



Dorset
Council

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan

February 2021

SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

Contents

Contents	2
1 Introduction	1
2 Legislative background to Habitats Regulations Assessment	2
3 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan	3
3.0. The characteristics of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan Area	3
3.1. The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan	8
4 Screening	9
4.1. Is The Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	10
5 Conclusion	17

1 Introduction

- 1.0.1 The purpose of this report is to determine whether or not the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) through a process known as SEA screening.
- 1.0.2 This report provides details of the proposed Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan and explains the legislative background to SEA screening, before providing an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.0.3 This report meets the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment and the Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations (2004).

SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

2 Legislative background to Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 2.0.1 European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment ('SEA Directive') introduces the need to undertake a strategic environmental assessment ('SEA') during the development of some plans and programmes. The main purpose of SEA, according to Article 1 of the SEA Directive, is:
- “to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.
- 2.0.2 The SEA Directive is transcribed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which establishes the requirement to undertake a sustainability appraisal ('SA') for some documents used for planning purposes. The SA process incorporates the requirement for SEA, but typically has a broader scope and considers the social and economic issues in addition to the environmental effects.
- 2.0.3 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, which amends the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, provides clarification on the SEA documents which must be submitted alongside neighbourhood planning proposals.
- 2.0.4 Regulation 2(4) of the amendment regulations 2015 adds to the list of documents that a neighbourhood planning group must submit to a local planning authority with a proposal for a neighbourhood plan, which is presented in regulation 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.
- 2.0.5 Regulation 6(4)(e) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires one of the following documents to be submitted alongside a neighbourhood planning document:
- (i) an environmental report prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004; or
 - (ii) where it has been determined under regulation 9(1) of those Regulations that the plan proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination.

3 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan

3.0. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STINSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

- 3.0.1 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area occupies approximately 13.5km² (1,352ha) and a population of approximately 321¹.
- 3.0.2 According to the 2011 census, the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area contains 149 households, comprising the following dwelling types:
- Detached 47.0%
 - Terraced 14.1%
 - Semi-detached 33.6%
 - Flats/Maisonettes 4.7%
 - Mobile Homes/caravans 0.7%
- 3.0.3 A majority of these dwellings (85.9%) have at least one usual resident.
- 3.0.4 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area and surrounding areas include a number of environmental designations, indicating the importance and sensitivity of the plan area from an environmental perspective.
- 3.0.5 Environmental designations include areas of importance for wildlife and habitats (Figure 3.1), the most important of which from an ecological perspective are the European Wildlife Designations which comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), and Ramsar sites. There are no European Wildlife sites within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area. However, Warmwell Heath, a small section of a wider network of lowland heath in Dorset, lies approximately 3.4km southwest of the Plan area. These areas of heath are collectively known as Dorset Heathlands and are covered by several international, European and national designations including SPA, SAC, Ramsar and SSSI.
- 3.0.6 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area contains national wildlife designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) which are also of high ecological importance, and non-designated wildlife sites (Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and Local Nature Reserves) which are of local importance for wildlife. The section of the River Frome which comprises much of the southern boundary of the Plan area, is designated as a SSSI. The River Frome is the most westerly example of a major chalk stream in Great Britain. The plant communities that the river support are species rich compared with similar communities on other rivers. The site also supports rare and scarce aquatic invertebrates, a characteristic assemblage of breeding riverside birds and a range of fish species. Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), which are areas of local wildlife importance (Figure 3.2).

¹ Source: 2017 mid-year estimates, Office for National Statistics

SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

Figure 3.1: Wildlife designations within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the red dashed line)

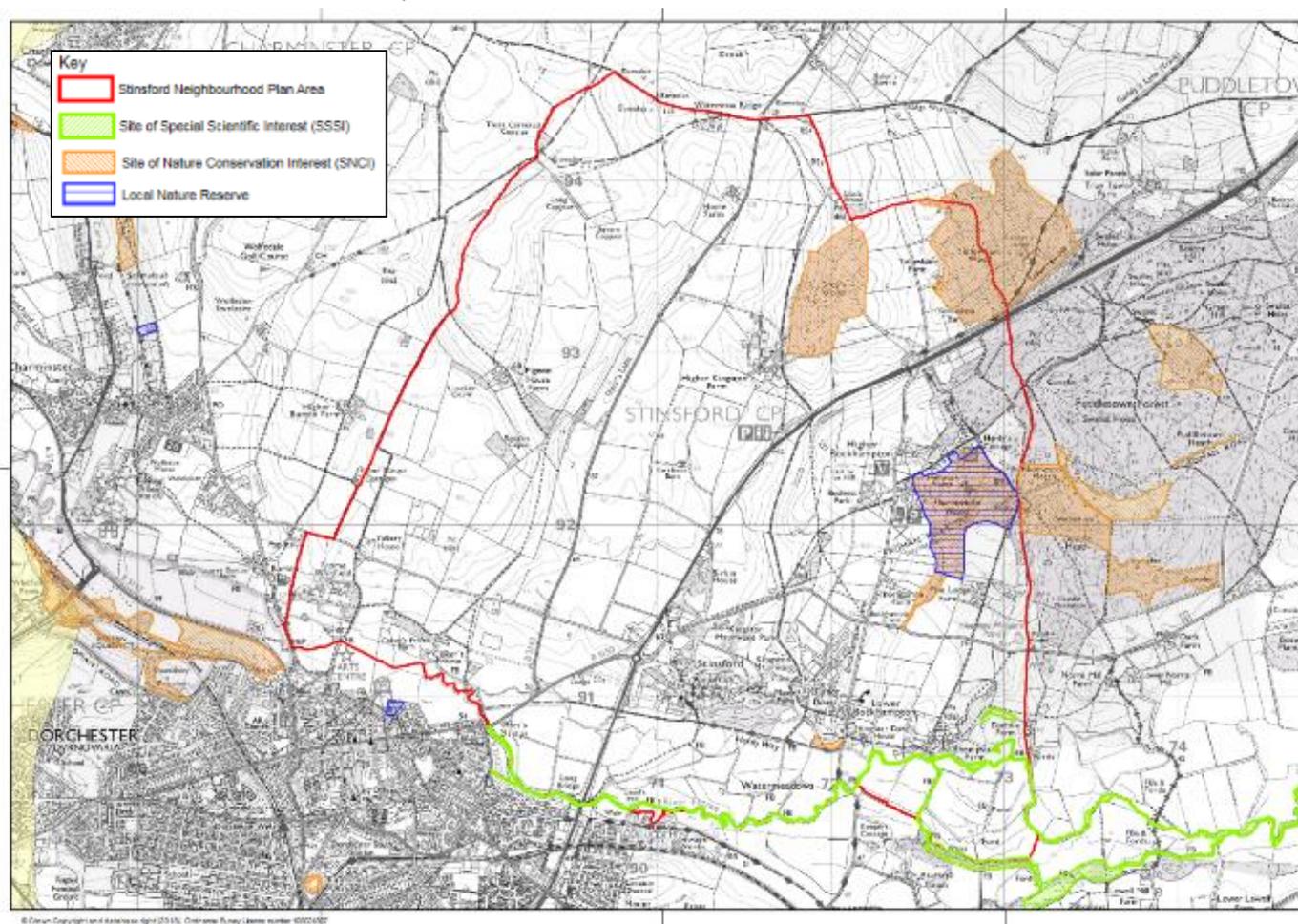


Figure 3.2: The Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) within the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan area

Name of SNCI	Area	Description
Black Heath	6.8	Areas of heathland, mostly forestry clearings.
Grey's Wood	23.1	A large deciduous woodland with rich ground flora.
Kingston Maurward Copse	0.6	A small deciduous copse alongside the river.
Thorncombe Wood	19.1	Mainly a deciduous woodland.
Yellowham Wood	49.8*	A large mainly deciduous woodland with a rich flora and butterfly populations.

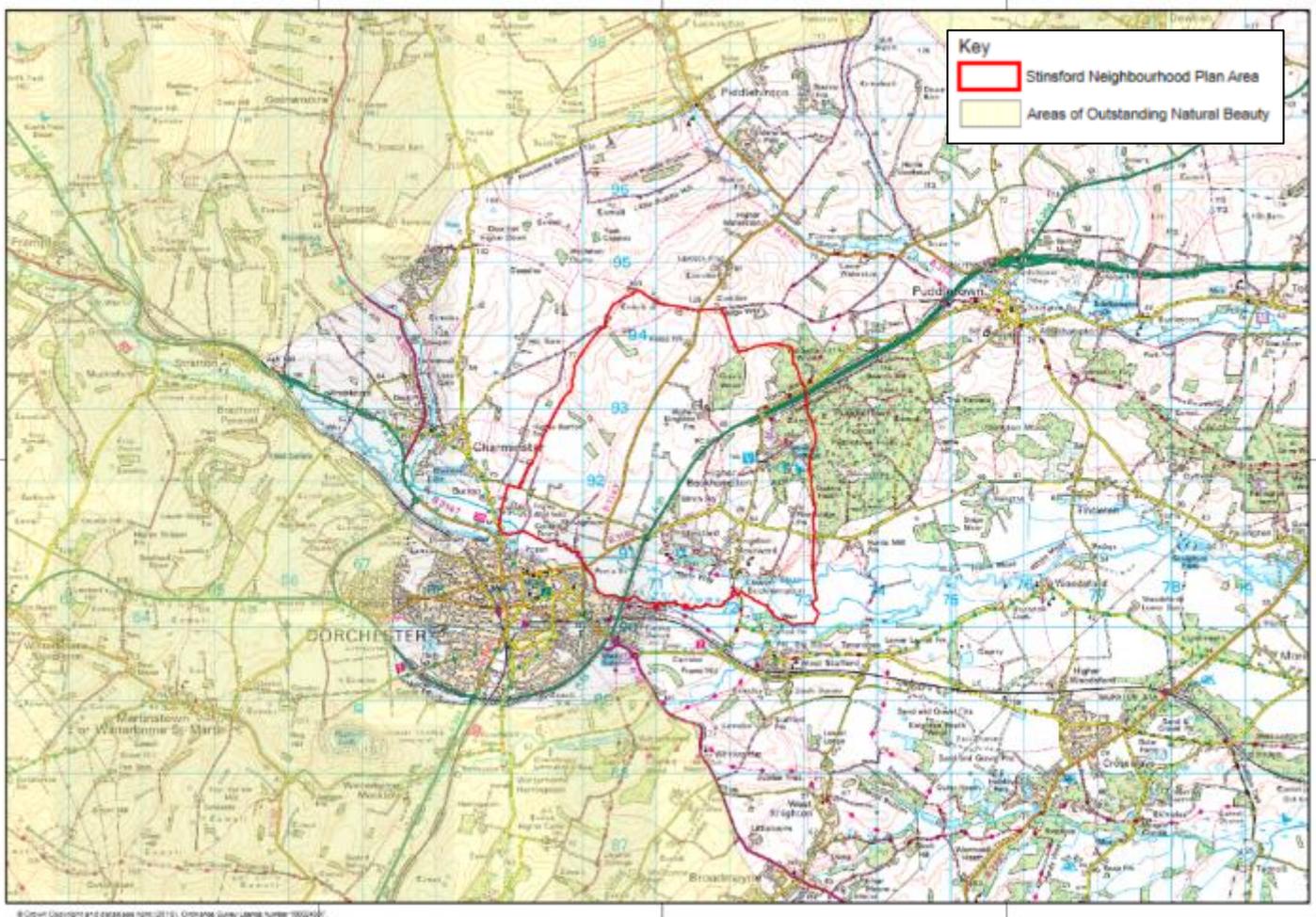
* Only partly within the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan Area

SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan - Pre-Submission Draft

- 3.0.7 The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation represents nationally important protected landscapes. The Dorset AONB occupies large areas of countryside within the wider landscape, outside of the neighbourhood plan area (Figure 3.3).
- 3.0.8 The parish has three main landscape types (as defined in the local landscape character assessments):
- river valley pasture (associated with the River Frome and its flood plain) – much of which is included as land of local landscape importance in the Local Plan,
 - chalk valley and downland, becoming more open to the north (this landscape includes the northern part of the parish and the settlements of Lower and Higher Bockhampton, Bhompston and Higher Kingston),
 - heath / forest mosaic (covering Puddletown Forest and the area around Greys and Yellowham Woods).

Figure 3.3: The extent of the Dorset AONB (shown in yellow) within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the red line)



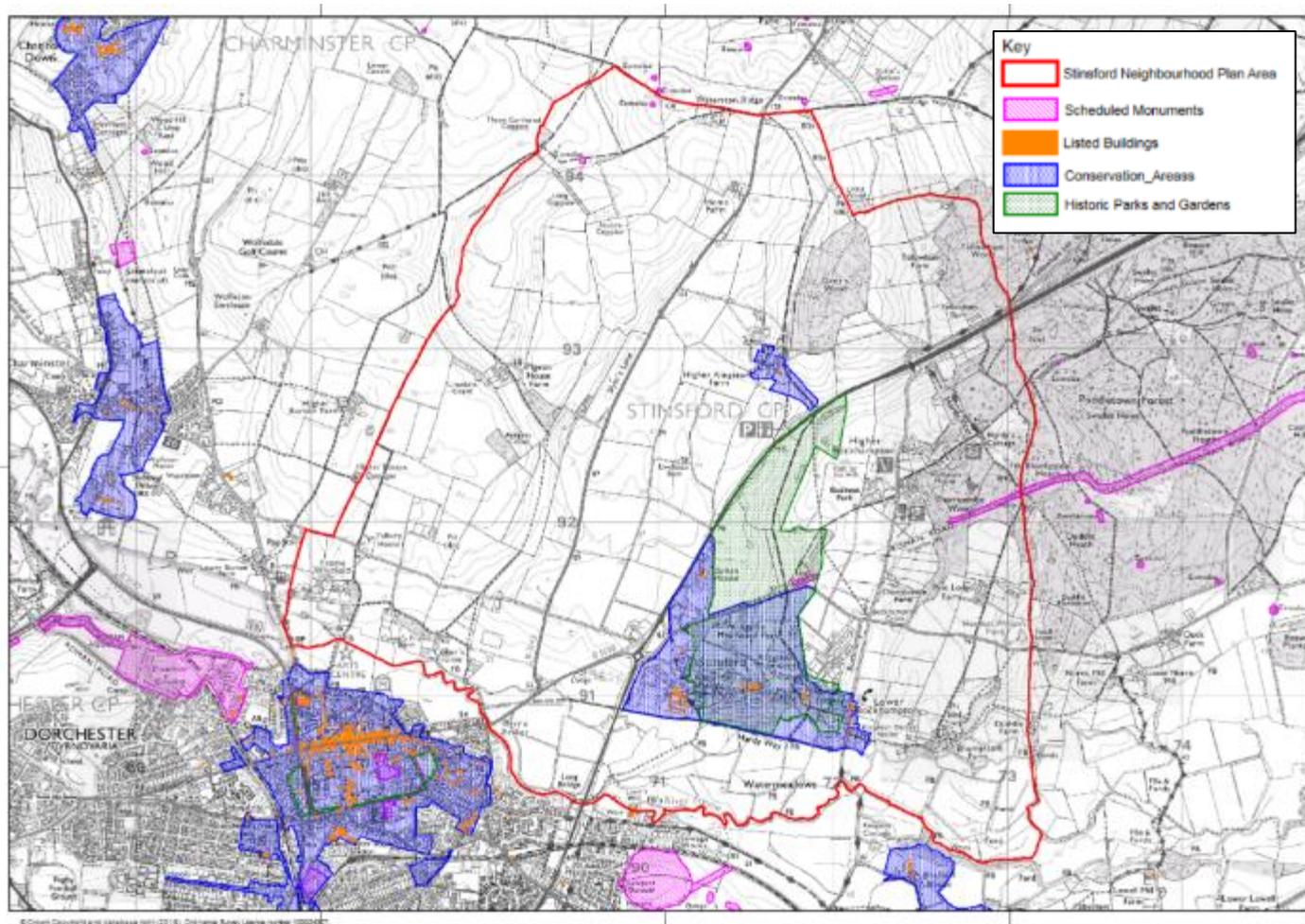
SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

3.0.9 In terms of heritage assets, there are two Conservation Areas within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area. These include the Higher Kingston Conservation Area in the north of the parish, and the Stinsford Conservation Area in the south (Figure 3.4). The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area contains many Listed Buildings, including three Grade I Listed Buildings: The Old Manor House; Kingston Maurward House; and the Church of St Michael in Stinsford. In addition, the parkland around Kingston Maurward is of national importance (Grade II*).

3.0.10 The parish is especially well known for being the birthplace and home of the novelist and poet Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928), in the heart of Hardy’s fictional ‘Wessex’. It is considered to be his fictional ‘Mellstock’ and features in many of his works. Hardy's Cottage in Higher Bockhampton is Grade II Listed and a significant visitor attraction.

Figure 3.4: Designated heritage assets within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the red line)

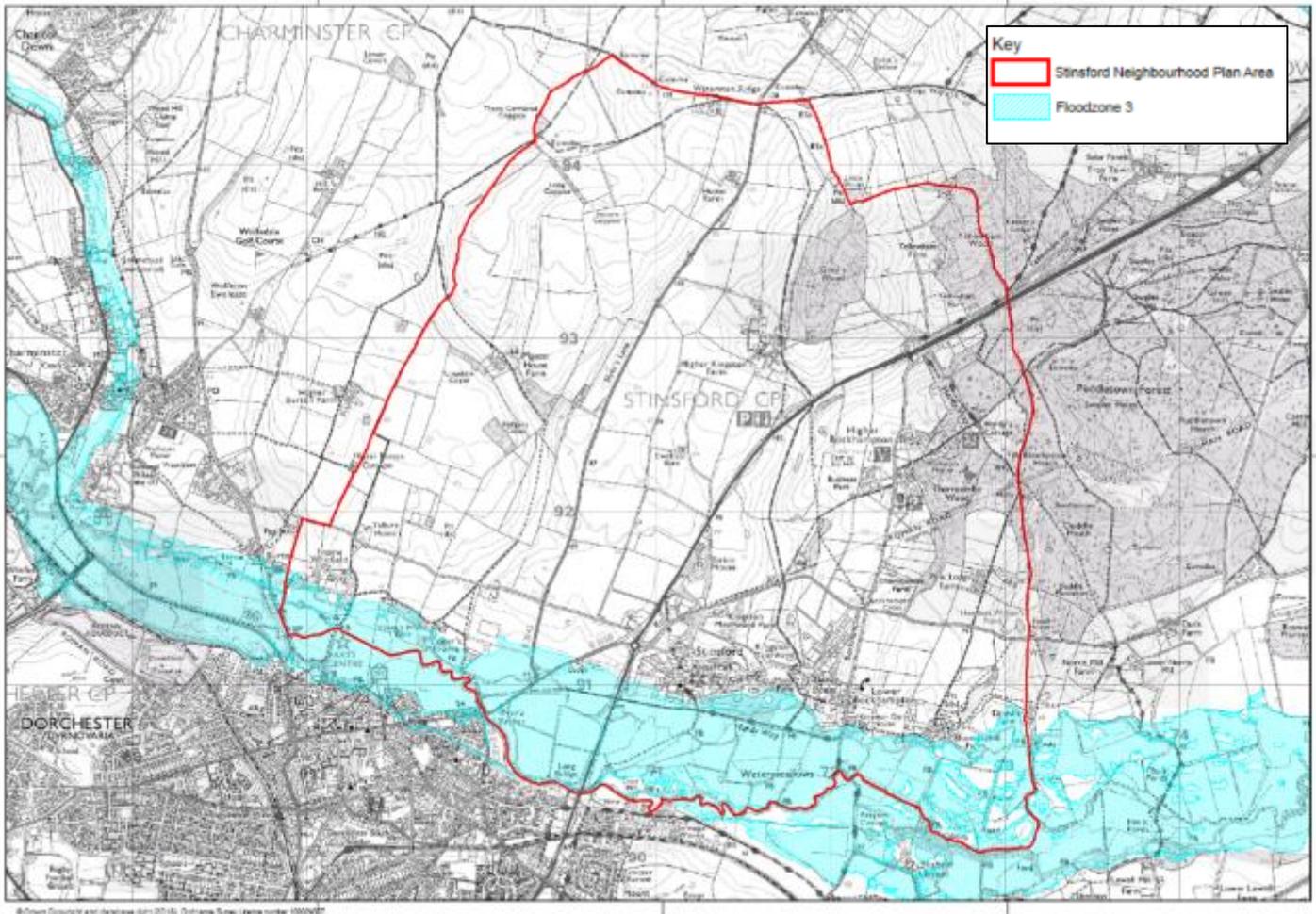


SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan - Pre-Submission Draft

3.0.11 The plan area includes high risk flood zones, associated with the River Frome, which forms much of the southern boundary of the Plan area, and the historic water meadows south of Stinsford (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: Flood zones within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the red line, high risk flood zones (flood zone 3) shown in blue)



SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

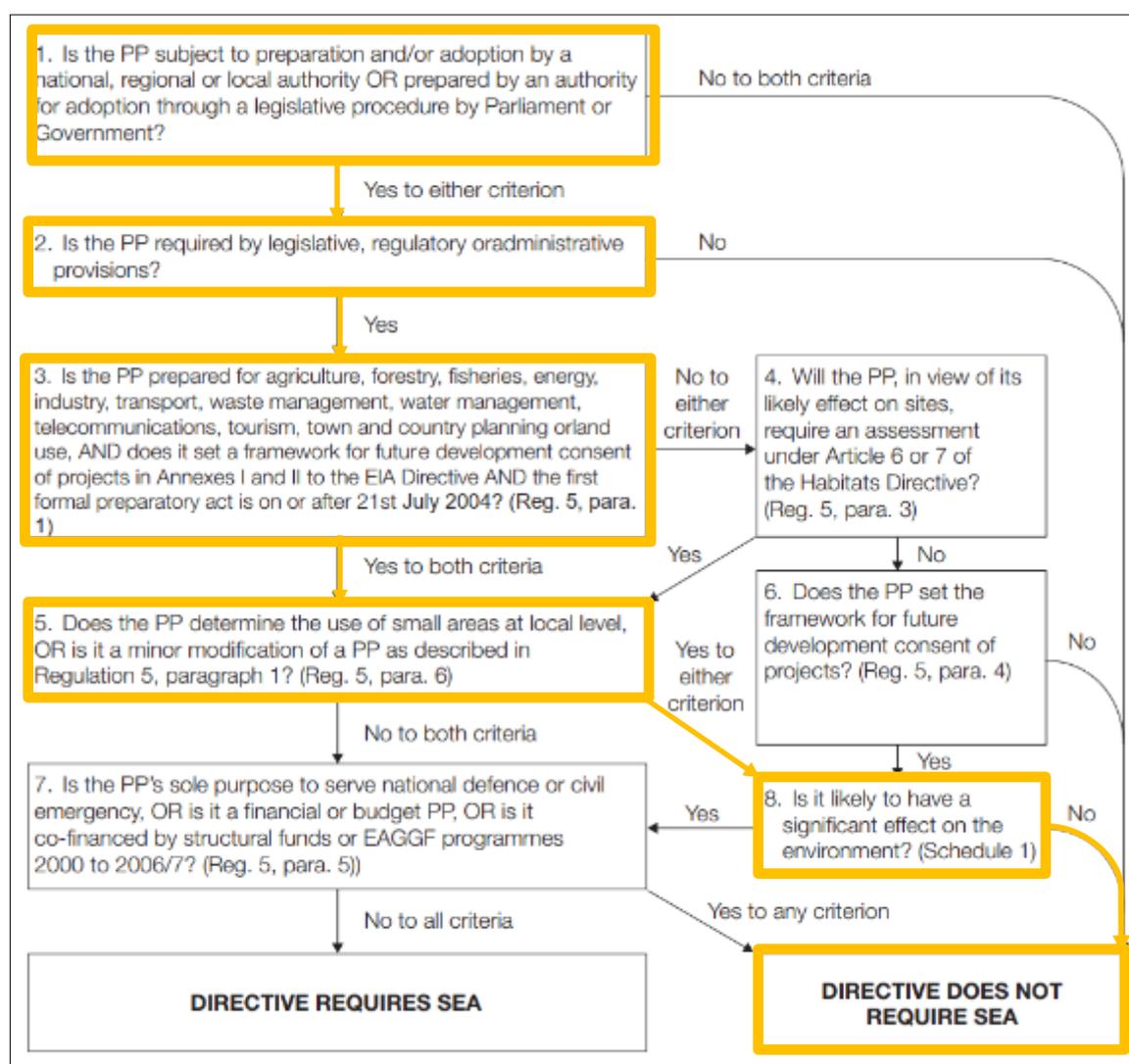
3.1. THE STINSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 3.1.1 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is at the draft stage. Whilst it is not yet finalised, the Plan does not propose to allocate sites for development.
- 3.1.2 Key policies of The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan with regard to development include those that seek to; protect and enhance community facilities; respect local landscape character and the setting of settlements; protect important local views; protect Stinsford’s historic environment; support local employment opportunities; support provision of affordable housing; and improve cycling infrastructure.
- 3.1.3 The Neighbourhood Plan will also provide general design guidelines to ensure that new development is of a type and standard that relates well to the character, needs and aspirations of local residents.
- 3.1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan also puts forward projects to; map the woodlands in the parish; investigate new and improved recreational routes and accessible green spaces; and identify and prioritise traffic management measures.
- 3.1.5 The draft objectives of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan are:
- to maintain, protect and improve the beauty, tranquillity and accessibility of our rural landscape, together with its diverse wildlife, that residents and visitors value so highly;
 - to protect vulnerable habitats from the impacts of climate change and build climate resilience;
 - to care for its historic and literary heritage and to welcome appropriate numbers of visitors;
 - to respond to the need for a demographically mixed population, a viable economy, and training, education and employment opportunities within the parish;
 - to provide appropriate levels of housing and other facilities to meet the needs of the local community;
 - to uphold principles of sustainable development and good and climate-friendly building design;
 - to play its part in tackling climate change and helping the UK to reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2050 through the protection and enhancement of its trees, woodland and forest;
 - to promote good and safe access links for walkers, cyclists and other road users, whilst working to reduce the reliance on fossil-fuel transport.

4 Screening

- 4.0.1 This Chapter provides an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.0.2 Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended) sets out the types of plan and programme that require SEA.
- 4.0.3 The SEA screening process is summarised in diagrammatic form in the flowchart shown in Figure 4.1. The screening for the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is highlighted in orange and justification for the decisions made at each stage in the SEA screening process is given in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1: A diagram summarising the SEA screening process with the SEA screening for the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan outlined in orange.



SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

Figure 4.2: a summary of the justification made for the decisions during the SEA screening for the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan.

Question in SEA screening flow chart (Figure 4.1)	Response
1. Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	YES The intention is for the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted by Dorset Council, a local authority, through a legislative procedure provided for under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	YES Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is not strictly a requirement (as it is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act), it will when 'made', form part of the Development Plan for the area, and would be a Statutory document, prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive AND the first formal preparatory act is on or after 21st July 2004?	YES The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes and may indicate where future development which falls under Annex II of the EIA Directive which includes urban development projects under paragraph 10(b) takes place.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP as described in Regulation 5, paragraph 1?	YES The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan determines the use of small areas at a local level (used alongside the adopted Local Plan). Neighbourhood plans cannot contain strategic policies or allocate the sites necessary to deliver the strategic priorities of the area.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	NO Justification for this decision is given later in this chapter.

4.1. IS THE PLAN LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

4.1.1 The final question in the SEA screening process presented in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan was question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

4.1.2 In order to answer this question, it is necessary to refer to Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, which sets out that the relevant criteria

to be taken into account when determining whether there are likely to be significant effects. Therefore, the criteria in Schedule 1 have been taken into consideration when determining whether the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA, as presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: The assessment of the likely significance of effects of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan (Taken from Annex II of the SEA Directive)

Criteria in Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations	Response	Is there a significant effect?
(1) Characteristics of the plan and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size, and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The framework for development projects within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area is currently set by the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan ('Local Plan'), which provides the overarching policy for the location, size and nature of development projects in this area. The emerging Dorset Council Local Plan is currently in preparation and will in future set the framework for future development. The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development than that defined in the Local Plan.	No
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted alongside its parent document, the Local Plan. It will expand upon the existing policies in the Local Plan and provide supplementary information on a local scale rather than influencing the strategic content of the Local Plan.	No
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Any development which comes forward through the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to the environmental considerations of the Local Plan. The aim of both plans is to achieve sustainable development.	No
d) Environmental problems relevant to	The environmental problems within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area are not	No

SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

the plan or programme.	considered exclusive to the area and are similar to those considered and addressed in the Local Plan.	
e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan.	No
(2) Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects.	It is anticipated that the plan period will be until 2036. Whilst some effects of the plan may be irreversible, it is not considered probable that significant effects will occur since the plan will not allocate any sites for development.	No
b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area is located adjacent and to the south of the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan area. The Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan sets a housing target based on 7 dwellings per year. For the 12-year period of the Plan, from April 2019 – March 2031, this equates to 84 new dwellings in total.</p> <p>The Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan area lies approximately 650m to the north of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area. On 10th May 2018, West Dorset District Council took the decision to make the Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan (as modified in accordance with the Examiner’s recommendations) part of the development plan for the Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Area. The Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan allocates two sites for housing, which in total would result in fewer than 50 additional dwellings coming forward, as well as a large site for employment.</p>	No

	<p>In addition to the neighbourhood plans in the surrounding areas, consideration must be given to other proposed development which may result in cumulative impacts, for example through the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (and subsequent Local Plan Review) and planning permissions.</p> <p>During 2018 the West Dorset and Weymouth Local Plan Review 'preferred options' were published, and this included Policy DOR15, proposing a significant expansion north of Dorchester, in Stinsford parish. The allocation provides 3,500 homes as well as employment land, a local centre and a range of community facilities such as schools and healthcare. This has been carried through to the draft Dorset Council Local Plan, which is currently at the options consultation stage.</p> <p>Whilst there is a significant amount of development coming forward in Stinsford through the Local Plan and planning permissions, the neighbourhood plan will not allocate sites for development and is in advance of any decision on the expansion of North Dorchester, which itself will be subject to an SEA as part of the Local Plan process. Therefore, the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to result in significant environmental effects when considered cumulatively.</p>	
c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant transboundary effects beyond the area of the Neighbourhood Plan due to the nature and scale of the proposals.	No
d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g due to accidents).	The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to introduce significant risks to human health and the environment, for example due to accidents, in light of the scale and type of development.	No
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the	The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area occupies approximately 13.2km ² and holds a population of 321 people ² . The spatial extent of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area and the	No

² According to 2017 mid-year estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics

SEA and HRA: Screening Report

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Draft

<p>population likely to be affected).</p>	<p>magnitude of the population affected are not considered of a significant scale for the purposes of SEA.</p>	
<p>f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p>	<p>The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area and its surrounding areas contain environmental designations of European and international value, reflecting the special natural characteristics and rich cultural heritage of this location.</p> <p>European Wildlife sites within 5km of the Plan area include the furthest west extent of the Dorset Heathlands sites, at Warmwell Heath. The Dorset Heathlands sites are unlikely to be vulnerable due to their distance from the plan area and because the plan will not allocate any sites for development.</p> <p>The special natural characteristics of the plan area include the River Frome SSSI. According to monitoring undertaken by Natural England, the SSSI is 58.74% in an ‘unfavourable’ condition, with 8.2% of the SSSI area declining into an even poorer condition. The River Frome is vulnerable to diffuse nutrient inputs from a range of sources including agriculture, urban development and vehicle emissions. Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development, nor does it include policies for the intensification of land use, no significant impacts are considered likely.</p> <p>The plan area also includes Thorncombe Wood SNCI, which is of local importance to wildlife and are therefore less sensitive than the European and National wildlife designation.</p> <p>The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area lies entirely outside of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area of national importance for landscape. Whilst the setting of the Dorset AONB designation should be considered, the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or</p>	<p>No</p>

		employment development, no significant impacts are considered likely.	
ii)	Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values	The Council's air quality monitoring regime has not previously identified any exceedances in air quality standards in the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is present on High East Street, Dorchester, due to high levels of nitrogen dioxide in that location. However, the Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate any development, and therefore is unlikely to result in a significant increase in airborne contaminants. As such an exceedance in air quality standards is considered unlikely.	No
iii)	Intensive land-use	The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent which would result in a significant intensification of land use, considering the scale of the development likely to come forward through the plan.	No
g)	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>The environmental designations within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area and its surrounding areas of national, community or international protection status (see Chapter 3 for further details) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); • European wildlife designations (Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive, Special Protection Area under the Birds Directive) • International wildlife designation (Ramsar as a wetland of International importance); • Site of Special Scientific Interest; • Conservation Areas; • Listed Buildings (including Grade II and Grade II* Listed Buildings); <p>The Dorset AONB, which recognises the national importance of the landscape in this area, lies just beyond the boundary of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area, to the north and south. The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or</p>	No

SEA and HRA: Screening Report

	<p>employment development. Significant adverse impacts upon the Dorset AONB are therefore considered unlikely. In addition, the plan includes the policy objective “to maintain, protect and improve the beauty, tranquillity and accessibility of our rural landscape”, as well as Policy SNP2 - Local Landscape Character which states that “Development will respect and where possible enhance the rural character of the local landscape.” Furthermore, the protection provided by policy ENV1 (i) of the Local Plan will prevent development which results in harm to the character of the Dorset AONB.</p> <p>There are designated areas of wildlife importance on a local, national and European level within the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area and its surroundings. European Wildlife sites within 5km of the Plan area include the furthest west extent of the Dorset Heathlands sites, at Warmwell heath. The Dorset Heathlands sites are unlikely to be vulnerable to due to their distance from the plan area and because the plan will not allocate any sites for development. The River Frome SSSI, which lies within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, is vulnerable to diffuse nutrient inputs from a range of sources including agriculture, urban development and vehicle emissions. Thorncombe wood SNCI is also with the plan boundary is of local importance to wildlife. Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development, nor does it include policies for the intensification of land use, no significant impacts are considered likely on these sites. Furthermore, the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan will be in general conformity with policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan, which prevents significant harm to wildlife designations. In addition, although the Poole Harbour wildlife sites lie further than 5km away, the Neighbourhood Plan Area lies within the Poole Harbour hydrological catchment. However, as the Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment</p>	
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	<p>development it will not result in an additional nutrients entering the harbour, and therefore no significant effect is anticipated to these sites.</p> <p>The heritage designations within the plan area include two Conservation Areas: the Higher Kingston Conservation Area in the north of the parish, and the Stinsford Conservation Area in the south. The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area contains 38 Listed Buildings, including the Grade II Listed Buildings of Hardy's Cottage, in Higher Bockhampton, and Kingston House in Kinston Maurward. There are also three Grade I Listed Buildings within the Plan area including The Old Manor House and Kingston Maurward House and the Church of St Michael in Stinsford. In addition, the parkland around Kingston Maurward is of national importance. The neighbourhood plan will have the following policy objective: "to care for its historic and literary heritage" as well as Policy SNP7 - Protecting Stinsford's Historic Environment and Policy SNP8 - Positively managing the Thomas Hardy connection. Furthermore, the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development, therefore no significant impacts upon heritage assets are considered likely.</p>	
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5 Conclusion

- 5.0.1 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan area includes sites of the highest environmental importance, some of which are greatly sensitive to the threats which may be posed by new development. However, the scope of Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan is such that these sensitive environmental assets are unlikely to be significantly affected by the plan, as the plan does not allocate any additional development.
- 5.0.2 The purpose of this consultation is to seek confirmation from the statutory environmental consultees that the conclusion that the full SEA and HRA AA process is not necessary to support the production of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan.