMSAR

- 5.1.1 The Dorset Heathlands Ramsar occupies an extensive but fragmented area in the southeast of the Dorset.
- 5.1.2 The Dorset Heathlands Ramsar is amongst the best examples of wet heaths and acid mires in lowland Britain, and supports a large assemblage of nationally rare and scarce wetland plant species and invertebrates.
- 5.1.3 Urban development in close proximity to the Dorset Heathlands may result in:
- Changes in pH, nutrient status, turbidity of water supplies to heathland;
 - Enrichment and pollutants from urban run-off;
 - Pollutants from mis-connections, storm overflows, spills, accidents;
 - Diversion of pre-existing natural water sources away from heathland catchments; and
 - Changes in heathland hydrology and leakage in underground pipes and sewers as a result of service infrastructure.
- 5.1.4 Additional development through the Dorset Council Local Plan may exacerbate these issues, resulting in a likely significant effect upon the Dorset Heathlands.
- 5.1.5 The issue of pollution to water is intrinsically linked to the other pressures upon the Dorset Heaths caused by development, such as disturbance and recreational pressure, which is considered elsewhere in the HRA screening.
- 5.1.6 The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-25 is an adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by Dorset Council. The main purpose of the SPD is to provide a mechanism for mitigating the impacts upon the Dorset heaths from new development.
- 5.1.7 The SPD ensures that residential development within 400m of the Dorset Heaths European Site is not permitted due to impacts upon the designation. Residential development within the area between 400m and 5km from the Dorset Heaths will result in a likely significant effect which must be adequately mitigated against in order to avoid an adverse effect upon integrity of the designation. Therefore, the impacts of residential development are largely a consideration within 5km of the Dorset Heaths.
- 5.1.8 Given that the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area is approx. 15km to the northwest of the Dorset Heaths, there is no viable pathway with the Dorset Heaths and therefore no likely significant effect.

WEST DORSET ALDER WOODS SAC

- 5.1.9 The West Dorset Alder Woods SAC comprises mixed ash-alder woods found along the winding valleys of West Dorset.

- 5.1.10 The woods have developed along the headwaters of alkaline streams and seepages having originating from the chalk downland and issuing from the underlying Upper Greensand at its junction with the Gault Clay.
- 5.1.11 The wetter woods form transitions to drier oak-ash woodland as well as associated further transitions to base-rich fens, reedswamp, fen meadow and acid grassland.
- 5.1.12 Diffuse pollution from agricultural practices in the areas surrounding the SAC is considered a pressure upon the SAC features. Whilst agricultural practices are at relatively low intensity, water quality issues exist due to intensive dairy units and the threat of nutrient enrichment due to runoff. Of particular concern is the nutrient enrichment of waters supplying the site's wet habitats, which could impact the SAC features.
- 5.1.13 The intensification of agricultural practices and new development served by private sewage treatment works (e.g septic tanks) in those areas surrounding the West Dorset Alder Woods SAC may result in nutrient enrichment at the SAC.
- 5.1.14 Given that the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area is approx. 15km to the northeast of the West Dorset Alder Woods SAC, development within the neighbourhood plan area is considered unlikely to affect water quality at the West Dorset Alder Woods SAC.

5.2. AIR POLLUTION - CERNE & SYDLING DOWNS SAC, FONTMELL & MELBURY DOWNS SAC, ROOKSMOOR SAC, DORSET HEATHLANDS SPA, SAC AND RAMSAR

- 5.2.1 Atmospheric nitrogen resulting from emissions to air from road traffic may result in the deposition of atmospheric nitrogen into the soil. This causes the enrichment of soils, affecting those habitats which are necessarily naturally low in nutrients. The sensitive habitats within 20km of the neighbourhood plan area include the chalk grasslands at the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC, the neutral and acid grassland meadows at the Rooksmoor SAC, and the Dorset Heathlands SAC, SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.2.2 Natural England's guidance note on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the habitats regulations advises a series of steps at the HRA screening stage to determine whether a proposal will result in a likely significant effect. These steps are set out below.
- 5.2.3 **Step 1** of the Natural England methodology asks the following question: Does the proposal give rise to emissions which are likely to reach a European site?
- 5.2.4 This initial screening step for air pollution assessment considers the distance between an emission source and the receptor, and factors including the scale of the proposal and source of emissions to determine whether emissions are likely to reach the European site.
- 5.2.5 The Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area is approx. 13km from the Fontmell and Melbury Down SAC and approx. 15km from the Dorset Heaths. Considering the distance of the plan area from these European Sites alongside the scale of the proposed development which is likely to come forward through the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review, which is approximately 55 dwellings over the period to 2031, it is considered unlikely that the plan will give rise to emissions at the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC and Dorset

- Heaths SAC, SPA and Ramsar. The effects of air quality of the Neighbourhood Plan upon these European sites therefore doesn't require further consideration.
- 5.2.6 The Rooksmoor SAC is adjacent to the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area and the Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC is approx. 8km away. It is possible that emissions resulting from additional traffic associated with the 55 dwellings coming forward through the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review may result in emissions which are likely to reach these European Sites given that both have roads within 200m of the European Site.
- 5.2.7 **Step 2** of the guidance asks: Are the qualifying features within 200m of a road sensitive to air pollution?
- 5.2.8 The Rooksmoor SAC is characterised by Purple moor-grass meadow habitat which supports Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia*. Both of this habitat and associated species are understood to be sensitive to air pollution.
- 5.2.9 The Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC contains semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (*important orchid sites) and also supports Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia*. This habitat and species are also sensitive to air pollution.
- 5.2.10 Further screening is therefore needed to establish whether air quality impacts of the plan will result in a likely significant effect.
- 5.2.11 **Step 3** of the guidance asks: Could the sensitive qualifying features of the site be exposed to emissions?
- 5.2.12 There is not sufficient information to determine the spatial extent of qualifying features on those areas within 200m of the road, or to sufficiently predict the deposition of pollutants in relation to the site's sensitive features.
- 5.2.13 Therefore, a precautionary approach is taken with an assumption made that a qualifying feature may be present and further screening is required.
- 5.2.14 **Step 4** involves the application of thresholds to consider the risk of road traffic emissions. Depending on the information available, the thresholds can be expressed in annual average daily traffic flow (AADT) or the predicted emissions.
- 5.2.15 Step 4a is to apply the threshold alone, with the threshold being 1000 AADT or less than 1% of the critical load of each qualifying feature.
- 5.2.16 The fragment of Rooksmoor SAC adjacent and to the north of the plan area is not within 200m of a significant road. However, the fragment of Rooksmoor SAC approx. 2.3km to the north of the plan area, at Lydlinch Common, is within 200m of a road and located where the A357 meets the A3030. This junction is approximately 3km by road to the neighbourhood plan area.
- 5.2.17 The Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC is approximately 8km to the southwest of the plan area. The SAC is not within 200m of the A352 at this location, but is located within 200m of local roads.

- 5.2.18 The provision of 55 dwellings is considered unlikely to result in an additional 1000 trips per day on average at the sections of European site which are adjacent to a road, considering the scale of development and distance from the European sites. Therefore, the thresholds from step 4 are not exceeded.
- 5.2.19 Following the steps set out in the Natural England guidance, it is concluded that the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review is not likely to result in a significant effect upon a European Site.

5.3. SPORT, LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 5.3.1 Many of the European Sites within Dorset and its surrounding areas offer an attractive natural environment for sport, leisure and recreation.
- 5.3.2 Visitor numbers to the countryside in England are increasing². This may be due to the rising population, an increase in the amount of available leisure time as a result in the change to social conditions (such as greater leave entitlement) and greater accessibility as a result of more private vehicle ownership and improved transport infrastructure.

CERNE & SYDLING DOWNS SAC, FONTMELL & MELBURY DOWNS SAC

- 5.3.3 The Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC and Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, located 8km and 13km from the plan area respectively, are characterised predominantly by semi-natural dry grassland with some scrub and heathland on the chalk valley slopes of north Dorset.
- 5.3.4 These chalk grassland habitats are sensitive to recreational pressure. This may result from trampling and erosion by walking or cycling. Those parts that are steep and with thin soils and those areas near to access points, where pressures are more concentrated, are particularly vulnerable. The addition of nutrients from dog faeces is also a threat, as this results in an input of nutrients into the soil, whereas chalk grassland habitats are necessarily naturally low in nutrients.
- 5.3.5 New development in the areas surrounding these European Sites may increase the local population and the number of visits to these sites, increasing the recreational pressure.
- 5.3.6 However, given the distance of the neighbourhood plan area from the site and the scale of the proposed development (55 dwellings in the period up to 2031), it is considered unlikely that the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review would result in an appreciable increase in the number of visitors to the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC and Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC. As a result, the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review will not result in a likely significant effect from recreational pressure upon these European Sites.

ROOKSMOOR SAC

- 5.3.7 The Rooksmoor SAC, adjacent to the plan area, is not considered to be under threat from sport, leisure and recreational pressure.

² Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (MENE) (Natural England, 2015)

- 5.3.8 The areas surrounding the Rooksmoor SAC are not heavily populated, and there is a wealth of countryside in the areas surrounding the SAC which can be used for recreational purposes considering the rural characteristics of the area and extensive public footpath network.
- 5.3.9 Furthermore, the parcel of the Rooksmoor SAC adjacent to the plan area has a single footpath which passes through it, and therefore access is limited.
- 5.3.10 Use of the Rooksmoor SAC for sport, leisure and recreational purposes is therefore considered to be minimal and the provision of 55 dwellings in the period up to 2031 within the plan area is unlikely to result in a likely significant effect upon the Rooksmoor SAC.

DORSET HEATHS SAC

- 5.3.11 Evidence shows that the Dorset Heaths are under significant pressure from an increasing number of people living nearby. As population grows, the impacts from human pressures and damage caused by domestic pets have the potential to cause adverse effects upon the protected habitats and species.
- 5.3.12 The main effects upon the Dorset Heaths as a result of development in close proximity to the Dorset Heaths include the following:
- Loss of supporting habitats: decrease in the semi-natural habitat adjoining heaths which provide functional support;
 - Predation: Fox, cat/rat predation on ground nesting birds and reptiles;
 - Enrichment: results in vegetation changes particularly alongside paths due to dog excrement and from rubbish and garden waste dumping by roads and from gardens. Also as a result of vehicles in transport corridor;
 - Roads: Increased fire risk from car thrown cigarettes, roads forming barriers to species mobility, road kills increasing mortality rates, and noise and light pollution from traffic;
 - Service infrastructures, both over and under heathland, causing disturbance and providing poles which act as look-out posts for bird predators;
 - Disturbance: May cause changes in breeding bird and animal distributions within and across sites, reduction in breeding success of birds/animals, and delayed breeding in SPA birds;
 - Trampling: Results in changes to vegetation, creation of bare areas and subsequent soil erosion, damage to bare ground reptile and invertebrate habitats and populations, increases in path and track networks;
 - Fire: May increase frequency of fires particularly in spring and summer, causing long term vegetation changes, increased mortality of heathland animals/birds, fragmentation/reduction of habitat on heaths; and

- Difficulties in heathland management: vandalism of signs and fences, opposition to management techniques such as tree felling, fencing and grazing, increased cost of heathland management.
- 5.3.13 The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-25, which sets out a strategy for the avoidance and mitigation of impacts of new residential development upon the Dorset Heaths, shows that these impacts are most marked for developments within 400m of heathland sites. Any residential development in this area would result in a negative effect upon the Dorset designated site.
- 5.3.14 In the area between 400m and up to 5km from a heathland site ('5km buffer zone'), the effect of development is less marked but still likely to be significant if mitigation is not delivered.
- 5.3.15 The neighbourhood plan area is approx. 15km from the Dorset Heaths SAC, and therefore considerably beyond the 5km buffer zone within which residential development is likely to result in significant effect upon the Dorset Heaths SAC. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review will result in a likely significant effect upon the Dorset Heaths from recreational pressure.

5.4. PUBLIC ACCESS, DISTURBANCE AND OTHER HUMAN INTRUSION

- 5.4.1 Disturbance occurs where human activity influences a habitat or the population of species which it supports.
- 5.4.2 Disturbance can result in a physical effect upon a habitat, for example by causing damage through erosion or trampling, or indirect effects through changes in management due to human intrusion.
- 5.4.3 In terms of the effects upon species, disturbance may affect an animal's behaviour, affecting its distribution, breeding success and health, and ultimately its survival.

DORSET HEATHLANDS SPA

- 5.4.4 The Dorset Heathlands SPA supports populations of Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Woodlark *Lullula arborea* during the breeding season and Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* and Merlin *Falco columbarius* over winter.
- 5.4.5 Public access and disturbance to breeding SPA birds, mostly by dogs, can affect their breeding success. This may have implications upon the populations of nightjar and woodlark in particular.
- 5.4.6 Other effects as a result of access and disturbance include predation by domestic cats and urban foxes and the illicit use of heaths for motorcycle scrambling. However motorcycle use on heathlands has generally declined relative to previous levels in response to site wardening and alternative facilities being made available.
- 5.4.7 Further residential development through the in those areas surrounding the Dorset Heaths would result in an increase in population, leading to an increase in disturbance to birds. This is likely to result in a significant effect on the Dorset Heaths SPA.

- 5.4.8 As previously discussed, in the water quality section (Chapter 5.1), the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-25 addressed the potential impacts of new development upon the Dorset Heaths by not permitting residential development within 400m of the Dorset Heaths and providing the appropriate mitigation within the area between 400m and 5km from the Dorset Heaths. Therefore, the impacts of residential development are largely a consideration within 5km of the Dorset Heaths.
- 5.4.9 Given that the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area is approx. 15km to the northwest of the Dorset Heaths, there is unlikely to be a significant effect upon the Dorset Heaths.

5.5. HABITAT FRAGMENTATION

DORSET HEATHS SAC

- 5.5.1 Habitat fragmentation occurs when a large area of habitat is split into smaller areas, resulting in populations becoming isolated and the overall area of the habitat being reduced.
- 5.5.2 Habitat fragmentation may occur as a result of development, for example housing or infrastructure such as roads, dividing a habitat into smaller parcels of land in addition to resulting in habitat loss.
- 5.5.3 In the mid-18th century, the Dorset Heathlands occupied an area of approximately 36,000ha in Southeast Dorset.
- 5.5.4 Over time the extent of the Dorset Heathlands reduced, largely as a result of agriculture, forestry and urban development. In 1996, the coverage of the Dorset Heathlands had dramatically reduced to approximately 7,373ha, and by 2019, the coverage of the Dorset Heathlands had fallen to approximately 6,199ha, representing a loss of around 83% of heathland habitat.
- 5.5.5 In addition to the loss of habitat, the Dorset Heathlands has become fragmented. In 1979, the Dorset Heathland existed in 768 separate parcels, 88% of which were less than 10ha (Webb & Haskins 1980).
- 5.5.6 Fragmentation of the Dorset Heathlands may reduce the suitability of the remaining habitat and cause them to be more susceptible to recreational pressure and the effects of wildfires and arson.
- 5.5.7 Studies have recorded negative responses to fragmentation for the species including the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, a qualifying feature for the Dorset Heathlands SPA. It is suggested that Dartford warblers avoid smaller and more isolated heath patches.
- 5.5.8 In recent years, the loss and fragmentation of the Dorset Heaths has almost halted through changes in national and local policy, including the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework which has been in place since 2007 and prevents further habitat fragmentation.
- 5.5.9 The Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area does not include any Dorset Heath, indeed the heaths are approx. 15km to the southeast of the plan area. Therefore, development

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

through the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan will not result in further habitat fragmentation at the Dorset Heaths.

6 Conclusion

- 6.0.1 The HRA screening exercise considered the potential threats, pressures and activities which may affect the European sites within 20km of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan area, including the Rooksmoor SAC which is adjacent and to the north of the neighbourhood plan area.
- 6.0.2 The potential threats, pressures and activities considered included air and water quality, recreational pressure and habitat fragmentation.
- 6.0.3 The HRA screening did not identify a credible or plausible pathway between the development coming forward through the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review and an effect upon a European Site. These findings were largely due to the scope of the neighbourhood plan and the amount of housing which it is likely to bring forward, and in some cases the considerable distance between the neighbourhood plan area and European sites.
- 6.0.4 Therefore, the HRA screening did not identify any likely significant effects resulting from the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review, and an Appropriate Assessment is not required in this instance.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

Appendix A: Details of European Sites within 20km of the Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

European Site	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives	Potential threats, pressures and activities with impacts
<p>Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC</p>	<p>Annex 1 habitats: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)</p> <p>Annex 2 species (present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for selection of this site): Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species, and, • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<p>Grazing; Fertilisation; Interspecific floral relations; Other ecosystem modifications</p>
<p>Dorset Heathlands Ramsar</p>	<p>Ramsar criterion 1: Contains particularly good examples of (i) northern Atlantic wet heaths with cross-leaved heath <i>Erica tetralix</i> and (ii) acid mire with Rhynchosporion.</p>	<p>Natural England considers the Conservation Advice packages for the overlapping European Sites to be sufficient to support the management of the Ramsar interests at this site.</p>	<p>Acid rain; pollution.</p>

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

European Site	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives	Potential threats, pressures and activities with impacts
	<p>Ramsar criterion 2: Supports 1 nationally rare and 13 nationally scarce wetland plant species, and at least 28 nationally rare wetland invertebrate species.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 3: Has a high species richness and high ecological diversity of wetland habitat types and transitions, and lies in one of the most biologically-rich wetland areas of lowland Britain, being continuous with three other Ramsar sites: Poole Harbour, Avon Valley and The New Forest.</p>		
Dorset Heathlands SPA	<p>During the breeding season; Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>; Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>; Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i></p> <p>Over winter; Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features • The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features • The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely • The population of each of the qualifying features, and, • The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. 	<p>Inappropriate scrub control; Public access/disturbance; Undergrazing; Forestry and woodland management ; Drainage; Water pollution; Invasive species; Habitat fragmentation; Wildfire/arson; Air pollution (atmospheric deposition); Deer</p>

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

European Site	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives	Potential threats, pressures and activities with impacts
Dorset Heaths SAC	<p>Annex 1 habitats: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> European Dry Heaths; Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</p> <p>Annex 1 habitats (present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for selection of this site): Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>); Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae; Alkaline fens; Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains</p> <p>Annex 2 species: Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i></p> <p>Annex 2 species (present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for selection of this site): Great crested Newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species • The distribution of qualifying species within the site 	<p>Grazing; Invasive non-native species; Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities Bionetic evolution; succession; Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions.</p>
Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC	<p>Annex 1 habitats (present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for selection of this site): Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p>	<p>Cultivation; Modification of cultivation practices; Air pollution; Biocenotic evolution, succession</p>

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

European Site	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives	Potential threats, pressures and activities with impacts
	<p>Annex 2 species: Early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species, and, • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	
Holnest SAC	<p>Annex 2 species: Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species 	None given

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

European Site	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives	Potential threats, pressures and activities with impacts
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species, and, • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	
Rooksmoor SAC	<p>Annex 1 habitats (present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for selection of this site): Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</p> <p>Annex 2 species: Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas</i> (<i>Eurodryas</i>, <i>Hypodryas</i>) <i>aurinia</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species, and, 	<p>Mowing / cutting of grassland; Grazing; Air pollution; Biocenotic evolution, succession</p>

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hazelbury Bryan Neighbourhood Plan Review

European Site	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives	Potential threats, pressures and activities with impacts
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	
<p>West Dorset Alder Woods SAC</p>	<p>Annex 1 habitats: Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) Annex 1 habitats (present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for selection of this site): Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains Annex 2 species: Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas</i> (<i>Eurodryas</i>, <i>Hypodryas</i>) <i>aurinia</i> Annex 2 species (present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for selection of this site): Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely The populations of qualifying species, and, <p>The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</p>	<p>Invasive non-native species; Problematic native species; Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources); Grazing; Forest and Plantation management & use.</p>