

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

November 2024

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
EB: Environmental Planner CB: Associate Director	NCB: Technical Director	IM: Associate Director	IM: Associate Director

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V1	March 2024	First draft for client review	JW	Dorset Planning
V2	March 2024	Final draft for consultation	CB	Associate Director
V3	November 2024	Final draft to accompany submission version	CB	Associate Director

Prepared for:

Knightsford Group Parish Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
3rd Floor, Portwall Place
Portwall Lane
Bristol BS1 6NA
United Kingdom

T: XXXXXXXXXX
aecom.com

© 2024 AECOM Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Limited (“AECOM”) for sole use of Locality (the “Client”) in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. AECOM shall have no liability to any third party that makes use of or relies upon this document.

Table of Contents

Non-Technical Summary (NTS)	i-vii
1. Introduction	1
2. Approach to alternatives assessment (Part 1)	6
3. Establishing reasonable alternatives	7
4. Assessing reasonable alternatives	10
5. Developing the preferred approach	16
6. Approach to assessing the submission version of the plan (Part 2)	18
7. Appraisal of the Knightsford NP	20
8. Conclusions and recommendations	25
9. Next steps and monitoring	27
Appendix A – Regulatory requirements.....	29
Appendix B - Scoping information	33

Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

Introduction

Background

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan (KNP). The KNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 2012 (as amended) and in the context of the local planning framework of Dorset Council. Once 'made' the KNP will hold material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area as part of the local development framework for Dorset.

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.

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*".

This report (and NTS) is the Environmental Report for the KNP. It is published alongside the submission version of the Plan.

Policy context

The adopted West Dorset, Weymouth, and Portland Local Plan (2015) forms the main strategic context for the KNP. It groups West Knighton and Broadmayne (though Broadmayne lies outside the neighbourhood area) together as one 'larger village' and identifies a development boundary around the village. Development opportunities in the more rural areas of West Dorset are expected to be focused primarily at the larger villages, at a scale appropriate to the size of village unless identified as a strategic allocation (there are no strategic allocations within the neighbourhood area or at Broadmayne). Neighbourhood plans are recognised as a way of bringing forward allocation sites for new development in these areas and may change development boundaries in this process. The remaining villages (Tincleton, West Stafford, and Woodsford) and areas beyond the development boundary are treated as countryside where development is more strictly controlled.

Work has commenced on a Local Plan Review, and options were consulted on back in 2021. The consultation draft does not propose any strategic allocations in the neighbourhood area and the spatial strategy remains largely unchanged at this stage.

Vision for the KNP

The following vision has been identified to guide the development of the KNP:

"West Knighton, West Stafford, Tincleton and Woodsford parishes will continue to be thriving communities. They will be rural, tranquil, friendly, attractive and safe. Development opportunities will be sustainable and in line with the needs and wishes of the parishes, respecting the area's historic and rural character".

The scope of the SEA

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*”. As such, an SEA Scoping Report was prepared in October 2023 and shared with statutory consultees (Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency). Scoping work culminates in the SEA framework. The SEA framework is a list of SEA topics and objectives that together comprise a framework to guide the subsequent appraisal. The SEA framework for the KNP, as shared through consultation, is:

SEA topic	SEA objective
Air quality	Support objectives to improve air quality within and surrounding the neighbourhood area and minimise sources of NO ₂ .
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.
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.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment of the neighbourhood area and its surroundings.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.
	Protect and improve water quality in the neighbourhood area.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transport and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Structure

The Environmental Report (and this NTS) is split into three parts. The first part dispenses the regulatory need to establish and assess reasonable alternative options for the KNP. The second part assesses the submission version of the KNP. The third and final part identifies the next steps for plan-making and SEA.

Assessing reasonable alternatives

The first part of the Environmental Report (Chapters 2-4) explores the strategic parameters of the local development framework and focusing on the growth strategy for the KNP, the site options in contention for allocation in the plan.

Whilst there is no strategic need to allocate land for development in the KNP, the Steering Group recognises the benefits of exploring land allocations that would contribute towards affordable housing needs and guide the new development that is expected to take place over the plan period.

After exploring the available sites for development, the following sites are whittled down as reasonable:

Parish	Site reference	Site name	Site size (ha)	Suitability
Tingleton	T1	Hollands Farmhouse	1.03	Potentially suitable
	T2	Tingleton Farm South	1.15	Potentially suitable
	T3	Tingleton Farm North	2.81	Potentially suitable
	T4	Penny Farthing Cottage	0.06	Potentially suitable
	T5	Meadows Cottage Site 1	0.09	Potentially suitable
	T6	Meadows Cottage Site 2	0.26	Potentially suitable
	T7	Meadows Cottage Site 3	1.86	Potentially suitable
	T8	Tingleton Farm	0.34	Potentially suitable
West Knighton	WK3	Land north of Yoah Cottage	0.13	Potentially suitable
	WK5	Land west of Highgate Lane	4.6	Potentially suitable
West Stafford	WS1	Wynd Close	0.90	Potentially suitable

With options across different settlement areas and within the settlements, the following four options are identified for assessment:

- **Option 1:** Allocate land for small-scale development in Tingleton (choosing from one or more of the following sites: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8)
- **Option 2:** Allocate land for small-scale development in West Knighton (Site WK3)
- **Option 3:** Allocate land for larger-scale development in West Knighton (Site WK5)
- **Option 4:** Allocate land for small-scale development in West Stafford (Site WS1)

The methodology and summary findings for the assessment of these four options is presented below. More detailed findings can be found in Chapter 6 of the Environmental Report.

Methodology

For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework. Where appropriate, neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted.

Within the summary table, for each row (i.e., for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right-hand side seek to both **rank** the alternatives in order of performance and **categorise** the performance of each option in terms of effects on the baseline.

The potential for significant effects is identified within the columns supported by colour coding. **Red** indicates a significant negative effect and **green** a significant positive effect. **Grey** indicates uncertainty. 'No' is written (with no colour coding) if no significant effects are anticipated.

Every effort is made to predict effects accurately, however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text. Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a **rank of preference**. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. **Numbers** are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best. Also, '=' is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par.

Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the SEA Regulations.¹ So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

¹ Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Summary findings

Option	Effect dimensions	Option 1 (Tincleton)	Option 2 (West Knighton)	Option 3 (West Knighton)	Option 4 (West Stafford)
Air quality	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	4	3
Biodiversity	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=	=
Climate change	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	3	1	1	2
Community wellbeing	Likely significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	3	2	1	3
Historic environment	Likely significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	3	3	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=	=
Landscape	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	3	4
Transport and movement	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	3	1	4	2

Overall, significant effects are concluded as most likely (pre-mitigation) in relation to two SEA themes: community wellbeing and the historic environment and this is common for all options.

Significant positive effects are concluded as likely in relation to community wellbeing, given the housing contribution under each option that will support reducing deprivation in relation to the 'barriers to housing and services' domain.

The potential for significant negative effects pre-mitigation is identified in relation to the historic environment as each option has identified heritage constraints. Most significantly, Option 2 would locate development within the designated West Knighton Conservation Area, and Option 3 would locate large-scale development adjacent to it. Option 4 would locate small-scale development adjacent to the West Stafford Conservation Area. Development in Tincleton (Option 1) would likely affect the setting of listed buildings.

Developing the preferred approach

The Steering Group presented the findings of the Site Options Assessment to residents in October 2023. Residents were invited to give feedback on which sites they felt may be suitable for development, and possible issues that should be considered in allocating any of the sites. The Steering Group considered the assessments and feedback from the community, which favoured Option 2 (Site WK3 – Land north of Yoah Cottage) as the preferred option for progression at Regulation 14 consultation. This reflected the aspirations to identify land for possible development to help meet local needs, and is focused on West Knighton, as the most accessible part of the neighbourhood area, in line with its position in the settlement hierarchy.

However, following Regulation 14 consultation, it was recognised that the preferred site allocation, whilst supported by the majority of respondents, was not supported by Dorset Council due to heritage harm, highways concerns (pedestrian / road safety) and the loss of an important hedgerow. On this basis, at submission stage, the plan is being progressed with no proposed site allocations for further housing development.

Assessing the submission version of the plan

Part two of the Environmental Report (Chapters 8-10) provides an assessment of the submission version of the KNP which proposes 16 policies to guide development in the neighbourhood area. The methodology and conclusions for this assessment are provided below.

Methodology

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

Every effort is made 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 made 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 submission version of the plan in more general terms.

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. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

Conclusions

Overall, no significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the KNP. The spatial strategy supports infill development and small-scale affordable

housing exception sites, as well as conversion, replacement or subdivision of existing rural buildings; this level of growth will support resident needs without impacting upon the rural nature of the neighbourhood area. Minor positive effects are therefore considered likely with regards to community wellbeing.

Broadly neutral to minor positive effects are predicted in relation to the rest of the SEA objectives. This reflects the wider policy provisions which embed landscape and design considerations, protect and enhance green infrastructure, protect key views and local landmarks, and improve pedestrian safety.

Next steps

Following submission to the Local Planning Authority and further consultation (Regulation 16), the KNP and supporting evidence will be subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the KNP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

If the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the KNP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Dorset Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the KNP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the KNP will become part of the local development framework for Dorset, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

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 Dorset Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No potential significant negative effects have been identified that would require additional or more stringent monitoring in this case.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This section provides the background and context of the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) and accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Background

- 1.2 AECOM is commissioned to lead on SEA in support of the emerging KNP. The KNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 2012 (as amended) and in the context of the local planning framework of Dorset Council. Once 'made' the KNP will hold material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area (Figure 1.1²), as part of the local development framework for Dorset.
- 1.3 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.³

Understanding SEA

- 1.4 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*".⁴ The report must then be considered when finalising the plan. 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')
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage? (i.e., in relation to the current submission version of the plan).
 3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.5 This report is the Environmental Report for the KNP. It is published alongside the submission version of the Plan. The report answers the three questions outlined above in turn, as discrete 'parts' of the report.⁵

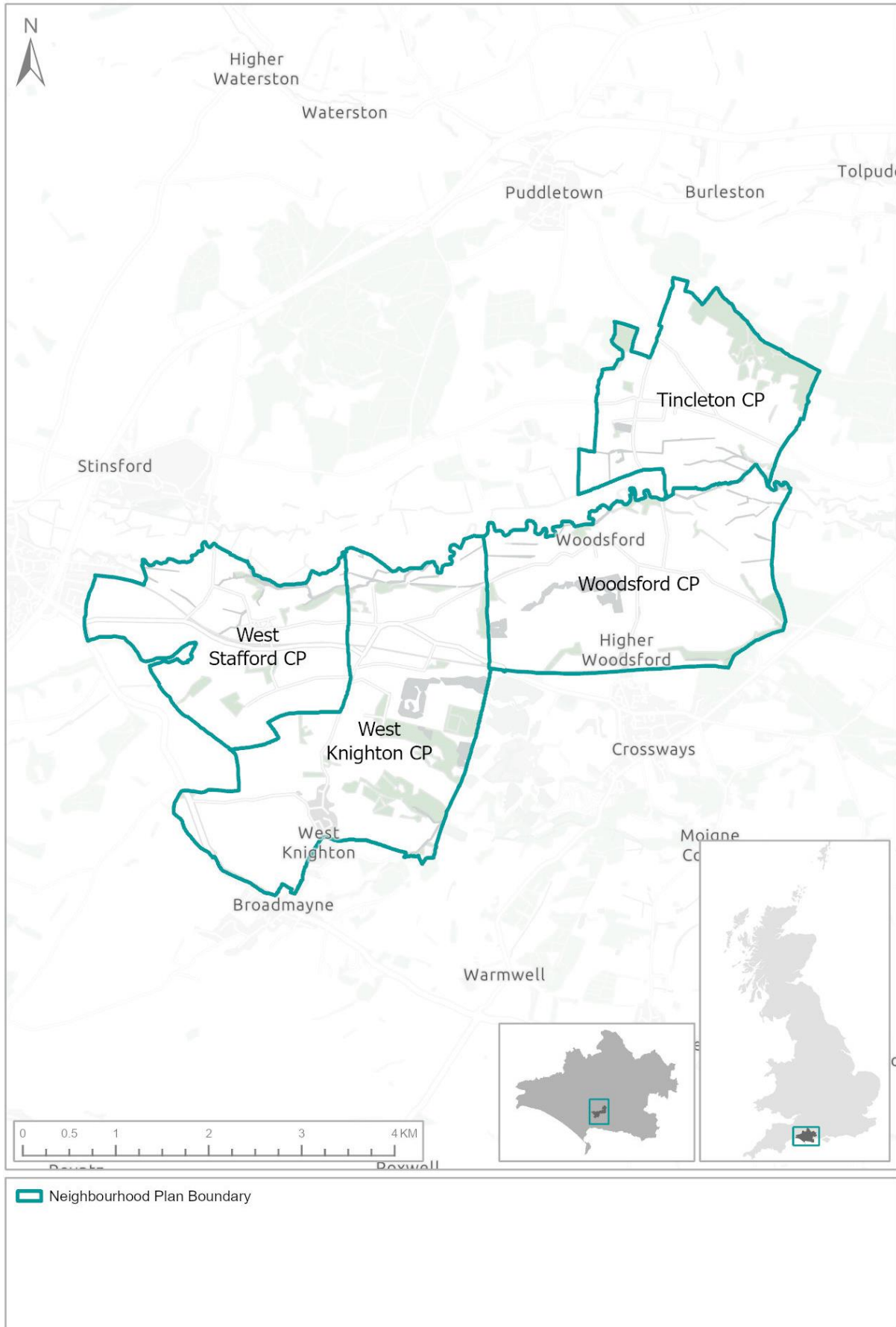
² NB: Knightsford Parish Council intend to request an update to the neighbourhood area boundary following boundary changes coming into effect in April 2024 and maps in the KNP and SEA will be updated accordingly at this time. The main implication is that the Dorset National Landscape will be wholly outside of the neighbourhood area.

³ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an Environmental Report, or B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. The KNP was officially 'screened in' as requiring SEA in February 2023.

⁴ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

⁵ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the Environmental Report, and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

Figure 1-1: Knightsford neighbourhood area



© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023
Esri UK, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, MET/NASA, USGS

Local Plan context

- 1.6 The adopted West Dorset, Weymouth, and Portland Local Plan (2015) forms the main strategic context for the KNP. It groups West Knighton and Broadmayne (though Broadmayne lies outside the neighbourhood area) together as one 'larger village' and identifies a development boundary around the village. Development opportunities in the more rural areas of West Dorset are expected to be focused primarily at the larger villages, at a scale appropriate to the size of village unless identified as a strategic allocation (there are no strategic allocations within the neighbourhood area or at Broadmayne). Neighbourhood plans are recognised as a way of bringing forward allocation sites for new development in these areas and may change development boundaries in this process. The remaining villages (Tincton, West Stafford, and Woodsford) and areas beyond the development boundary are treated as countryside where development is more strictly controlled.
- 1.7 Work has commenced on a Local Plan Review, and options were consulted on back in 2021. The consultation draft does not propose any strategic allocations in the neighbourhood area and the spatial strategy remains largely unchanged at this stage.

Vision and objectives of the KNP

- 1.8 The following vision has been identified:

“West Knighton, West Stafford, Tincton and Woodsford parishes will continue to be thriving communities. They will be rural, tranquil, friendly, attractive and safe. Development opportunities will be sustainable and in line with the needs and wishes of the parishes, respecting the area’s historic and rural character”.

- 1.9 The following eight objectives also highlight those areas where the KNP could help achieve the vision:
- Protect and enhance the rural and tranquil landscape of the parishes.
 - Protect and enhance the distinctive local, natural and historic environment.
 - Safeguard valued local views and greenspaces, and if possible identify new green spaces that local residents can enjoy.
 - Keep roads safe, and ensure there are safe and attractive walking, cycling and riding routes around and between neighbouring parishes - this could be through making paths more accessible with gates; improving cycle and bridleways; traffic calming; etc.
 - Identify land for possible development to help meet local needs.
 - Ensure new houses and other buildings are well-designed, sustainable and in keeping with the character of the villages.
 - Enable new employment proposals consistent with the rural character, for example rural diversification; small workshops etc.
 - Protect, enhance and encourage local facilities and services, such as our pubs; village halls; farm / community shops.

Scope of the SEA

- 1.10 The SEA Scoping Report (October 2023) sets out the policy context and baseline information that has informed the development of key issues and the identification of appropriate sustainability objectives against which the KNP can be appraised.
- 1.11 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*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.⁶
- 1.12 As such, these authorities were consulted over the period 19th October to 23rd November 2023 and responses were received from all three authorities. The detailed responses are provided in Appendix B.
- 1.13 Scoping work culminates in the SEA framework. The SEA framework is a list of SEA topics and objectives that together comprise a framework to guide the subsequent appraisal. The SEA framework for the KNP is presented in Table 1.1. The key issues identified for each topic and informing the objectives are presented in Appendix B.

Table 1.1: KNP SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective
Air quality	Support objectives to improve air quality within and surrounding the neighbourhood area and minimise sources of NO ₂ .
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.
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.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment of the neighbourhood area and its surroundings.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.
	Protect and improve water quality in the neighbourhood area.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transport and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

⁶ These consultation bodies were selected “*by reason of their specific environmental responsibility, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes*” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3))

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

2. Approach to alternatives assessment (Part 1)

- 2.1 This section of the report provides an overview of the approach to identifying and assessing reasonable alternatives for the purposes of SEA.
- 2.2 Whilst work on the KNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives at this stage.
- 2.3 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Plan, namely the allocation of land for housing development, or alternative sites.

Why focus on site allocations?

- 2.4 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:
 - KNP vision and objectives, particularly the objective to identify land for possible development to help meet local needs.
 - Housing growth and development is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
 - The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.
- 2.5 Wider thematic policies in the KNP area explored in more detail in Part 2 (What are the SEA findings at this stage) of the Environmental Report.

Structure of this part of the report

- 2.6 This part of the report is structured as follows:
 - **Chapter 3** - explains the process of establishing reasonable alternatives.
 - **Chapter 4** - presents the assessment of reasonable alternatives; and
 - **Chapter 5** – explains the Steering Group’s reasons for selecting the preferred option, considering the appraisal.

3. Establishing reasonable alternatives

- 3.1 The aim of this chapter is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative site options and thereby present “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*”.⁷
- 3.2 Specifically, there is a need to explain the strategic parameters that have a bearing on the establishment of options (in relation to the level and distribution of growth) and the work that has been undertaken to date to examine site options (i.e., sites potentially in contention for allocation in the KNP). These parameters are then drawn together in order to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives’.

Strategic parameters

- 3.3 The adopted West Dorset, Weymouth, and Portland Local Plan and emerging Dorset Local Plan, identify West Knighton (along with Broadmayne outside of the neighbourhood area) as a ‘larger village’ with a development boundary. Development in rural areas is focussed primarily at the larger villages, at a scale appropriate to the size of the village. The rest of the villages are considered areas of countryside for the purposes of planning (where development is strictly controlled). Whilst no site allocations are made in the adopted, or emerging Local Plan, that contribute to district-wide housing needs, the Local Plan does seek to facilitate neighbourhood planning, recognising that appropriate housing allocations may be made through neighbourhood plans, and development boundaries adjusted accordingly.
- 3.4 Informed by the emerging Dorset Local Plan, the KNP Steering Group identifies a target for six new homes over the period 2023 – 2033, based on existing completions and planning permissions that fall within the plan period (one new home) and a total windfall allowance of five new homes.
- 3.5 In developing the KNP, consideration has also been given to affordable housing needs, which based on the affordable housing register, identifies a need for seven affordable homes across the four parishes. A local Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) has also been undertaken to establish the types and tenures of new homes that are likely to be needed over the plan period and inform the policy approach to allocating land for development. Of note, the HNA highlights that additional affordable housing over and above that shown on the housing register would be beneficial, and that the main need for affordable housing is likely to arise in the parishes of West Knighton and West Stafford.
- 3.6 Further of note, the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Minerals Site Plan (2019) (which also forms part of the planning framework in Dorset) identifies a strategic allocation for the expansion of Woodsford Quarry that intersects the neighbourhood area in the north at Woodsford. There are currently three live applications relating to the quarry (P/FUL/2023/04753; P/VOC/2023/04760, and P/VOC/2023/04761). These are still undecided.

⁷ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations

Site options

- 3.7 Following a local ‘Call for Sites’ in November 2022, AECOM undertook an independent and objective Site Options Assessment (SOA) which assessed a total of 14 of 15 sites identified through the call for sites and through the Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). One site was excluded from assessment as it had already been built out by that point.
- 3.8 Of the 14 sites that were assessed, two were considered unsuitable for residential development. Eleven were found to be potentially suitable for allocation in the KNP, subject to the mitigation of identified constraints, and one site (WK1 – Glebe Farm North) was found to be suitable for allocation in the KNP (largely free of constraint). However, since the assessment was undertaken, the highways authority has outlined several access constraints for development at site WK1 (Glebe Farm North) which indicate that they would recommend refusal of planning applications for development at this site.
- 3.9 Of the twelve sites that were considered suitable or potentially suitable for allocation, most are in Tincleton (eight). Three sites are in West Knighton and one site is in West Stafford – see Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Suitable, or potentially suitable sites for allocation in the KNP

Parish	Site reference	Site name	Site size (ha)	Suitability
Tincleton	T1	Hollands Farmhouse	1.03	Potentially suitable
	T2	Tincleton Farm South	1.15	Potentially suitable
	T3	Tincleton Farm North	2.81	Potentially suitable
	T4	Penny Farthing Cottage	0.06	Potentially suitable
	T5	Meadows Cottage Site 1	0.09	Potentially suitable
	T6	Meadows Cottage Site 2	0.26	Potentially suitable
	T7	Meadows Cottage Site 3	1.86	Potentially suitable
	T8	Tincleton Farm	0.34	Potentially suitable
West Knighton	WK1	Glebe Farm North	1.31	Suitable*
	WK3	Land north of Yoah Cottage	0.13	Potentially suitable
	WK5	Land west of Highgate Lane	4.6	Potentially suitable
West Stafford	WS1	Wynd Close	0.90	Potentially suitable

*no longer found to be suitable

Establishing reasonable alternatives

- 3.10 Whilst there is no strategic need to allocate land for development in the KNP, the Steering Group recognises the benefits of exploring land allocations that would contribute towards affordable housing needs and guide the new development that is expected to take place over the plan period.
- 3.11 Sites that were found unsuitable in the SOA for allocation in the KNP are not progressed as 'reasonable' alternatives. Site WK1 (Glebe Farm North) is also discounted given the indications from the Highways authority.
- 3.12 Whilst a relatively large-scale development opportunity exists in Tincton (Site T3), given the position of Tincton in the settlement hierarchy, recognised as an area of countryside, larger-scale development is unlikely to be appropriate or acceptable locally. On this basis Site T3 is also not considered to be a 'reasonable' alternative. Only small-scale development opportunities in Tincton are being explored through the KNP process and SEA.
- 3.13 Considering these points, options in this respect are emerging in terms of the settlement areas where land could be allocated as well as through the range of sites within these villages.
- 3.14 The options that are therefore proposed for assessment are:
- **Option 1:** Allocate land for small-scale development in Tincton (choosing from one or more of the following sites: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8)
 - **Option 2:** Allocate land for small-scale development in West Knighton (Site WK3)
 - **Option 3:** Allocate land for larger-scale development in West Knighton (Site WK5)
 - **Option 4:** Allocate land for small-scale development in West Stafford (Site WS1)

4. Assessing reasonable alternatives

4.1 The following four options (established in the previous chapter) are assessed in this chapter:

- **Option 1:** Allocate land for small-scale development in Tincleton (choosing from one or more of the following sites: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8)
- **Option 2:** Allocate land for small-scale development in West Knighton (Site WK3)
- **Option 3:** Allocate land for larger-scale development in West Knighton (Site WK5)
- **Option 4:** Allocate land for small-scale development in West Stafford (Site WS1)

Methodology

4.2 The four options identified are subject to assessment and the findings are discussed below. For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping (see Table 1.1) as a methodological framework. Where appropriate, neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted.

4.3 Within the summary table, for each row (i.e., for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right-hand side seek to both **rank** the alternatives in order of performance and **categorise** the performance of each option in terms of effects on the baseline. The potential for significant effects is identified within the columns supported by colour coding. **Red** indicates a significant negative effect and **green** a significant positive effect. **Grey** indicates uncertainty. 'No' is written (with no colour coding) if no significant effects are anticipated.

4.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately, however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text. Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a **rank of preference**. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. **Numbers** are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best. Also, '=' is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par.

4.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the SEA Regulations.⁸ So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

⁸ Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Table 4.1: Summary findings for the alternatives assessment

Option	Effect dimensions	Option 1 (Tincleton)	Option 2 (West Knighton)	Option 3 (West Knighton)	Option 4 (West Stafford)
Air quality	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	4	3
Biodiversity	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=	=
Climate change	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	3	1	1	2
Community wellbeing	Likely significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	3	2	1	3
Historic environment	Likely significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	3	3	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=	=
Landscape	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	3	4
Transport and movement	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	3	1	4	2

Air quality

4.7 With respect to air quality, it is recognised that an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) lies close to the neighbourhood area in Dorchester. As a larger town in proximity, residents are likely to rely on Dorchester to some degree to access a wider range of goods, services, and employment opportunities. Small-scale growth (Options 1, 2, and 4) is ultimately considered less likely to lead to impacts at the AQMA than larger-scale growth (Option 3) which would generate more traffic – though none of the options are considered likely to lead to significant effects. West Stafford is located closest to the AQMA, so of the smaller scale options, growth in this village (Option 4) is ranked less preferably. Tincleton is further removed from Dorchester and supported by access to Puddletown (and the service offer here), which could reduce the level of traffic accessing Dorchester, on this basis, small-scale growth at Tincleton (Option 1) is considered to rank best overall.

Biodiversity

- 4.8 All options would involve development within the 5km Heathland Mitigation Zones and within the Poole Harbour Nutrient Catchment Area where appropriate mitigation would be required. A supporting Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will determine any likely significant effects on the integrity of the internationally designated sites for any development sites that are progressed through the KNP.
- 4.9 One site in Tincteton (Site T1) intersects Priority Habitat (Traditional Orchards) where it will be important to ensure this habitat is retained (a recently planted walnut orchard), reducing the developable area of the site. None of the other sites under any of the options are known to contain Priority Habitats.
- 4.10 All sites under Options 1, 2, and 3 intersect the National Habitat Network Enhancement or Expansion Zones, where biodiversity net gains could support improved ecological connections. The site under Option 4 in West Stafford does not intersect this network.
- 4.11 Overall, no significant effects are considered likely under any of the options, and the premise for biodiversity net gain in development is likely to deliver positive effects with regards to habitat enhancement and expansion. The options cannot be differentiated in a meaningful way, and thus are all considered to rank similarly.

Climate change

- 4.12 None of the options intersect fluvial Flood Risk Zones 2 or 3, but all sites under consideration are subject to surface water flood risk constraints, either within the site or adjacent to it. The site at West Stafford under Option 4 is relatively less constrained as it lies adjacent to an area of high risk, and improved drainage on site may help to reduce offsite risks.
- 4.13 All options are edge of settlement development locations, but West Knighton is considered a 'higher order' settlement in the settlement hierarchy providing better access to more services and facilities locally. On this basis, Options 2 and 3 are considered to rank marginally better than Options 1 and 4 in terms of promoting more sustainable modes of transport, including active travel.
- 4.14 All options are considered to have equal opportunities to deliver high-quality sustainable design and construction, supported by integrated green infrastructure and measures to bolster climate resilience.
- 4.15 Overall, no significant effects are considered likely under any of the options. Options 2 and 3 are considered to rank first overall with development within the most accessible village. Option 4 is ranked marginally better than Option 1 given the lower surface water flood risk constraints associated with this option.

Community wellbeing

- 4.16 All options are considered likely to support community wellbeing through the delivery of housing to meet local needs that can help to reduce deprivation in relation to the 'barriers to housing and services' domain. Larger-scale development (Option 3) is considered to rank better than smaller-scale development options (Options 1, 2, and 4) given the delivery of more homes, including more affordable homes.
- 4.17 All options propose settlement edge development that is relatively accessible. West Knighton is considered a 'higher order' settlement in the settlement hierarchy together with Broadmayne, providing better access to local services and facilities. For this reason, Options 2 and 3 are considered to rank better than Options 1 and 4.
- 4.18 Given small-scale development is likely to meet the forecasted needs of residents, all options are considered likely to support significant positive effects.

Historic environment

- 4.19 Option 2 would deliver development wholly within the West Knighton Conservation Area. Site WK3 currently forms part of the setting of the Grade II Listed Yoah Cottage and lies opposite another Grade II Listed cottage.
- 4.20 Option 3 (Site WK5) would locate relatively large-scale development adjacent to the West Knighton Conservation Area, in the vicinity of Grade II Listed Yoah Cottage and The New Inn, and Listed Buildings in the south (including West Knighton Farmhouse), and the settings of these assets are likely to be impacted.
- 4.21 Option 4 would locate development adjacent to the West Stafford Conservation Area, and in the setting of the Grade II Listed 'Former Entrance Gatepiers to Manor House'. The Manor House is Grade I listed, also sited approximately 150m northeast of the site. The listed Talbothays Lodge is around 500m east with current open views across the fields.
- 4.22 Tincton (Option 1) does not have a designated conservation area, but the setting of the Grade II listed buildings may be affected by development at any of the site options (Site T4 is considered least constrained in this respect given the existing development providing a buffer and the small-scale nature of the site).
- 4.23 Overall, the potential for significant negative effects pre-mitigation is identified under all the options. Tincton is considered the least constrained (with potentially suitable sites such as Site T4) and ranks first accordingly. Option 4 is ranked second as it involves small scale development adjacent to the conservation area. Given the identified constraints at West Knighton (development within the conservation area, or large-scale development adjacent to it), Options 2 and 3 rank last.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 4.24 With regards to effective land use, there are sites in Tincleton that are previously developed land in part. Accordingly, Option 1 has the potential to rank better than Options 2, 3, and 4 (as these options are formed of greenfield development opportunities only). However, high-quality agricultural land (Grade 2) also underlies more of the site options in Tincleton (including at some of the sites that are previously developed land in part). On this basis, development opportunities in West Knighton and West Stafford are more likely to better utilise soil resources of lower quality, making it difficult to meaningfully rank the options. Given the scale of development under any of the options, no significant effects are anticipated with regards to soil resources.
- 4.25 With regards to mineral resources, none of the options intersect the strategic expansion of Woodsford Quarry and as such, the options are not considered likely to lead to adverse effects relating to minerals availability.
- 4.26 With regards to water resources, none of the options are of a scale that would be considered likely to significantly impact upon water demand and supply forecasts, as managed at the catchment level by Wessex Water. Wider policy mitigation (e.g., as provided by the Local Plan) should also ensure the long-term protection of groundwater source protection zones.
- 4.27 Overall, no significant effects are considered likely, and the options are considered to rank similarly.

Landscape

- 4.28 With regards to landscape, Option 4 in West Stafford lies adjacent to 'Land of Local Landscape Importance' identified through the Local Plan (Policy ENV3). Development at the West Stafford site has implications for this landscape setting and mitigation is likely to be required. On this basis, is considered to rank marginally less preferably than the remaining options. With opportunities to utilise previously developed land under Option 1, this option is also considered to rank marginally better than Options 2, 3, and 4 which encompass greenfield development. Smaller-scale development in the rural landscape (Options 1, 2, and 4) is also considered likely to have less of a landscape impact than larger-scale development (Option 3). Overall, no significant effects are considered likely under any option, but mitigation is likely to be required to minimise impacts given the rural character of the neighbourhood area.

Transport and movement

- 4.29 With regards to transport and traffic, smaller-scale growth under Options 1, 2, and 4 are likely to generate less traffic than larger-scale growth under Option 3. Accordingly, Option 3 is ranked last.
- 4.30 As more accessible areas, growth in West Knighton and West Stafford (Options 2, 3, and 4) would be preferred to growth in Tincleton (Option 1), which is further removed from Dorchester (as a main town in proximity providing a wider range of goods, services, and employment opportunities). Given the close connectivity with Broadmayne (and the settlement offer here), Options at West Knighton would be considered to rank better than the option for growth at West

Stafford, with West Knighton providing greater opportunity to access services and goods by more sustainable transport modes – including active travel.

- 4.31 Growth at Tincleton is considered to have limited local access and the potential to bolster active travel opportunities are therefore limited. Whilst Puddletown is relatively nearby, residents are likely to drive to access the offer here.
- 4.32 Despite the relatively limited sustainable transport connections, no significant negative effects are considered likely under options promoting small-scale growth (Options 1, 2, and 4), and broadly neutral effects would be considered most likely (a continuation of the baseline, including a high reliance on the private vehicle). Whilst larger-scale growth brings the opportunity to improve accessibility (through appropriate development contributions), this is unlikely to be of a large enough scale to positively impact upon the baseline. Minor negative effects are therefore concluded as most likely under Option 3 for larger-scale growth in West Knighton.

Conclusions

- 4.33 Overall, significant effects are concluded as most likely (pre-mitigation) in relation to two SEA themes: community wellbeing and the historic environment and this is common for all options.
- 4.34 Significant positive effects are concluded as likely in relation to community wellbeing, given the housing contribution under each option that will support reducing deprivation in relation to the 'barriers to housing and services' domain.
- 4.35 The potential for significant negative effects pre-mitigation is identified in relation to the historic environment as each option has identified heritage constraints. Most significantly, Option 2 would locate development within the designated West Knighton Conservation Area, and Option 3 would locate large-scale development adjacent to it. Option 4 would locate small-scale development adjacent to the West Stafford Conservation Area. Development in Tincleton (Option 1) would likely affect the setting of listed buildings.

5. Developing the preferred approach

- 5.1 The Steering Group presented the findings of the Site Options Assessment to residents in October 2023. Residents were invited to give feedback on which sites they felt may be suitable for development, and possible issues that should be considered in allocating any of the sites. The Steering Group considered the assessments and feedback from the community, which favoured Option 2 (Site WK3 – Land north of Yoah Cottage) as the preferred option for progression at Regulation 14 consultation. This reflected the aspirations to identify land for possible development to help meet local needs, and is focused on West Knighton, as the most accessible part of the neighbourhood area, in line with its position in the settlement hierarchy.
- 5.2 However, following Regulation 14 consultation, it was recognised that the preferred site allocation, whilst supported by the majority of respondents, was not supported by Dorset Council due to heritage harm, highways concerns (pedestrian / road safety) and the loss of an important hedgerow. On this basis, at submission stage, the plan is being progressed with no proposed site allocations for further housing development.

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

6. Approach to assessing the submission version of the plan (Part 2)

- 6.1 The aim of this part of the report is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the submission version of the KNP. This part of the report presents:
- An appraisal of the submission version of the KNP under the eight SEA topic headings established through scoping (Chapter 7).
 - Consideration of potential cumulative effects (Chapter 7); and
 - The overall conclusions at this current stage (Chapter 8).
- 6.2 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see Table 1.1) as a methodological framework.
- 6.3 Every effort is made 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 made 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 submission version of the plan in more general terms.
- 6.4 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. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.
- 6.5 The KNP proposes 16 policies to guide development in the neighbourhood area, these are listed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: KNP policy list

Policy reference	Policy name
1	Development set in rural landscapes
2	Wildlife corridors and biodiversity
3	Plot formation, building set-back, orientation, and boundary treatments
4	Incorporating the car in developments – parking guidelines
5	Density, building heights, and rooflines
6	Building mix
7	Materials and architectural details
8	Extensions and conversions – general principles
9	Sustainability in design
10	Local Green Spaces
11	Important local views and landmarks
12	Development in proximity to heritage assets
13	Village roads and Quiet, Low Traffic Routes
14	Prioritising walking, cycling, and horse riding
15	Supporting community facilities
16	Meeting local housing needs in the Plan area

7. Appraisal of the Knightsford NP

- 7.1 The appraisal of the submission version of the KNP is presented below structured according to the eight SEA objectives established through scoping (see Table 1.1). Cumulative effects are also considered.

Air quality

- 7.2 Most notably for air quality, the Dorchester Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is located around 1.5km to the west of the neighbourhood area. This AQMA has demonstrated improved air quality recently, with plans to revoke the declaration soon. It will be important to ensure that the growth strategy of the KNP does not undermine the actions to revoke the Dorchester AQMA.
- 7.3 In this respect, the KNP identifies a low overall growth target of just six new dwellings over the plan period, and proposes this will come forward through infill development, conversions, and/ or small-scale affordable housing exception sites. Whilst new residents are likely to continue to rely on private car use to some degree, no significant effects are considered likely given the limited growth proposed through the KNP.
- 7.4 Wider plan policies could indirectly benefit air quality, particularly within the neighbourhood area, given the policy emphasis on prioritising walking and cycling as more sustainable modes of transport (Policy 14) as well as improving safety for pedestrians and maintaining a network of Quiet Lanes that support active travel (Policy 13).
- 7.5 Overall, no significant effects are considered likely in relation to air quality, and **broadly neutral to minor positive effects** are concluded as most likely.

Biodiversity

- 7.6 There are many sensitive habitats across the neighbourhood area and nearby. Of note, the neighbourhood area intersects the 5km Heathland Mitigation Zone and Poole Harbour Nutrient Catchment Area. Under Policy ENV2 of the adopted Local Plan, development will only be permitted where there is provision to avoid, or secure effective mitigation of, potential adverse effects upon the integrity of Poole Harbour and Dorset Heaths internationally designated sites for biodiversity.
- 7.7 A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) accompanies the KNP which, in relation to internationally and nationally designated sites, identifies one policy recommendation and additional wording for inclusion in the KNP that will ensure that the KNP will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of any European sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
- 7.8 The River Frome is also a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that intersects the neighbourhood area in the north, and Warmwell Heath SSSI lies just east of West Knighton and south of Woodsford (outside of the neighbourhood area). The small-scale development needs identified for the plan period are not likely to lead to impacts in this respect, as indicated by the SSSI Impact Risk Zone (which identifies development of over 50 homes as a risk factor).

- 7.9 With regards to priority habitats, floodplain grazing marsh surrounds the River Frome and there are dispersed areas of woodland, much of the neighbourhood area is recognised for its potential to support habitat expansion and enhancement (particularly in the area between the River Frome and woodland habitats in West Knighton and Woodsford) and the River Frome is noted as an area of Restorable Habitat. It is noted that the identified biodiversity sites and habitats in the neighbourhood area are already relatively well protected through the Local Plan policy framework and the provisions of the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol (DBAP).
- 7.10 The KNP supplements existing policy protections by introducing Policy 2 which seeks to strengthen the wildlife corridors in the neighbourhood area, retain existing biodiversity features on sites, avoid impeding the movement of species, and link up small areas of isolated woodland. This is supported by Policy 10 which seeks to protect and enhance a network of Local Green Spaces.
- 7.11 Considering these points, **minor positive effects** are concluded as most likely given the additional policy support for enhancing biodiversity.

Climate change

- 7.12 Areas of fluvial flood risk in the neighbourhood area are largely associated with the River Frome and its tributaries. Areas of high surface water flood risk are also associated with the river corridor but more medium and low risk areas are also dispersed across the landscape.
- 7.13 Sustainable transport access is limited across the neighbourhood area, but the KNP focuses minimal growth at West Knighton as one of the most accessible villages in the area, which can support more active travel opportunities. Wider plan policies also seek to improve pedestrian safety and enhance active travel connections (Policies 13 and 14).
- 7.14 Climate resilience is also bolstered through good design and integrated green infrastructure and the KNP seeks to embed these principles through the provisions of Policies 1 – 10. This includes integrating green infrastructure and sustainability principles in design that include sustainable drainage systems, rainwater harvesting, permeable surfaces, locally sourced materials, building orientation, and inbuilt wildlife features.
- 7.15 The spatial strategy of the KNP avoids negative effects arising, and the supporting policy framework is considered most likely to lead to **minor long-term positive effects**.

Community wellbeing

- 7.16 The neighbourhood area encompasses the four villages of Tincton, West Knighton, West Stafford, and Woodsford, each with their own distinct identity and characteristics. West Knighton is the largest parish in terms of population and West Stafford is of a similar size, adjoining the easternmost part of Dorchester. Woodsford is the smallest parish and Tincton is considered somewhat fragmented. Most of the KNP policies are directed at ensuring future development helps to retain the special and rural character of the area. It also focuses growth in West Knighton offering future residents good access to the services and facilities within the village.
- 7.17 Across the neighbourhood area, the population comprises mainly of older people (over the age of 50) and the housing stock comprises mainly three- and four-bedroom family homes (accounting for around 81%) with high average house prices. Despite this, there are high levels of good health reported by residents who are supported by access to local green spaces as well as the surrounding countryside. The small-scale growth proposed will help to ensure that this immediate countryside access is retained for both existing and future residents.
- 7.18 Mainly rural in nature, there are limited existing community facilities and indicators show higher deprivation in relation to the 'barriers to access to housing and services' deprivation domain. The delivery of new homes as proposed under Policy 16 will help to reduce deprivation in this respect. However, the small-scale opportunities are less likely to bring forward affordable housing, but Policy 16 does identify support for affordable rural exception sites. Development is also focused at West Knighton which is considered one of the most accessible areas in the neighbourhood area.
- 7.19 Wider plan policies which seek to deliver high-quality design in new development (Policies 1-9), protect and enhance Local Green Spaces (Policy 10) and Wildlife Corridors (Policy 2), retain important views and local landmarks (Policy 11), and improve safety for pedestrians as well as enhance active travel opportunities (Policies 13 and 14) will also benefit community wellbeing. On this basis, **minor positive effects** are considered most likely overall.

Historic environment

- 7.20 There are many designated historic assets within the neighbourhood area which includes listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and conservation areas in both West Knighton and West Stafford.
- 7.21 The wider policy framework of the KNP has positive implications for the historic environment. Most notably, Policy 12 seeks to raise awareness of historic assets in new developments, identifying specific design considerations that would contribute to this, and Policy 11 is dedicated to protecting and enhancing important local views and landmarks.
- 7.22 Overall, **minor positive effects** are considered likely to emerge from the wider policy framework which seeks to raise awareness of historic assets within the neighbourhood area in new developments.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 7.23 There are significant areas of high-quality (Grade 2) agricultural land across the neighbourhood area that should be preserved where possible. The spatial strategy of the KNP identifies a low housing need over the plan period (for just six new homes) with growth being focused within the development boundary for West Knighton. As such, it is anticipated that no significant effects would arise with regards to land resources.
- 7.24 Notably, there is a strategic minerals land allocation that intersects the neighbourhood area around Woodsford, for the strategic expansion of Woodsford Quarry.⁹⁹ The spatial strategy of the KNP does not affect this allocation and the KNP highlights (in supporting text) that a recent planning application at the site including long-term restoration plans (beyond 2040) could deliver multiple benefits for water quality, biodiversity, landscape, and community wellbeing.
- 7.25 The River Frome is particularly sensitive in terms of water quality, though no significant effects are likely through the KNP given the plan does not allocate a site for development.
- 7.26 Most of the western extent of the neighbourhood area is a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone relating to groundwater that is sensitive to pollution. Policy 1 identifies the need to conserve watercourses and ditches, supported by Policy 9 which incorporates both water quality and water resource considerations in the design of new developments. Water resources are managed at a catchment scale by Wessex Water and the low growth proposed through the KNP is considered unlikely to significantly impact upon supply and demand forecasts or wastewater treatment needs.
- 7.27 Overall, **minor positive effects** are considered likely to emerge from the wider policy framework which embeds key water conservation and quality considerations in new development.

Landscape

- 7.28 Most notably, the Dorset National Landscape (formerly AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is adjacent to the neighbourhood area in to the south-west. This is contrasted with Dorchester to the west as a relatively urban area and to the north and east, the landscape is characterised by large areas of woodland and former quarries, in a rural, countryside setting. Within the neighbourhood area, most of the landscape is characterised as areas of Heath/ Farmland Mosaic or Valley Pasture, though there are smaller areas of Chalk Valley and Downland in West Knighton and Tincton.
- 7.29 Nearly all the wider policies proposed in the KNP have positive implications for landscapes and landscape character. Informal consultation to date has highlighted the residents' aspirations to retain the local green spaces, dark skies, and key views that typify the local landscape as well as the linked historic character of the villages. Policies 1, 10, 11, and 12 pay particular attention to protecting and enhancing these key values and are supported by a wider policy

⁹⁹ [Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Minerals Sites Plan 2019](#)

framework paying close detail to the design of new development (Policies 3 – 9) and integrated green infrastructure (Policies 1 and 2).

- 7.30 Considering these points, no significant negative effects are anticipated, and benefits are expected from the wider policy framework. On this basis, **minor long-term positive effects** are concluded as most likely.

Transport and movement

- 7.31 There is a high reliance on the private car for movement in and around the neighbourhood area, and despite high levels of home-working, it is estimated that half the working residents commute outside the neighbourhood area, travelling over 10km to access their jobs. Train stations are accessible at Dorchester and Moreton outside of the neighbourhood area, but bus services are severely limited. In the absence of strategic transport interventions (outside of the scope of the KNP), these trends are likely to continue over the plan period.
- 7.32 Despite this, there is a network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and cycle paths (including Route 2 of the National Cycle Network) providing residents with active travel opportunities that connect the settlements, the key service centre of Dorchester, and surrounding countryside, and the villages provide a limited service offer.
- 7.33 The KNP identifies a low housing need for just six homes over the plan period with growth focused within the development boundary for West Knighton. The low growth strategy is considered unlikely to have significant impacts with regards to transport and movement.
- 7.34 The wider KNP policy framework includes policy provisions that will reduce the impacts of parking in new developments (Policy 4) and retain and enhance safe and attractive active travel opportunities (Policy 14). Policy 13 is also dedicated to improving pedestrian safety on village roads and protecting Quiet Lanes for their recreational use.
- 7.35 Considering these points, no significant negative effects are anticipated because of the spatial strategy, and benefits are expected from the wider policy framework. On this basis, **minor long-term positive effects** are concluded as most likely.

Cumulative effects

- 7.36 No significant cumulative effects are considered likely given the very small-scale development supported through the KNP. The wider policy measures that seek to protect the landscape and bolster sustainable design in development will positively impact upon the wider landscape and Dorset rural area in combination with the Local Plan.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

- 8.1 Overall, no significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the KNP. The spatial strategy supports infill development and small-scale affordable housing exception sites, as well as conversion, replacement or subdivision of existing rural buildings; this level of growth will support resident needs without impacting upon the rural nature of the neighbourhood area. Minor positive effects are therefore considered likely with regards to community wellbeing.
- 8.2 Broadly neutral to minor positive effects are predicted in relation to the rest of the SEA objectives. This reflects the wider policy provisions which embed landscape and design considerations, protect and enhance green infrastructure, protect key views and local landmarks, and improve pedestrian safety.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

9. Next steps and monitoring

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

Plan finalisation

- 9.2 Following submission to the Local Planning Authority and further consultation (Regulation 16), the KNP and supporting evidence will be subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the KNP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.
- 9.3 If the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the KNP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Dorset Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the KNP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the KNP will become part of the local development framework for Dorset, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by Dorset Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No potential significant negative effects have been identified that would require additional or more stringent monitoring in this case.

Appendices

Appendix A – Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1**, 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** 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 the Environmental Report, in accordance with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Report section	Questions answered	Regulatory requirement met
Introduction	What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
	What is the scope of the SA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Key environmental problems/ issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
Part 1	What has plan-making/ SA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach). The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives assessment/ a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the Plan.
Part 2	What are the SA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the Plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan.
Part 3	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the monitoring measures envisaged.

Table AA.2: Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in accordance with regulatory requirements

<u>Schedule 2</u>	<u>Interpretation of Schedule 2</u>	
<i>The report must include...</i>	<i>The report must include...</i>	
1. an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>
2. the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>
3. the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	
4. any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	
5. the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>
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;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	
7. the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>
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	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]
9. a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.	
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan	
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]

Table C: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where regulatory requirements are or will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
Schedule 2 requirements:	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Chapter 2 (‘What’s the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information. The relationship with other plans and programmes is also considered in the SEA Scoping Report (2023).
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	These matters were considered in detail at the scoping stage, which included consultation on a Scoping Report published in October 2023. The outcome of scoping was an ‘SEA Framework’, and this is presented within Chapter 1 (‘What’s the scope of the SEA’). More detailed messages from the Scoping Report - i.e., messages established through context and baseline review - are presented within Appendix B.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	
5. The environmental protection objectives established at international, national, or community level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	The Scoping Report (2023) presents a detailed context review and explains how key messages from the context review (and baseline review) were then refined to establish an ‘SEA framework’. The key issues established through scoping are presented in Appendix B. The context review informed the development of the SEA framework and topics, presented in Chapter 1, which provide a methodological ‘framework’ for appraisal. With regards to explaining “how... considerations have been taken into account” - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 4 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 5 explains the Parish Council’s ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e., explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in-light of alternatives appraisal (and other factors). • Chapter 7 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the submission version of the plan and Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations.
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,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 4 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 7 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the submission version of the plan and Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
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).	As explained within the various methodology sections, as part of appraisal work, consideration has been given to the SEA scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions.
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.	Where necessary, mitigation measures are identified within the alternatives appraisal (in Chapter 4) and appraisal of the submission version of the Plan (Chapters 7 and 8).
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 3 deals with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues/ options. Also, Chapter 5 explains the Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in light of alternatives appraisal). Methodology is discussed at various places, ahead of presenting appraisal findings, and limitations/ assumptions are also discussed as part of appraisal narratives.
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10.	At this stage no additional monitoring measures are identified as being necessary over and above those already being considered by the Council.
10. A Non-Technical Summary of the information provided under the above headings.	A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is provided at the start of the 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 SA Report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1 and 6.2).	At the current time, this SEA Environmental Report is being published alongside the submission version of the plan for public consultation.
The SA Report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the Plan. The SA 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.	The Council will take into account this SEA Environmental Report when preparing the submission version of the Plan.

Appendix B - Scoping information

Linked to Chapter 1 of the main report, this appendix provides scoping information. Scoping consultation was undertaken during the period 19th October to 23rd November 2023 and consultation responses were received from the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. These responses are detailed in Table AB-1 below. Following the feedback, the key issues for each of the SEA topics that have been scoped in and have informed the development of the SEA objectives are provided.

Table AB-1: KNP Scoping Report consultation responses

Consultation response	SEA response/ action
Historic England	
David Stuart, Historic Places Adviser	
Thank you for your SEA Scoping consultation associated with the emerging Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan. We have no comments on the Scoping Report other than to highlight the desirability of including our guidance note on Site Allocations additionally to those included on p5. Although this guidance is titled to apply to Local Plans its advice is equally applicable to sites being allocated through the neighbourhood plan process (see attached).	Noted, with thanks. The Guidance Note on site allocations has been added to the context review and will inform the subsequent appraisal.
Natural England	
Rosalind Tuck, Lead Planning Adviser – West Dorset	
Planning consultation: Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Scoping Consultation Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. Natural England has provided some advice below on the Plan.	Thank you for your detailed response.
<u>Air quality</u> : The objective should additionally refer to reducing air pollution from Ammonia. Dorset Council have adopted an Interim Air Pollution Strategy in relation to adverse effects on the Dorset Heathlands, may be referenced here or in the Biodiversity section.	Noted with thanks, this will also be informed by the supporting HRA.
<u>Biodiversity</u> : The objective is welcomed, however it would reflect government policy if there was also reference to the expansion of natural habitats and recovery of species. There are additionally SDPs for the Dorset Heathlands, Poole Harbour (nutrient neutrality).	Noted with thanks.

Consultation response

SEA response/ action

Significant contributions to biodiversity and access to natural greenspace are in the process of being delivered at former minerals workings at Warmwell.

Climate change: The objective is supported.

Many thanks.

Community wellbeing: Natural England advise the SEA may wish to note the increasing understanding for the importance of access to natural greenspace and the countryside in wellbeing.

Noted, with thanks, this is picked up within the subsequent appraisal.

Historic environment: Natural England has no comment

Noted.

Land, soil, and water resources: Natural England support the objectives

Many thanks.

Landscape: Natural England support the objective, the obligations on authorities to avoid harm to AONBs has been recently updated in the NPPF, the objective could be modified to include moderate after Protect.

Noted with thanks, this will inform the subsequent appraisal.

Transport and movement: Natural England support the objective

Many thanks.

Additional comments:

The SEA should consider nationally set targets such as the 30 x 30 target and a number of other commitments set out in recent legislation such as the Environment Improvement Plan 2023 Plan for Water 2023 and the Environmental Protection Act 2022. Specifically, how where and when might an appropriate contribution to such commitments be delivered within the plan area.

Noted, with thanks, this will be considered through the appraisal.

In addition the plan should aim to support effective water usage in new developments and potentially in existing developments. The South West Water WRMP is currently being redrafted and is as yet not signed off. In many areas of the country water supplies are impacting significantly on natural habitats such as chalk streams. Natural England advise that in forming this plan the NP Group and planning authority satisfies themselves that the plan is not causing, adding to or making it more difficult to remove an adverse effect risk from abstraction. The NP area falls within an area which is recognized as under serious water stress.

Noted, with thanks, this will be considered through the subsequent appraisal.

Additional national strategies which may be referenced:

Environment Improvement Plan 2023

Plan for Water 2023

Environmental Protection Act 2022

LUR Act 2023

The SEA may also wish to consider local aspirations for new natural greenspace and biodiversity gains which

Noted, with thanks.

Consultation response

SEA response/ action

meet more integrated objectives and which if identified/ located will serve to address Green Infrastructure needs through some of the available funding streams such as heathland mitigation, nutrient neutrality and BNG gain.

I trust this advice will assist you and the authority in considering the application further.

Environment Agency

Ms Ellie Challans, Sustainable Places – Planning Specialist

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping report for the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan.

We consider there to be potential significant environmental effects associated with the plan, based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee.

The neighbourhood plan area contains;

- 1) Flood Zone 2 or 3
- 2) A Main River
- 3) River Frome SSSI designated site.
- 4) Source protection zones (SPZs)
- 5) Permitted waste site

Noted, many thanks for taking the time to respond.

Flood risk

As already identified in the SEA scoping report the Neighbourhood Plan has significant areas of flood zone 2 and 3 and includes a Main River: The River Frome.

If the plan is proposing growth in flood risk areas, the Sequential Test must be suitably addressed, along with ensuring any risk can be adequately managed. Proposed development must be steered away from areas at increased risk of flooding to areas of lowest risk. The Local Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Surface Water Management Plans form the evidence base to determine the level of flood risk in this area. It should be noted that the plan may be found to be unsound if adequate justification for development in areas at increased risk of flooding is not provided.

For allocations in areas at increased risk of flooding and for sites in flood zone 1 where the access/egress route may be affected by flooding, flood warning and emergency response is a key consideration to ensure development can be delivered safely. We do not normally comment on or approve the adequacy of flood emergency response procedures, as we do not carry out these roles during a flood. Our involvement with this

Noted with thanks. This is considered through the subsequent appraisal.

Consultation response

SEA response/ action

development during an emergency will be limited to delivering flood warnings to occupants/users covered by our flood warning network. Planning practice guidance (PPG) states that, in determining whether a development is safe, the ability of residents and users to safely access and exit a building during a design flood and to evacuate before an extreme flood needs to be considered. One of the key considerations to ensure that any new development is safe is whether adequate flood warnings would be available to people using the development. We also advise you undertake appropriate consultation with your, local planning authority, emergency planners and the emergency services to determine whether the proposals are safe in accordance with paragraph 167 of the NPPF and the guiding principles of the PPG. The LPA should therefore consider the implications for access/egress with respect to flooding on any allocations including those where the development site may be at low risk.

The plan should ensure that a suitable buffer distance is maintained between any proposed development and any watercourse/waterbody/flood defence, in order to maintain access, protect biodiversity and avoid impacts to flood defence infrastructure.

Main River water quality

Noted, with thanks.

The River Frome flows through the neighbourhood plan area. As pointed out in the report this watercourse is currently failing to reach good ecological status/potential under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). It currently has moderate status. 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. An assessment of the potential impacts of the neighbourhood plan on this watercourse under WFD should be included within the SEA appraisal. Further information on the current status of this watercourse can be found on the Catchment Data Explorer.

Source Protection Zones (SPZs)

Noted, with thanks.

Your plan includes areas which are located in SPZs, which are groundwater resources that are particularly sensitive to contamination. These should be considered within the plan if growth or development is proposed here, in particular avoiding potentially contaminative development in these areas. The relevance of the designation and the potential implication upon

Consultation response

SEA response/ action

development proposals should be considered with reference to our Groundwater Protection guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater-protection>

Waste

We recommend that any housing sites are steered away from high-risk waste disposal and treatment facilities to ensure the sites are not vulnerable to impacts of odour, noise, dust emissions, air pollution or traffic movements. The site selection methodology should include proximity to regulated waste sites as a criteria. There should be appropriate buffer zones between regulated sites and site allocations.

Noted, with thanks.

Environmental Net Gain and biodiversity

Biodiversity Net Gain is already established in the NPPF paragraphs 174d, 179b and 180d., for new developments and planning policies. Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain from 2024As part of the government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, and 25-Year Environment Plan there is also the target to incorporate wider Environmental Net Gain into planning decisions and strategic planning.

The plan should consider opportunities for how these requirements can be met and preferably where the plan can go beyond any minimum requirements to deliver environmental net gains.

Noted, with thanks.

Managing and adapting to climate change

Our latest Adaptation report, Living Better with a Changing Climate, shows that England will inevitably face significant climate impacts, and that early action is essential. This is also supported by your local authority's declaration of a climate emergency. Significant climate impacts are inevitable especially for flood and coastal risks, water management, freshwater wildlife, and industrial regulation. On-going policy reform presents an opportunity to strengthen the role the planning system plays in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and to ensure a fair transition to a low carbon economy. Therefore, your plan should ensure any policies, site allocations and design of development, takes the future challenges of climate change into account.

Noted, with thanks.
The SEA includes an SEA objective that focuses on climate change.

Strategic water planning

In February 2011, the Government signalled its belief that more locally focussed decision making and action should sit at the heart of improvements to the water

Noted, with thanks.

Consultation response

SEA response/ action

environment. This is widely known as the catchment-based approach and has been adopted to deliver requirements under the Water Framework Directive.

This seeks to:

- deliver positive and sustained outcomes for the water environment by promoting a better understanding of the environment at a local level; and
- to encourage local collaboration and more transparent decision-making when both planning and delivering activities to improve the water environment.

Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity to deliver multi-functional benefits through linking development with enhancements to the environment. You can find more information on the challenges that threaten the water environment and how these challenges can be managed for your plan area in your River Basin Management Plan.

Drainage and wastewater infrastructure

Noted, with thanks.

Where the plan proposes development or promotes growth, we recommend early consultation with Wessex Water. The plan should determine whether there is (or will be prior to occupation) sufficient infrastructure capacity existing for the connection, conveyance, treatment and disposal of quantity and quality of water associated with any proposed development within environmental limits of the receiving waterbody. This may impact on the housing figures and the phasing of development. Please note that if there is not sufficient capacity in the infrastructure then we must be consulted again if alternative methods of disposal are proposed.

Green and blue infrastructure

Noted, with thanks.

Green and blue infrastructure is important for adaptation and resilience to climate change, provides health and wellbeing benefits, allows nature recovery, improves water quality, and assists in delivering net zero targets. The plan should include policies which support and encourage opportunities to incorporate green and blue infrastructure, including natural flood management approaches, river restoration including de-culverting/naturalisation, and the protection of existing natural assets. You may also wish to identify important networks in your plan area and ensure policies manage development over or near these areas.

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment at the earliest stages. Together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and

Noted, with thanks.

Consultation response

SEA response/ action

ideas on incorporating the environmental into your plan.

This is available at:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/consider-environment-neighbourhood-plans/>

Key issues – air quality

Dorchester AQMA, located approximately 1.5km west of Knightsford, was declared due to high levels of NO₂ associated with road traffic. Given the population of Knightsford rely on accessing goods and services in Dorchester to some degree, as it is the main centre in West Dorset, there is potential for development within the neighbourhood area to influence air quality in and around the AQMA through increased car use, which will be a key issue to consider when identifying sites/ growth locations in the KNP. **It will be important to ensure that the KNP does not undermine any actions being implemented to help revoke the declaration.** The effects of the KNP in relation to traffic and congestion will also be explored further under the transport and movement SEA topic.

The KNP presents opportunities to improve accessibility and support active travel and public transport, which could limit potential negative effects on air quality. These opportunities will also be explored further under the community wellbeing and transport and movement SEA topics.

Key issues – biodiversity

The KNP should seek to protect the River Frome SSSI, as well as nearby Dorset Heathlands SAC and SPA/ Warmwell Heath SSSI. Whilst the latter is not within the neighbourhood area, development in Knightsford has the potential to negatively impact this designated site through increased recreational disturbance and added pressures from nearby road traffic (e.g., along the B3390).

BAP priority habitats within the neighbourhood area should be protected, and the ecological corridors between them strengthened. Notably, where habitat networks of the National Habitat Network are present, opportunities to connect habitats should be sought in line with Natural England's guidance.

Key issues – climate change

As the KNP is seeking to allocate sites for housing development, it has the potential to affect the baseline in respect of climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, this is unlikely to be significant given a likely low level of growth being pursued through the KNP.

CO₂ emissions associated with the transport sector remain high in Knightsford (which include quarrying operations), highlighting the importance of accessible development and the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure. The KNP can seek to address this locally, particularly by strengthening active travel routes and opportunities to increase self-containment.

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 KNP policy framework.

There is a need to consider both existing and future flood risk, avoiding vulnerable development in areas of high fluvial flood risk, and managing, and where possible, improving, drainage rates and flood defences.

Key issues – community wellbeing

One of the LSOAs in Knightsford (West Dorset 01A) is amongst the 30% most deprived when looking at the ‘barriers to housing and services’ domain in isolation. This means that the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services in this area is poor. The KNP can develop evidence and policy that can support local access to appropriate housing types and tenures.

Knightsford has an aging population and a small working age population, especially compared to the national average; this could put pressures on local care and health facilities and lead to a shrinking of the local economy. The KNP could explore ways to help combat this.

Key issues – historic environment

Future development will need to consider design and layout so that it does not negatively impact the setting of heritage assets in the neighbourhood area, particularly listed buildings, and the conservation area.

The KNP provides an opportunity to protect the historic environment through policy, particularly with respect to identifying locally important features.

Opportunities to improve the condition and status of heritage at risk could be explored.

Key issues – land, soil, and water resources

Given the KNP is seeking to allocate sites for housing development, it has the potential to impact local land, soil, and water resources/ quality. However, the KNP also has the potential to protect these resources through policy implementation. Nevertheless, it is recognised that some protection will be provided through the higher-level policy framework, at the Local Plan level, and therefore the KNP could provide more locally based policies to protect these resources.

Key issues – landscape

It will be important for the KNP to protect the local landscape, including its key characteristics. This will deliver benefits across several SEA topics, including biodiversity and geodiversity and climate change, by maintaining features that contribute to the ecological network and climate change mitigation. A key opportunity for the KNP in this respect is to develop a design code or guide that seeks to manage, protect, and enhance key features.

As part of the setting of the Dorset AONB, the KNP provides good opportunity to identify key views across the landscape from within and surrounding the neighbourhood area and provide them policy protections.

Key issues – transport and movement

As the KNP is allocating sites for housing development, it has the potential to influence the existing transport network, both positively and negatively.

Almost a third (32.6%) of people aged 16 years and over in employment in the Knightsford work mainly from home. However, over half (53.7%) of people in the neighbourhood area drive a car or van to work. The KNP presents an opportunity to support increased homeworking and a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport.

