

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report to accompany the Regulation 14 version of
the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan

Alderholt Parish Council

November 2023

Quality information

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Table of Contents

Non-Technical Summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Context and vision for the Neighbourhood Plan.....	4
3. What is the scope of the SEA?	6
4. What has plan making / SEA involved up to this point?	7
5. Assessment of reasonable alternatives	11
6. What are the appraisal findings at this stage?	18
7. Next steps and monitoring	27
Appendix A Regulatory requirements.....	29
Appendix B The scope of the SEA	33
Appendix C Assessment of reasonable alternative site options.....	43

Non-Technical Summary

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan. This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

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

What is the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan?

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

Purpose of this Environmental Report

This Environmental Report, which accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (April 2023), which includes information about the Neighbourhood Plan area's environment and community.

The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

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

The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes.
- Relevant aspects of the current and future state of the environment and key sustainability issues for the area.
- The SEA Framework of objectives against which the Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed.
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- An assessment of the likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The next steps for the Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying SEA process.

Identification of reasonable alternatives for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan

Chapter 4 of the Report explains the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*”.

Strategic parameters are first considered, namely the absence of a formal housing requirement figure within an adopted development plan document for the Parish Council. The Parish falls within Dorset County Council authority area. The latest consultation for the Dorset Local Plan in January-March 2021 proposes a housing requirement of 30,481 dwellings for the plan area, and a Neighbourhood Plan housing requirement figure for Alderholt of at least 192 dwellings over the plan period 2021/2-2037/38.

As of April 2022, there are existing consents in the Neighbourhood Area for 138 homes. This leaves a requirement of approximately 50 homes to meet the 192 housing figure, taking into account that further small infill sites within the village envelope will continue.

The first step in establishing reasonable alternatives that can achieve this was to identify site options. The site selection process was led by the Parish Council, with support from AECOM (through a ‘Site Options Assessment’ (SOA) technical support package).

A total of 19 SHLAA sites were identified in the Neighbourhood Area for assessment. Out of these sites 11 sites were ‘excluded’ from further assessment in their entirety as they were not suitable, available and achievable. A total of five sites were taken forward in their entirety for further assessment. The remaining three sites were partially ‘excluded’ with four sub-areas ‘included’ for further assessment.

The shortlist of nine sites have been considered ‘suitable’ and ‘potentially suitable’ for development, when assessed against their ability to meet the emerging neighbourhood plan objectives. In light of the conclusions of the AECOM SOA, the nine potentially suitable/ suitable sites were given further consideration by Alderholt Parish Council for promoting housing development through the Neighbourhood Plan.

These nine sites are therefore the focus of the SEA reasonable alternatives, supporting the Parish Council’s consideration of sites for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The sites taken forward for consideration through the SEA are set out in the table overleaf and shown within Figure 4.1 of the main report.

Reasonable alternative site options

Site name	Size (Ha)	No. of homes/ capacity
Alderholt Nursery (002)	0.93	Approx. 20
Cross Farm (004)	6.26	Approx. 25 - 30 with some small scale employment plus POS and access to trailway possible
Paddock south of Daggons Road (006a)	1.06	Approx. 15 with some small scale employment possible
Land south of Ringwood Road (007a)	17.00	Up to 250 with some employment possible plus POS possible
Land west of Hilbury Road (007b)	8.15	Up to 180 with some employment possible plus POS possible
Land south of Blackwater Grove (009)	3.64	Approx. 50 plus POS possible
Presseys Corner (013)	1.80	Approx. 15 – 20 with some small scale employment plus POS possible
Stroud Firs (016a)	8.86	Approx 20 – 25 plus POS and access to trailway possible
Land at Blackwater House (020)	4.03	Approx. 40 plus POS and access to trailway possible

Assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan

The detailed appraisal of the reasonable alternatives under the SEA themes is presented in Appendix C, with summary findings presented in the table overleaf. To support the appraisal findings, the site options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SEA themes. This will provide an indication of the comparative sustainability performance of the reasonable alternative options in relation to each theme.

The following methodology has been used:

For each of the site options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.2) as a methodological framework. Green shading is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst red shading is used to indicate significant negative effects, however this is also stated in the text. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted. Uncertainty is noted with grey shading.

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 site option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best.

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

Reasonable alternatives summary assessment findings

Table 5.1 Summary assessment findings

SEA topic		Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Biodiversity	Significant effect?	1	3	2	4	4	2	3	5	2
	Rank	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Uncertain
Climate change	Significant effect?	1	4	1	1	2	1	1	4	1
	Rank	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	2	3	1	4	4	2	3	5	2
	Rank	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes - negative	Yes - positive
Historic environment	Significant effect?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Rank	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effect?	1	2	2	5	4	3	2	2	3
	Rank	Uncertain	No	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No	No	Yes - negative
Landscape	Significant effect?	1	4	2	5	5	3	4	4	3
	Rank	No	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Uncertain
Transportation and movement	Significant effect?	1	3	2	5	5	2	4	3	1
	Rank	No	No	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No	No	No	No

Summary conclusions:

In relation to **biodiversity**, Site 016a is worst performing as is almost wholly made up of valued biodiversity, including a significant area of priority habitat woodland. Sites 007a, 007b and 009 are also considered to perform poorly against other sites as have the potential to adversely impact on nationally designated Cranbourne Chase SSSI. Site 009 also holds local biodiversity value, and does not present the strategic scale opportunities Sites 007a and 007b do, therefore is worst performing of the three. Site 013 performs less well as is constrained by an adjacent SINC, and Site 004 is similarly constrained by adjacent priority habitat. Sites 006a and 020 perform reasonably, but all hold local biodiversity value that could be lost or damaged as a result of development. Site 002 is therefore best performing as is not constrained by designated biodiversity sites, habitats or local biodiversity /ecological features.

In relation to **climate change**, given any level of growth in Alderholt will lead to an increase in CO₂ emissions, uncertain effects are concluded for all sites for this SEA theme. The extent to which the options have the potential to support climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts depends on the specific location, design, layout and scale of development, and the inclusion of features to support climate resilience. Options are therefore ranked by flood risk, given the uncertainty in relation to meeting climate mitigation objectives.

In relation to **community wellbeing**, strategic sites 007a and 007b are best performing in terms of delivering significant new homes, including affordable homes to meet local needs. However, at this early stage it is uncertain what would be delivered alongside new homes and employment at these sites, and what the residual effects would be on the village settlement. It is noted that these sites could be seen to be too large in the context of the village, and that their delivery might not best meet Neighbourhood Plan objectives. This includes protecting the strong sense of community, and identifying suitable sites for the level of development required; i.e., not exceeding this requirement. Furthermore, the delivery of associated infrastructure is unknown at this stage, and the capacity of Alderholt's services and facilities, road and sustainable transport network are all limited/ constrained.

In relation to the **historic environment**, none of the sites are constrained by designated historic assets, and it is otherwise difficult to rank options in terms of their potential impact upon historic environment objectives at this stage.

In relation to **land, soil and water resources**, Site 002 is best performing, being part brownfield in nature. All other options have the potential to lead to negative effects due to the loss of greenfield land, with significance increasing with the size of the site. Options are ranked by their indicative ALC grade and size (area of greenfield agricultural land lost), although it is noted that a level of uncertainty exists given the predictive data used.

In relation to **landscape**, larger sites 007a and 007b, and sites 016a and 004 on the northern settlement edge perform less well than other smaller sites, given the potential for development to lead to urban sprawl and the likely significant change in settlement pattern. This is particularly important given the sensitivity of the wider landscape, i.e. reflecting the presence of the AONB to the north, and the AGLV. Sites 004 and 016a are most constrained in this respect, being on the northern settlement edge, however dense vegetation with Site 016a and surrounding Site 004 would likely limit long distance views. Larger sites 007a and 007b are more open in nature

although further from landscape designations, while Site 013 is smaller in size but constrained by the AGLV to the east.

It is difficult to meaningfully differentiate between site options in relation to landscape at this stage; therefore taking a precautionary approach, Sites 007a and 007b are considered worst performing (reflecting their size and location) followed by Sites 016a and 004, with the potential to lead to adverse significant effects on the landscape. Smaller sites perform more positively, although the sensitivity of the landscape and the location of sites on the village edge could nonetheless lead to adverse effects. Site 013 is notably worst performing of the smaller sites reflective of the AGLV. Furthermore, uncertainty exists at this stage over development design and what mitigation could be achieved to lessen landscape and visual impacts.

In relation to **transportation**, it is considered that the development of any site for housing will lead to increased reliance on the private vehicle to an extent, notably for journeys outside of the parish for employment, education, shopping, etc. Therefore, focusing on localised journeys, it is considered that sites closest to the village centre, and that could support the Trailway are best performing. These sites are most likely to facilitate active travel uptake and modal shift, for day-to-day journeys within the village. Sites 004 and 016a perform reasonably as have a PRow extending through the edge of the sites towards station road, however sites are relatively distant from the village centre, and it is uncertain whether this PRow could be utilised for access to local services and facilities. Furthermore, the northern edge of the settlement location of sites 004, 013 and 016a is likely to lead to private vehicle use, connecting to the strategic network outside of Alderholt (via the A338).

Larger sites 007a and 007b are noted for having the potential to deliver a level of infrastructure alongside new homes, which could support local transport objectives; however, uncertainty exists at this stage ahead of detailed proposals and master planning. Taking a precautionary approach and given the existing capacity issues on the local road network, large sites 007a and 007b are considered worst performing.

Approach taken through the Neighbourhood Plan

Utilising the findings of the SOA, SEA and community feedback on options (received through ongoing consultation events), the Parish Council narrowed the nine sites down to the following three. The Parish Council consider that these three sites best meet the draft Neighbourhood Plan's objectives, while also meeting the 50-dwelling housing figure:

- Site 002: Alderholt Nursery, East of Ringwood Road – about 20 homes
- Site 006a: Paddock South of Daggons Road – about 15 homes with some small scale employment
- Site 009: Land south of Blackwater Grove about 15-20 homes with POS / natural greenspace

Preliminary assessment of the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan

In October 2023 AECOM assessed an early draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, providing the following recommendation in relation to the biodiversity SEA theme:

Site allocation 'Paddock South of Daggons Road' is constrained by local biodiversity, having a number of mature oak trees along the site boundaries. An ecology survey undertaken in 2020 noted that the trees and hedgerows on site offer good opportunities for bat foraging and commuting, and the presence of a large mature oak close to the existing entrance with potential bat roost features. It is recommended that landscaping along the site boundaries be included as a requirement of the site, to incorporate mature trees and hedgerows, protecting and enhancing biodiversity present.

The Parish Council subsequently updated the draft Neighbourhood Plan in response to AECOMs preliminary recommendation.

Assessment of the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan

The aim of Chapter 6 is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 14 version of the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan, under the SEA theme headings.

For each SEA theme, 'significant effects' of the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment, as appropriate.

Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the Neighbourhood Plan. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

Overall conclusions are set out overleaf.

Conclusions

Significant positive effects are concluded in relation to community wellbeing objectives. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan policies will support access to housing, including affordable housing, and employment, to meet local needs. Policies seek to protect and enhance the character of the village, the village 'High Street', local services and facilities, and improve overall accessibility where possible.

Minor positive effects are concluded in relation to the historic environment, recognising that the policy framework seeks to protect and enhance local heritage assets, with particular consideration given to the distinctive character and heritage of the village. This is reflected through site allocation policies, with key consideration given to the village's distinct character areas and visual context.

Broadly neutral to minor positive effects are concluded as most likely in relation to climate change. It is considered that growth will occur with or without the Neighbourhood Plan, and that the increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area and absolute emissions are not considered a consequence of the Neighbourhood Plan. Additionally, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated in relation to ground water flood risk.

Neighbourhood Plan policies perform well against biodiversity objectives, however **neutral effects** are concluded, reflective of site allocation policies. It will be important for policies to help ensure ecological sensitivities are appropriately considered during the planning, construction, and operational phases for new development proposals which come forward during the plan period, whilst also delivering net gains.

Minor negative effects are concluded overall in relation to land soil and water, reflecting the loss of greenfield land at all sites, and potentially good quality, agricultural land at Alderholt Nursery. Nonetheless it is noted that the draft Neighbourhood Plan seeks to prioritise the development of brownfield land where possible.

Effects are likely to be **minor negative** overall in relation to transport. It is considered that the requirements set out through the site allocation policies and the wider policy framework seek to utilise opportunities within the village to maximise use of and access to active/ sustainable travel. It is recognised that more strategic highways/ transport issues are beyond of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Next steps

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

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

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

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

1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of Dorset Council.
- 1.3 Key information relating to the Neighbourhood Plan is presented below in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 Key information relating to the Neighbourhood Plan

Name of Responsible Authority	Alderholt Parish Council
Title of Plan	Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan
Subject	Neighbourhood planning
Purpose	The Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of Dorset Council. The Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan will be used to guide and shape development within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Timescale	2022 – 2034
Area covered by the plan	The Neighbourhood Plan area covers Alderholt Parish.
Summary of content	The Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan will set out a vision, strategy, and range of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Plan contact point	Gina Logan, Alderholt Parish Council Email: councillorglogan@alderholtparishcouncil.gov.uk

SEA Screening for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA where it is likely to have significant environmental effects. In this respect, the Neighbourhood Plan has been screened by Dorset Council, with the following conclusions made:

'It is confirmed that a full SEA and HRA are required with respect to preparation of the Alderholt NP given the ambitions of making allocations and the known environmental constraints in the area.'
- 1.5 In light of this screening outcome, an SEA process is being undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).

SEA explained

- 1.6 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues.
- 1.7 The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the emerging plan’s contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.8 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
- i. When deciding on ‘the scope and level of detail of the information’ which must be in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 - ii. A report (the ‘Environmental Report’) is published for consultation alongside the draft plan (i.e. the draft Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan) that presents outcomes from the environmental assessment (i.e. discusses ‘likely significant effects’ that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.
- 1.9 This ‘Environmental Report’ is concerned with item ‘ii’ above, with item ‘i’ having concluded earlier in 2023.

Structure of this SEA Environmental Report

- 1.10 This document is the SEA Environmental Report for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan and hence needs to answer all four of the questions listed below with a view to providing the information required by the SEA Regulations. Each of the four questions is answered in turn within this report, as set out below.
- 1.11 Further detail is provided in Appendix A, which seeks to identify how the structure of the report aligns with the regulatory requirements:

Table 1.2: Questions that must be answered by the SEA Environmental Report to meet the regulatory¹ requirements

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ²
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
<p>What’s the scope of the SEA?</p> <p>What is the sustainability ‘context’?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. • The 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.

¹ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

² NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ²
What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 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. • Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What are the key issues and objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making/SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. • The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. • Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The likely significant effects associated with the Regulation 14 version of the plan. • The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Regulation 14 version of the plan.
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next steps for the plan making / SEA process.

2. Context and vision for the Neighbourhood Plan

Local Plan context for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The strategic policy context for Alderholt is set by Dorset's local development framework, which consists of the of the adopted Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (2014), the saved policies of the 2002 East Dorset Local Plan (saved policies), the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Waste Plan (2019) and the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Mineral Sites Plan (2019).
- 2.2 The East Dorset and Christchurch Core Strategy (2014) identifies Alderholt as one of the area's Rural Service Centres. These are described within Policy KS2 as the *"Main providers for the rural areas where residential development will be allowed of a scale that reinforces their role as providers of community, leisure and retail facilities to support the village and adjacent communities"*.
- 2.3 The Core Strategy and saved policies of the earlier Local Plan will in time be replaced by the Dorset Local Plan. Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation took place between 18 January and 15 March 2021. Dorset Council have since announced a pause in plan-making to consider comments and housing targets and the new plan is not expected until 2026.

Vision, aims and objectives for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.4 Developed during the earlier stages of plan making and via community consultation, the vision for the Neighbourhood Plan is as follows:

"To ensure that Alderholt remains a village with the essential amenities and facilities that enables residents and visitors to enjoy the beautiful countryside whilst being part of an active and friendly community in a peaceful rural setting."
- 2.5 The vision is underpinned by the following objectives:
 1. Protect and retain the character of the village – its uniqueness on the edge of Dorset, its compact form and quiet nature, its links to the former railway, historic buildings, and the surrounding countryside.
 2. Reinforce the sense of a village centre/high street.
 3. Protect and strengthen the highly valued amenities and community facilities that provide its residents with a strong sense of connection and community, allowing them and newcomers to be active, develop and thrive.
 4. Identify suitable sites for the level of development required to meet the anticipated need for housing, as well as providing opportunities for some local employment, that would be compatible with the nature of our village and limited road access.
 5. Ensure there are safe and attractive walking and cycling routes around the village and support the project to re-use the former railway for recreation and onward connection to Fordingbridge.

6. Protect the intrinsic beauty and enjoyment of the countryside and approaches to Alderholt
7. Protect and strengthen the more isolated settlements – Cripplestyle, Daggons and Crendell - and the wider countryside from inappropriate development ensuring its rural nature and the extensive biodiversity of our parish is enhanced.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability topics and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives.
- 3.2 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. As such, these authorities were consulted in April 2023. Appendix B presents further information.

The SEA framework

- 3.3 Table 3.1 overleaf presents a list of topics and objectives that together form the backbone of the SEA scope. Together they comprise a ‘framework’ to guide the assessment.

Table 3.1: The SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
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 within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, protect, and enhance water quality, and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

4. What has plan making / SEA involved up to this point?

Introduction

- 4.1 In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include...
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
 - The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.
- 4.2 As the delivery of new housing development through the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan is what is most likely to have a significant effect on SEA objectives, it was determined that this issue should be the primary focus of the consideration of alternatives through the SEA process. Case-law (most notably Friends of the Earth Vs. Welsh Ministers, 2015) has established that planning authorities may apply discretion and planning judgement when determining what should reasonably be the focus of alternatives appraisal, recognising the need to apply a proportionate approach and ensure an SEA process/ report that is focused and accessible.
- 4.3 The potential sites for delivering development in line with the Neighbourhood Plan objectives, will directly or indirectly influence the themes identified above (the SEA Framework) and the Parish Council's preferred approach.

Overview of plan making / SEA work undertaken to date

- 4.4 The aim here is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present "*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*".
- 4.5 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 Neighbourhood Plan). These parameters are then drawn together to arrive at 'reasonable alternatives'.

Strategic parameters

- 4.6 As of June 2023, no formal housing requirement figure exists within an adopted development plan document for the Parish Council. The latest consultation for the Dorset Local Plan in January-March 2021 proposes a housing requirement of 30,481 dwellings for the plan area, and a Neighbourhood Plan housing requirement figure for Alderholt of at least 192 dwellings over the plan period 2021/2-2037/38.

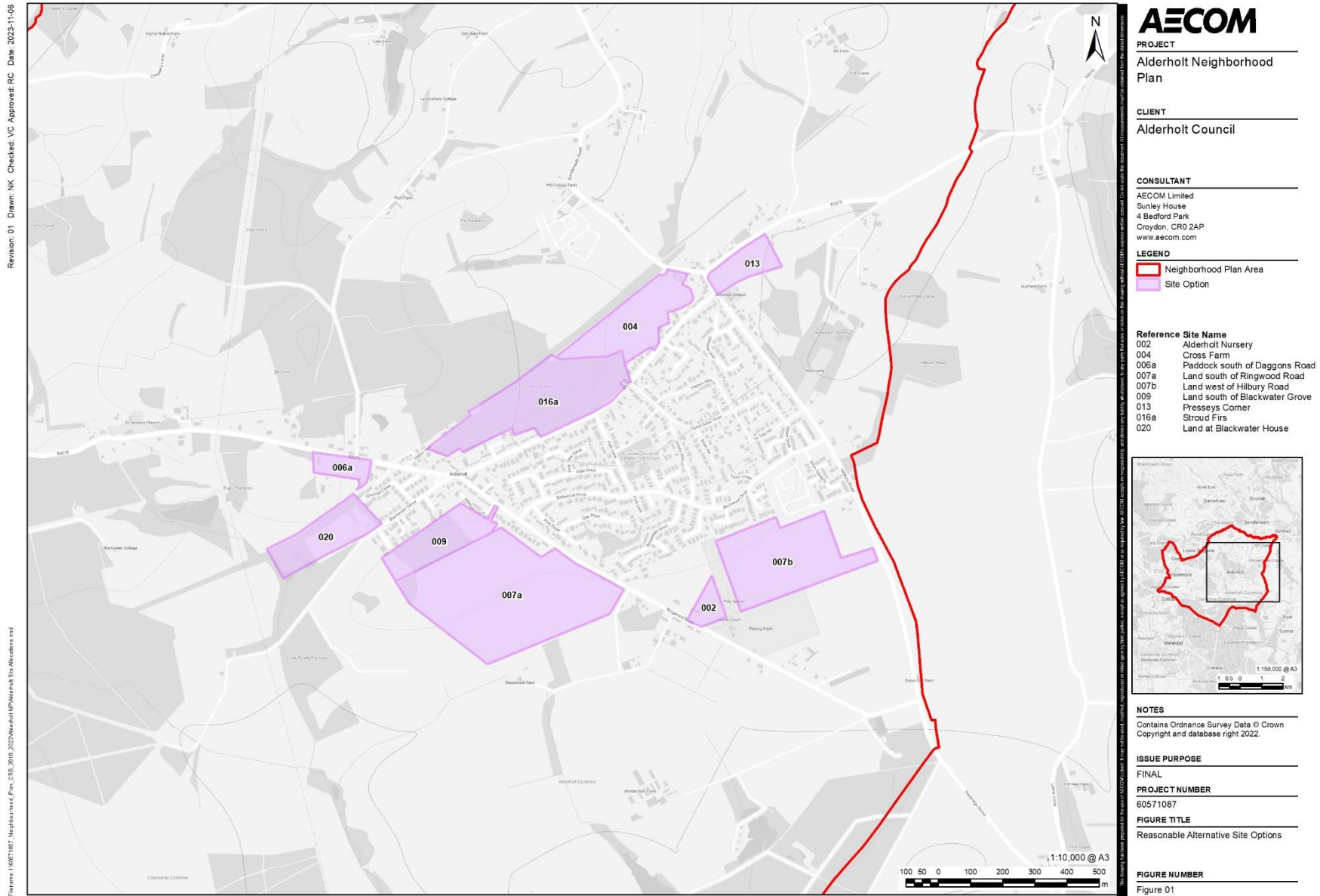
- 4.7 As of April 2022, there are existing consents in the Neighbourhood Area for 138 homes. This leaves a requirement of approximately 50 homes to meet the 192 housing figure, taking into account that further small infill sites within the village envelope will continue.
- 4.8 The first step in establishing reasonable alternatives that can achieve this was to identify site options.

Site options

- 4.9 The site selection process was led by the Parish Council, with support from AECOM (through a 'Site Options Assessment' (SOA) technical support package).
- 4.10 A total of 19 SHLAA sites were identified in the Neighbourhood Area for assessment. Out of these sites 11 sites were 'excluded' from further assessment in their entirety as they were not suitable, available and achievable. A total of five sites were taken forward in their entirety for further assessment. The remaining three sites were partially 'excluded' with four sub-areas 'included' for further assessment.
- 4.11 The shortlist of nine sites have been considered 'suitable' and 'potentially suitable' for development, when assessed against their ability to meet the emerging neighbourhood plan objectives.
- 4.12 In light of the conclusions of the AECOM SOA, the nine potentially suitable/suitable sites were given further consideration by Alderholt Parish Council for promoting housing development through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.13 These nine sites are therefore the focus of the SEA reasonable alternatives, supporting the Parish Council's consideration of sites for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.14 The sites taken forward for consideration through the SEA are set out in Table 4.1 overleaf, and identified within Figure 4.1, also overleaf.

Table 4.1 Reasonable alternative site options

Site name	Size (Ha)	No. of homes/ capacity
Alderholt Nursery (002)	0.93	Approx. 20
Cross Farm (004)	6.26	Approx. 25 - 30 with some small scale employment plus POS and access to trailway possible
Paddock south of Daggons Road (006a)	1.06	Approx. 15 with some small scale employment possible
Land south of Ringwood Road (007a)	17.00	Up to 250 with some employment possible plus POS possible
Land west of Hilbury Road (007b)	8.15	Up to 180 with some employment possible plus POS possible
Land south of Blackwater Grove (009)	3.64	Approx. 50 plus POS possible
Presseys Corner (013)	1.80	Approx. 15 – 20 with some small scale employment plus POS possible
Stroud Firs (016a)	8.86	Approx 20 – 25 plus POS and access to trailway possible
Land at Blackwater House (020)	4.03	Approx. 40 plus POS and access to trailway possible



5. Assessment of reasonable alternatives

5.1 The detailed appraisal of the reasonable alternatives under the SEA themes is presented in Appendix C, with summary findings presented in Table 5.1 below. To support the appraisal findings, the site options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SEA themes. This will provide an indication of the comparative sustainability performance of the reasonable alternative options in relation to each theme.

Methodology

- 5.2 For each of the site options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.2) as a methodological framework. Green shading is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst red shading is used to indicate significant negative effects, however this is also stated in the text. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted. Uncertainty is noted with grey shading.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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 site option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best.
- 5.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

Table 5.1 Summary assessment findings

SEA topic		Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Biodiversity	Significant effect?	1	3	2	4	4	2	3	5	2
	Rank	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Uncertain
Climate change	Significant effect?	1	4	1	1	2	1	1	4	1
	Rank	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	2	3	1	4	4	2	3	5	2
	Rank	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes - negative	Yes - positive
Historic environment	Significant effect?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Rank	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effect?	1	2	2	5	4	3	2	2	3
	Rank	Uncertain	No	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No	No	Yes - negative
Landscape	Significant effect?	1	4	2	5	5	3	4	4	3
	Rank	No	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Uncertain
Transportation and movement	Significant effect?	1	3	2	5	5	2	4	3	1
	Rank	No	No	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No	No	No	No

Summary conclusions:

- 5.6 In relation to **biodiversity**, Site 016a is worst performing as is almost wholly made up of valued biodiversity, including a significant area of priority habitat woodland. Sites 007a, 007b and 009 are also considered to perform poorly against other sites as have the potential to adversely impact on nationally designated Cranbourne Chase SSSI. Site 009 also holds local biodiversity value, and does not present the strategic scale opportunities Sites 007a and 007b do, therefore is worst performing of the three. Site 013 performs less well as is constrained by an adjacent SIN, and Site 004 is similarly constrained by adjacent priority habitat. Sites 006a and 020 perform reasonably, but all hold local biodiversity value that could be lost or damaged as a result of development. Site 002 is therefore best performing as is not constrained by designated biodiversity sites, habitats or local biodiversity /ecological features.
- 5.7 In relation to **climate change**, given any level of growth in Alderholt will lead to an increase in CO₂ emissions, uncertain effects are concluded for all sites for this SEA theme. The extent to which the options have the potential to support climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts depends on the specific location, design, layout and scale of development, and the inclusion of features to support climate resilience. Options are therefore ranked by flood risk, given the uncertainty in relation to meeting climate mitigation objectives.
- 5.8 In relation to **community wellbeing**, strategic sites 007a and 007b are best performing in terms of delivering significant new homes, including affordable homes to meet local needs. However, at this early stage it is uncertain what would be delivered alongside new homes and employment at these sites, and what the residual effects would be on the village settlement. It is noted that these sites could be seen to be too large in the context of the village, and that their delivery might not best meet Neighbourhood Plan objectives. This includes protecting the strong sense of community, and Identifying suitable sites for the level of development required; i.e., not exceeding this requirement. Furthermore, the delivery of associated infrastructure is unknown at this stage, and the capacity of Alderholt's services and facilities, road and sustainable transport network are all limited/ constrained.
- 5.9 In relation to the **historic environment**, none of the sites are constrained by designated historic assets, and it is otherwise difficult to rank options in terms of their potential impact upon historic environment objectives at this stage.
- 5.10 In relation to **land, soil and water resources**, Site 002 is best performing, being part brownfield in nature. All other options have the potential to lead to negative effects due to the loss of greenfield land, with significance increasing with the size of the site. Options are ranked by their indicative ALC grade and size (area of greenfield agricultural land lost), although it is noted that a level of uncertainty exists given the predictive data used.
- 5.11 In relation to **landscape**, larger sites 007a and 007b, and sites 016a and 004 on the northern settlement edge perform less well than other smaller sites, given the potential for development to lead to urban sprawl and the likely significant change in settlement pattern. This is particularly important given the sensitivity of the wider landscape, i.e. reflecting the presence of the AONB to the north, and the AGLV. Sites 004 and 016a are most constrained in this respect, being on the northern settlement edge, however dense vegetation with

Site 016a and surrounding Site 004 would likely limit long distance views. Larger sites 007a and 007b are more open in nature although further from landscape designations, while Site 013 is smaller in size but constrained by the AGLV to the east.

- 5.12 It is difficult to meaningfully differentiate between site options in relation to landscape at this stage; therefore taking a precautionary approach, Sites 007a and 007b are considered worst performing (reflecting their size and location) followed by Sites 016a and 004, with the potential to lead to adverse significant effects on the landscape. Smaller sites perform more positively, although the sensitivity of the landscape and the location of sites on the village edge could nonetheless lead to adverse effects. Site 013 is notably worst performing of the smaller sites reflective of the AGLV. Furthermore, uncertainty exists at this stage over development design and what mitigation could be achieved to lessen landscape and visual impacts.
- 5.13 In relation to **transportation**, it is considered that the development of any site for housing will lead to increased reliance on the private vehicle to an extent, notably for journeys outside of the parish for employment, education, shopping, etc. Therefore, focusing on localised journeys, it is considered that sites closest to the village centre, and that could support the Trailway are best performing. These sites are most likely to facilitate active travel uptake and modal shift, for day-to-day journeys within the village. Sites 004 and 016a perform reasonably as have a PRoW extending through the edge of the sites towards station road, however sites are relatively distant from the village centre, and it is uncertain whether this PRoW could be utilised for access to local services and facilities. Furthermore, the northern edge of the settlement location of sites 004, 013 and 016a is likely to lead to private vehicle use, connecting to the strategic network outside of Alderholt (via the A338).
- 5.14 Larger sites 007a and 007b are noted for having the potential to deliver a level of infrastructure alongside new homes, which could support local transport objectives; however, uncertainty exists at this stage ahead of detailed proposals and master planning. Taking a precautionary approach and given the existing capacity issues on the local road network, large sites 007a and 007b are considered worst performing.

Development of the preferred strategy

5.15 Utilising the findings of the SOA, SEA and community feedback on options (received through ongoing consultation events), the Parish Council narrowed the nine sites down to the following three. The Parish Council consider that these three sites best meet the draft Neighbourhood Plan's objectives, while also meeting the 50-dwelling housing figure:

- Site 002: Alderholt Nursery, East of Ringwood Road – about 20 homes
- Site 006a: Paddock South of Daggons Road – about 15 homes with some small scale employment
- Site 009: Land south of Blackwater Grove about 15-20 homes with POS / natural greenspace

Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.16 To support the implementation of the vision for the Neighbourhood Plan discussed in Chapter 2, the current version of the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan puts forward a number of policies to guide development in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Policies have been identified in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan objectives, following extensive community consultation and evidence gathering. The policies are set out in Table 5.2 overleaf.

Table 5.2 Neighbourhood Plan policies

Policy no.	Policy title
Policy 1	Settlement pattern, layout, and densities
Policy 2	People-friendly streets and paths
Policy 3	Parking provision
Policy 4	Respecting local character in the design
Policy 5	Environmental performance and sustainability
Policy 6	Landscaping
Policy 7	Meeting local needs – housing
Policy 8	The village ‘High Street’
Policy 9	The trailway
Policy 10	Meeting local needs – employment
Policy 11	Revised village envelope
Policy 12	Alderholt Nursery, East of Ringwood Road
Policy 13	Paddock South of Daggons Road
Policy 14	Land south of Blackwater Grove
Policy 15	Safeguarding local facilities
Policy 16	Important Local Green Spaces
Policy 17	Key landscape features
Policy 18	Important views
Policy 19	Non-designated heritage assets around Alderholt

Preliminary assessment of the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.17 In October 2023 AECOM assessed an early draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, providing the following recommendation in relation to the biodiversity SEA theme:
- 5.18 Site allocation 'Paddock South of Daggons Road' is constrained by local biodiversity, having a number of mature oak trees along the site boundaries. An ecology survey undertaken in 2020 noted that the trees and hedgerows on site offer good opportunities for bat foraging and commuting, and the presence of a large mature oak close to the existing entrance with potential bat roost features. It is recommended that landscaping along the site boundaries be included as a requirement of the site, to incorporate mature trees and hedgerows, protecting and enhancing biodiversity present.
- 5.19 The Parish Council subsequently updated the draft Neighbourhood Plan in response to AECOMs preliminary recommendation.

6. What are the appraisal findings at this stage?

Introduction

6.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 14 version of the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version (i.e., the Regulation 14 version) of the Neighbourhood Plan under the SEA theme headings.
- The overall conclusions at this current stage.

Approach to this appraisal

6.2 The appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan is presented below and is structured under the SEA themes.

6.3 For each SEA theme, 'significant effects' of the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment, as appropriate.

6.4 Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the Neighbourhood Plan. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

6.5 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been carried out for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan (2023). The HRA screening exercise undertaken indicated that four of the draft Neighbourhood Plan policies, three of which refer to site allocations, were considered to pose Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) to the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area (SPA)/ Ramsar Habitat site, the Avon Valley SPA/ Ramsar, and the New Forest SPA/ Ramsar/ SAC (Special Area of Conservation) site. The potential for LSEs were concluded either alone or in combination with other projects and plans, due to contributing to one or more of the following impact pathways: recreational pressure, noise and visual disturbance, loss of functionally linked habitat and atmospheric pollution.

6.6 These pathways and the policies were discussed within the Appropriate Assessment (AA). The AA concluded that the overarching Local Plan – Christchurch and East Dorset (2014) was considered to provide protective policies (e.g. Policy ME1 Safeguarding Biodiversity and Geodiversity) for

Habitat sites. As the Alderholt NP is required to comply with policies within the Local Plan it could be concluded that the Alderholt NP would not adversely impact Habitat sites either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

- 6.7 However, policy wording recommendations have been made, and adopted through Policy 7 (Meeting Local Need – Housing) to cover recreational pressure, noise and visual disturbance and loss of functionally linked habitat and water quality.
- 6.8 In terms of local biodiversity, Alderholt includes areas of extensive woodland. Land defined as Priority Habitat is mainly concentrated in the southwest of the neighbourhood area and directly north of the main settlement of Alderholt, with deciduous woodland being the predominant type.
- 6.9 The Policy framework recognises the importance of these biodiversity features, notably Policy 16 (Important Local Green Spaces) includes ‘Oak Road southern woodland corridor’ as a key area for protection from development. The wooded area is designated for its value to the landscape and role as a wildlife corridor. Additionally, the policy designates ‘Stroud Firs’, a deciduous woodland frontage along Station Road for its abundant wildlife value (and being a priority habitat).
- 6.10 In terms of site allocations, the draft Neighbourhood Plan allocates three sites, one of which is part brownfield, while the others are wholly greenfield in nature. The sites are located to the west of the village, adjacent to existing built form, away from areas of biodiversity importance. ‘Paddock South of Daggons Road’ is the most constrained in terms of on-site biodiversity, having a number of mature oak trees along the site boundaries. An ecology survey undertaken in 2020 noted that the trees and hedgerows on site offer good opportunities for bat foraging and commuting, and the presence of a large mature oak close to the existing entrance with potential bat roost features. In line with the site allocation policy, “The mature trees and hedgerows along the site boundaries should be retained as far as practicable.”
- 6.11 Previous ecology surveys of the Alderholt Nursery site indicate that it is of limited wildlife importance, and as such the replacement of the leylandii hedges with native species, and landscaping proposals in line with site allocation Policy 12 should be able to provide a significant biodiversity gain. It is noted that the delivery of net gains³ at this part brownfield site provides the opportunity to improve biodiversity in an area of low biodiversity value.
- 6.12 No ecological survey has been taken for Land south of Blackwater Grove, and the Neighbourhood Plan highlights this as a requirement to provide the baseline in which to measure biodiversity net-gain. The site allocation does however set out a requirement for accessible greenspace, which can support a range of habitats and species.
- 6.13 All site allocation policies perform positively by setting requirements to enhance the ecological value of the sites, including incorporating green infrastructure through design. Policy 4 (Respecting Local Character in the Design), Policy 6 (Landscaping) and Policy 17 (Key Landscape Features) also perform positively in this respect, highlighting the importance of high-quality design enhancing

³ 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 (BNG) from a start date of January 2024

biodiversity throughout the parish. This includes building in opportunities to link habitats and potential wildlife corridors, as well as ensuring that biodiversity net gain is maintained for the lifetime of the development.

- 6.14 Overall, Neighbourhood Plan policies perform well against biodiversity objectives. It will be important for policies to help ensure ecological sensitivities are appropriately considered during the planning, construction, and operational phases for new development proposals which come forward during the plan period, whilst also delivering net gains. **Neutral effects** are concluded.

Climate change and flood risk

- 6.15 In terms of mitigation climate change, Policy 5 (Environmental Performance and Sustainability) seeks to ensure that new buildings and extensions incorporate a range of measures to achieve high standards of environmental performance, delivering a reduction in CO2 emissions. High quality design in this respect will ensure that buildings are more resilient to climatic changes, and also are less costly to run.
- 6.16 Provisions set out in Policy 2 (People Friendly Streets and Paths) and Policy 3 (Parking Provision) are likely to be effective at reducing emissions from transport, targeting local improvements that will support a modal shift towards active travel and electric vehicles. These policies will help reduce emissions by supporting a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport where available, however it is recognised that the sustainable travel offer in Alderholt is limited.
- 6.17 In terms of climate adaptation, the site allocations are not considered to be at risk of fluvial or surface water flood risk. However, Paddock South of Daggons Road and Land south of Blackwater Grove may be susceptible to groundwater flooding, which is a key concern for the wider parish. As such, in line with site allocation policies, a comprehensive flood risk assessment is required to understand potential risk from groundwater and inform the planning application. Policy 12 (Alderholt Nursery) also requires development of the site to include large native tree species which will help to manage drainage.
- 6.18 Furthermore, it is recognised that the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance together with relevant saved policies of the East Dorset Local Plan highlight the importance of development taking place in areas at least risk of flooding where possible. More information on this should be provided in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment being undertaken by Dorset Council later this year (2023).
- 6.19 Landscaping also presents an opportunity to increase biodiversity and reduce flood risk through design, particularly for open space and gardens. Specifically, extensive areas of hard surfacing can increase flood risk, and it is therefore important for such areas to be reduced and broken up with planting in between; and constructed with permeable materials. These types of design considerations are promoted through Policy 6 (Landscaping), recognising the constraints of the village.
- 6.20 In terms of the wider framework, a number of policies perform positively through planning for green infrastructure, supporting connectivity and the attractiveness of spaces and places. This is a key opportunity in which the Neighbourhood Plan can help to promote climate change adaptation measures.

Key policies in this regard include Policy 1 (Settlement pattern, layout and densities), Policy 4 (Respecting local character in the design), Policy 16 (Important Local Green Spaces), and Policy 17 (Key Landscape Features).

6.21 Overall, by recognising growth will occur with or without the Neighbourhood Plan, the increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area and absolute emissions are not considered a consequence of the Neighbourhood Plan. On this basis, and alongside the avoidance of adverse effects in relation to ground water flood risk, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated, and broadly **neutral to minor positive** effects are concluded as most likely.

Community wellbeing

6.22 As set out in Policy 7 (Meeting Local Needs – Housing), sufficient land is allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan, which together with the extant planning consents and potential for further sensitive infill within the village envelope, should meet the identified housing target over the plan period. In terms of the delivery of affordable housing, Policy 7 highlights that the overall provision of affordable housing will be guided by the requirements set in the Local Plan. Furthermore, at least 25% of affordable housing should be delivered as First Homes, as defined in national policy.

6.23 Policy 7 also states that as the three sites allocated through the Neighbourhood Plan exceed the housing need requirement, the release of unallocated greenfield sites for housing outside of the village envelope should be resisted (in accordance with Policy 11). The importance of maintaining the settlement pattern, layout, and setting requirements for the density of new development, is detailed through Policy 1.

6.24 One of the key objectives of this Neighbourhood Plan is to reinforce the sense of a village centre / high street. Most of the facilities are located along Daggons Road / Station Road and at the junction with Ringwood Road, which acts as the village centre/ high street. Recognising that the services and facilities offer of the village is limited, Policy 15 (Safeguarding Local Facilities) requires that every effort should be made to avoid the loss of retail premises, leisure, and other local facilities. This provides local context to reinforce Core Strategy Policy PC5, which also seeks to prevent the unnecessary loss of retail premises, leisure, and other local facilities.

6.25 While facilities are provided a level of protection, Policy 8 (The Village High Street) presents encouragement for flexible use within the high street, to support the vitality and viability of local services (where certain criteria is met). This includes ensuring the streetscene is maintained, reflecting the importance of the rural nature and feel of the village. Policy 16 (Important Local Green Spaces), Policy 17 (Key Landscape Features) and Policy 18 (Important Views) are just three of many policies which seek to protect the character and attractiveness of the village; which contributes to overall sense of place and community feel.

6.26 In terms of the site allocations, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies key sensitivities, with site allocation policies establishing mitigation requirements, particularly in relation to the landscape and character of the village. In terms of access to the village centre, where sites are limited in access, policy requirements seek to ensure access will be secured. Specifically, Alderholt

Nursery currently has poor footpath connectivity into the village, and therefore Policy 12 states *“safe and attractive pedestrian access into the village should be achieved through the site to allow connection via the Parish Council land to the east (which links through to Birchwood Drive) and with the adjoining development to the north (which links through to Broomfield Drive).”* Similar requirements are set for other site allocations where necessary, recognising the importance of integrating the sites with the village centre.

- 6.27 The Railway notably runs to the south of site allocation ‘Paddock South of Daggons Road’, and Policy 13 highlights the importance of *“ensuring that the layout of the development enables future pedestrian / cycle access through the site to the railway.”* The railway is considered to provide recreation and accessibility as a footpath, extending through the parish connecting residents with the village centre and surrounding countryside.
- 6.28 Site allocation Paddock South of Daggons Road is allocated for 15 dwellings and at least 0.2ha of employment land. The employment uses are required to be either workspaces, retail / commercial or similar uses that generate employment and would be compatible with the “High Street” location of the site. This will contribute towards the sustainable growth of the village, recognising that employment opportunities in the parish are currently limited. In this respect, Policy 10 is noteworthy as supports opportunities for infill within the Village ‘High Street’ area (in line with set criteria), to boost employment opportunities in the long term.
- 6.29 Overall, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan policies will support access to housing, including affordable housing, and employment, to meet local needs. Policies seek to protect and enhance the character of the village, the village ‘High Street’, local services and facilities, and improve overall accessibility where possible. **Significant positive effects** are therefore concluded as most likely.

Historic environment

- 6.30 The draft Neighbourhood Plan considers the different character and history of the various parts of the parish, and notably considers the course of the railway as a heritage asset that should be celebrated as part of the history of the area. Policy 9 (The Railway) therefore performs positively through protecting the dismantled railway corridor, and supporting opportunities for its improvement to increase access to and understanding of the asset.
- 6.31 While not rich in designated assets, the Neighbourhood Area has a number of farms, barns and associated structures listed in the Dorset Historic Environment Record; albeit not statutorily Listed. Policy 19 (Non-designated Heritage Assets Around Alderholt) therefore seeks to ensure that any development conserve and respect the contribution made by non-designated historic buildings and features to the character of the area; and lists the type of assets of concern. This will have a positive effect on historic environment objectives, protecting the important character of the area and links to the past.
- 6.32 Alderholt has a strong, historic, linear pattern of development within the early village footprint which should be respected; alongside important green spaces and local views which contribute to the historic character of the settlement. Relevant policies in this respect include Policy 1 (Settlement pattern, layout,

and densities), Policy 4 (Respecting Local Character in Design), Policy 6 (Landscaping), Policy 11 (Revised Village Envelope), Policy 16 (Important Green Spaces), Policy 17 (Key Landscape Features), and Policy 18 (Important Views).

- 6.33 Notably Policy 1 requires that all development reflects the character areas established through the Neighbourhood Plan, and that proposals reinforce the pattern of development historically seen. This is reinforced through Policy 4 (Respecting Local Character in Design), which provides specific requirements related to new development height, roof design, development detailing, building form, building façade, etc. to ensure successful integration with the area.
- 6.34 The need to respect the village's character areas is further reflected through the site allocations policies (Policy 12 – 14), for example with proposals required to include landscaping, respect important frontages, and respect the amenity of adjoining properties.
- 6.35 Overall, it is considered that the policy framework will deliver **minor positive effects**, seeking to protect and enhance local heritage assets, with particular consideration given to the distinctive character and heritage of the village. This is reflected through site allocation policies, with key consideration given to the village's distinct character areas and visual context.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 6.36 The Neighbourhood Plan has a strong focus on protecting the rural areas outside of the village from inappropriate levels of development. For example, several policies seek to protect key features of landscape and biodiversity interest in the open countryside. While these policies do not specifically seek to address land, soil and water resources, the policies will indirectly help promote and protect these resources, including the promotion of high-quality green networks in the neighbourhood area and the protection and enhancement of key features. This will help support the capacity of the landscape to regulate soil and water quality.
- 6.37 With respect to the proposed site allocations (Policies 12 – 14), the Alderholt Nursery site includes an area of brownfield land, which supports the efficient use of land use in the parish. However, the remainder of Alderholt Nursery, and the other two site allocations are greenfield in nature. Development at these locations will result in the permanent loss of greenfield land, which cannot be mitigated. In terms of the quality of agricultural land at these sites, it is recognised that predictive data has been used for the assessment of reasonable alternatives (Chapter 5 and Appendix C). Natural England predictive data suggests Alderholt Nursery is of 'Good to Moderate' quality, while the other two sites are of 'Poor' quality. The development of Alderholt Nursery therefore could lead to the loss of this reasonable quality agricultural land, however as set out above the exact quality is uncertain without detailed surveys being undertaken.
- 6.38 In terms of water resources, it is recognised that there are drainage concerns at the sites, which have been discussed in detail under climate change above. In terms of water resources, Wessex Water are likely to maintain adequate water services over the plan period. Nonetheless, it is recognised that new development has the potential to affect water quality and availability through

increased consumption and pollution, wastewater discharges, water runoff and modification. Notably, the River Avon is just east of the parish with known water pollution issues. Policy 5 (Environmental performance and sustainability) and Policy 6 (Landscaping) notably support measures to improve water management, quality, and availability.

- 6.39 Overall is considered that the draft Neighbourhood Plan seeks to prioritise the development of brownfield land where possible. However, **minor negative effects** are concluded overall, reflecting the loss of greenfield land at all sites, and potentially good quality, agricultural land at Alderholt Nursery.

Landscape

- 6.40 Alderholt parish is mainly rural in character. Much of the countryside within the parish (to the north and east) is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value. The South East Dorset Green Belt runs up to the southern edge of the parish, and the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) runs down to its northern edge. A key focus of the Neighbourhood Plan is therefore to protect and retain the character of the village – its uniqueness on the edge of Dorset, its compact form and quiet nature, and the surrounding countryside.
- 6.41 Policy 1 seeks to ensure that different densities and plot sizes are appropriately considered during the design process and reflective of the settlement's rural character. In particular, Policy 1 gives consideration to the spacing between buildings, and the importance of supporting green corridors to contribute to the area's rural character. Furthermore, large-scale backland development that would undermine the area's character, and front-to-back relationships, should be avoided.
- 6.42 This approach is reflected through the site allocations, with all sites being no greater than 20 homes, and not significantly prominent in the wider landscape. It is noted that Alderholt Nursery had planning consent refused by Dorset Council in 2021 for potential harm to the open character of the countryside, and therefore site allocation Policy 12 sets strict requirements for design and landscaping along the site boundaries.
- 6.43 Land south of Blackwater Grove is not prominent in the wider landscape but would form a new settlement edge with the countryside. Site allocation Policy 13 therefore requires that proposals should be designed and landscaped accordingly, respecting the amenity of adjoining residential properties.
- 6.44 The delivery of housing on Paddock South of Daggons Road will form part of the visual entrance to the village from the west, and this is addressed through site allocation Policy 13. The policy requires that 'The design, mix and layout of dwellings should be in line with Policies 1 – 7, and including Policy 8 (The Village "High Street" in relation to those adjoining Daggons Road, and recognising the importance of this frontage as the entrance to the village and therefore critical to establishing its character.'
- 6.45 Outside of the site allocations, it is recognised that the wider policy framework seeks to ensure any new development considers the key characteristics of the local landscape, and the key features that contribute to the special qualities of the neighbourhood area. Policy 17 (Key Landscape Features) and Policy 18

(Important Views) are significant in this respect, requiring that schemes protect and reinforce local landscape characteristics and features.

- 6.46 More broadly, Policy 4 (Respecting Local Character in the Design) supports development proposals that conserve and enhance the distinctive local character and heritage of the village. The criteria presented reflects that of National Model Design Code and Guidance⁴, providing local design considerations to reinforce national policy and guide planning applications. The policy aims to ensure development in the plan area is designed to complement and strengthen local character and distinctiveness. This will also help guide development to be in-keeping with the surrounding environment, reducing the visual impact of the development and respecting the important relationship between the built and natural environment. Policy 2 (People-friendly streets and paths) and Policy 11 (Revised Village Envelope) are also of relevance here.
- 6.47 Finally, it is noted that Local Green Spaces have been designated and mapped through the draft Neighbourhood Plan, with development restricted in these locations (in accordance with criteria set out). Many have been designated for their landscape value, with the intention of softening the development edge, maintaining the rural feel of the village, providing a woodland frontage, and providing views towards the countryside.
- 6.48 Overall, the draft Neighbourhood Plan is considered likely to lead to **minor negative effects**, reflecting the inevitable changes to the landscape, and overall loss of greenfield land, within a sensitive location. However, site allocation policy requirements seek to ensure any adverse effects on the landscape are mitigated. Furthermore, the wider policy framework performs well against landscape objectives, recognising the importance of settlement identity and landscape character, and key landscape features within design – overall effects are therefore likely to be negligible.

Transportation

- 6.49 The neighbourhood area has a limited sustainable transport offer. There are no railway stations in the area (the railway having been dismantled following the Beeching cuts in the 1960s), and a very limited bus service. It is perhaps not surprising that car ownership levels are therefore much higher than the Dorset average, with nearly two thirds (66%) of households having two or more cars (the average for Dorset being less than half (45%)).
- 6.50 Furthermore, the main road through the parish is the B3078, which runs east-west through the parish connecting to the village of Cranborne and the town of Fordingbridge in Hampshire. This road includes sharp bends and pinch-points that make it unsuitable for large volumes of traffic.
- 6.51 A key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan is therefore to support sustainable transport opportunities within and around the village and reduce the need to travel where possible. Policy 2 (People Friendly Streets and Paths) seeks to ensure there are safe and attractive walking and cycling routes around the village and sets out a range of measures to improve the parish's streets and paths to facilitate active travel uptake. This includes natural traffic calming through lane width and alignment variation of the carriageway, and crossing

⁴ The National Model Design Code provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. Available [here](#)

points designed to align with pedestrian desire lines. A number of other policies perform positively through supporting the attractiveness, accessibility, and connectivity of places. Key policies in this respect include Policy 1 (Settlement Pattern, Layout and Densities), Policy 4 (Respecting Local Character in Design), Policy 6 (Landscaping), Policy 11 (Revised Village Envelope) and Policy 18 (Key Landscape Features).

- 6.52 Policy 3 (Parking Provision) is noteworthy as seeks to address the clutter of on-street parking in many parts of Alderholt. This would contribute towards addressing local congestion and accessibility issues, including improving road safety for pedestrians.
- 6.53 More broadly in relation to transportation, another key objective of the draft plan is to support the project to re-use the former railway for recreation and onward connection to Fordingbridge. The railway is a priority to improve the efficiency of the transport network and lead to other benefits for the town and is supported through Policy 9 (The Trailway). The potential of the Alderholt Trailway has been recognised in the first draft of the Dorset Council Local Plan, and Local Transport Plan.
- 6.54 In terms of the site allocations, given limited sustainable transport opportunities within the village, it is recognised that continued reliance on the private vehicle is likely to prevail. Consideration is also given to the small-scale employment to be delivered alongside housing at Paddock South of Daggons Road, which could lead to further congestion on Daggons Road / Station Road where most of the village's facilities are located. To address this, site allocation Policy 13 seeks to ensure employment areas are on the road frontage, and that an extension to the existing pavement is made, among other requirements. Notably, future connections through land to the south to provide pedestrian / cycle links to the Trailway should be included within the design of the layout.
- 6.55 Alderholt Nursery and Land south of Blackwater Grove notably have poor footpath connectivity into the village, and therefore a requirement of site allocation Policy 12 (Alderholt Nursery) and Policy 14 (Land south of Blackwater Grove) is that pedestrian access should be improved, providing safe and attractive access into the village by foot.
- 6.56 The access via Blackwater Grove and Blackwater Close is not suitable for high levels of traffic, and this is reflected in the proposal (i.e., only 15 dwellings).
- 6.57 It is considered that the requirements set out through the site allocation policies and the wider policy framework seek to utilise opportunities within the village to maximise use of and access to active/ sustainable travel. It is recognised that more strategic highways/ transport issues are beyond of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. Overall effects are therefore considered likely to be **minor negative**.

Conclusions

- 6.58 **Significant positive effects** are concluded in relation to community wellbeing objectives. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan policies will support access to housing, including affordable housing, and employment, to meet local needs. Policies seek to protect and enhance the character of the village, the

village 'High Street', local services and facilities, and improve overall accessibility where possible.

- 6.59 **Minor positive effects** are concluded in relation to the historic environment, recognising that the policy framework seeks to protect and enhance local heritage assets, with particular consideration given to the distinctive character and heritage of the village. This is reflected through site allocation policies, with key consideration given to the village's distinct character areas and visual context.
- 6.60 Broadly **neutral to minor positive** effects are concluded as most likely in relation to climate change. It is considered that growth will occur with or without the Neighbourhood Plan, and that the increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area and absolute emissions are not considered a consequence of the Neighbourhood Plan. Additionally, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated in relation to ground water flood risk.
- 6.61 Neighbourhood Plan policies perform well against biodiversity objectives, however **neutral effects** are concluded, reflective of site allocation policies. It will be important for policies to help ensure ecological sensitivities are appropriately considered during the planning, construction, and operational phases for new development proposals which come forward during the plan period, whilst also delivering net gains.
- 6.62 **Minor negative effects** are concluded overall in relation to land soil and water, reflecting the loss of greenfield land at all sites, and potentially good quality, agricultural land at Alderholt Nursery. Nonetheless it is noted that the draft Neighbourhood Plan seeks to prioritise the development of brownfield land where possible.
- 6.63 Effects are likely to be **minor negative** overall in relation to transport. It is considered that the requirements set out through the site allocation policies and the wider policy framework seek to utilise opportunities within the village to maximise use of and access to active/ sustainable travel. It is recognised that more strategic highways/ transport issues are beyond of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Next steps and monitoring

Next steps

- 6.64 This Environmental Report accompanies the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan for Regulation 14 consultation.
- 6.65 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.
- 6.66 At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with local planning policy.

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

Monitoring

6.68 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.

6.69 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).

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

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

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

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ⁵
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
What is the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The 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.
What's the scope of the SEA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 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. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 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. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What are the key issues and objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the submission version of the plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the submission version of the plan.
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The next steps for the plan making /SEA process.

⁵ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

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

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the SA Report	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 (‘Local Plan context and vision for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan’) presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’). More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix B of this Environmental Report.
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 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, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been considered during its preparation;	
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	Chapter 5 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area). Chapters 6 presents an appraisal of the plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 6 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan. Also, specific recommendations are made in Chapter 6.
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 4 deals with ‘Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with’, in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options. Also, Chapter 5 explains the Town Council’s ‘reasons for selecting the preferred option’ (in-light of alternatives assessment).

9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10; Chapter 7 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

10.A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.

The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations

authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2) This iteration of the Environmental Report is being published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 14 consultation.

The SA must be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.

The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure. This Environmental Report, alongside Regulation 14 consultation responses, will inform plan finalisation.

Appendix B The scope of the SEA

Introduction

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

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

Air quality

- The two AQMAs within Dorset are far removed from the neighbourhood plan area. The closest AQMA in relation to the neighbourhood plan area is the Salisbury City Centre AQMA, located approximately 14km north in Wiltshire.
- Given the distance of the neighbourhood plan area from AQMAs, and that the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to deliver a significant level of development, the potential for the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan to lead to significant negative effects in relation to air quality is negligible. In combination with the fact that no air quality exceedances have been recorded within the neighbourhood plan area, this theme is **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- Nutrient pollution is a key issue for the River Avon SAC. In March 2022 Natural England provided updated advice for development proposals that have the potential to affect water quality resulting in adverse nutrient impacts on internationally protected habitats sites. This advice applied to the catchments of five habitats sites including the River Avon SAC. Any developments will need to demonstrate nutrient neutrality for Phosphorus using the Natural England River Avon nutrient budget calculator.
- Recreation, namely high footfall, may be affecting the breeding success of SPA birds and resulting in adverse effects upon the New Forest SAC and Ramsar habitats through impacts including disturbance to birds. As the Neighbourhood Plan area is within 3km of the European site, and therefore within the 13.8km area around the New Forest and the 400m- 5km Dorset Heaths buffer zone, the recreational pressure issue is relevant to future development in Alderholt.
- A number of designated sites within the neighbourhood plan area are in poor condition. Notably, a small section (8.52%) of the Cranborne Common SSSI, which is located in the southwest of the neighbourhood plan area, is designated as unfavourable-no change. In addition, The Moors River System SSSI, which is in proximity to the neighbourhood plan area, is classified by Natural England as 12.68% unfavourable–declining.
- Network Enhancement Zones define land that connects existing patches of primary and associated habitats which are currently highly fragmented and where fragmentation could be reduced by habitat creation. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will be important to not only protect these SSSIs but to enhance any unfavourable units; utilising

opportunities for net-gain where possible, including the recognised Network Enhancement Zone.

Climate change and flood risk

- Small sections of the neighbourhood plan area, to the extreme north and south, are at high risk of flooding, falling within Flood Zone 3 (1% or greater probability of flooding from rivers). However, these are largely concentrated around the Hammer Brook (south of Crossroads Plantation) and adjacent to Sandleheath along the River Allen tributary. High surface water flood risk also extends along both waterbodies, with sections of low surface water flood risk present towards Hill Cottage Farm. Fluvial and surface water flood risk could be exacerbated by groundwater emergence in the neighbourhood plan area.
- 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 Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan policy framework.
- There is a need to consider flood risk, avoiding vulnerable development in areas of high fluvial flood risk, and managing, and where possible, improving drainage rates. The neighbourhood plan area could benefit from the installation of SuDS to help mitigate flood risk and effects.

Community wellbeing

- Access to housing, and housing stock, is a key issue for the neighbourhood plan area, particularly for younger people. Development through the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan can support the provision of additional housing within the neighbourhood plan area creating more opportunity for younger residents to get on the housing ladder.
- The lack of local employment opportunities is an issue for the neighbourhood plan area; most residents are likely to travel a distance outside of the neighbourhood area for access to employment.

Historic environment

- The neighbourhood plan area's eight listed buildings are concentrated in the north of the neighbourhood plan area. There is also significant number of undesignated heritage assets located throughout the neighbourhood plan area. It will be important to ensure that future development avoids/ minimises impacts upon the historic environment and maximises opportunities to improve the public realm and green infrastructure, to the indirect benefit of heritage settings.
- The Length of deer park bank at Alderholt's Scheduled Monument (see Figure 7.2) is currently listed as being 'at risk,' although this is not related to development impacts.
- The Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan can help ensure that any development that comes forward during the plan period is appropriately located and sensitive to the historic setting of the designated and undesignated heritage assets within the area, in terms of design and layout. Further, the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan

provides an opportunity to improve understanding of the key characteristics and unique history of this area, and identify the significance associated with different heritage assets and their settings.

Land, soil, and water resources

- Development through the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to lead to the loss of productive (Grade 3a) agricultural land. However, the extent of high-quality agricultural land in the neighbourhood plan area is currently uncertain (Grade 3 has the potential to be 3a or 3b). Furthermore, it is considered that neighbourhood plans should seek to prioritise development on brownfield land in line with national policy, where this land is available (though it is noted there are not many brownfield options in the neighbourhood plan area).
- Development through the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan should be sensitive to the NVZ and SPZ that intersects the entirety of the neighbourhood plan area. However, given the scale of these designations, development likely to be proposed through the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to significant impact these zones (other than in relation to the nutrient issues related to the River Avon, covered under the biodiversity theme).
- As shown in Figure 8.3, the neighbourhood plan area is underlain by bedrock and superficial sand Mineral Resource Blocks. As such, any development through the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan should refer to Policy AS1 within the Dorset Mineral Strategy (see Table 8.1) on the provision and protection of sand and gravel. There is also significant sand and gravel extraction proposed just outside of the neighbourhood plan area within Hampshire (Midgham Farm site) although this proposal is still at draft stage and has yet to be confirmed.
- All three watercourses in the neighbourhood plan have had varying ecological conditions over the years and have all received a failed chemical status due to the presence of hazardous chemicals in the water.

Landscape

- It will be important that the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect and enhance the local landscape in future development, including its coherence and characteristics. This is likely to be delivered through an appropriate spatial strategy and requirement for suitable design and layout in line with higher level policy.
- Although development within the neighbourhood plan area will not have direct impacts on the adjacent AONB, the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan should have regard to its setting, and to the aims and objectives of the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan, particularly in relation to the obstruction of key views into this designation (see Policy PT11 and PT16).

Transportation and movement

- Car use in the neighbourhood plan area is significantly higher than the district, region, and country. Given the rural nature of the neighbourhood plan area, and limited access to sustainable transport, Alderholt will likely continue the reliance on the private vehicle for travel.

- There are concerns regarding the suitability of the current highway network to accommodate a significant level of traffic growth without improvements. The B3078 is designated as a 'Traffic Sensitive Street', due to the level of traffic at peak periods and likelihood that roadworks would cause delays and disruption to road uses during peak periods.
- Sustainable transport in Alderholt is poor, bus services are relatively infrequent, and there are no railway stations located in the vicinity of the neighbourhood plan area, and no safe cycle routes identified. Whilst the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to encourage improvements to current bus services and encourage improvements to the PRow network, this is unlikely to make a significant difference to the modal split and reliance on the private car.

Scoping consultation responses

The draft SEA scoping report was shared with the Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England, and Dorset Council for formal consultation earlier in 2023. The responses received and how they have been addressed are presented overleaf.

Table AB.1: SEA scoping consultation responses

Consultee	Consultation response summary	AECOM response
Environment Agency	<p>We agree 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. We are in general agreement with the proposed scope, the listed key evidence and the proposed objectives. We can also offer the following advice in relation to the key environmental constraints to be considered.</p> <p>Biodiversity and River Water Quality</p> <p>We agree with the conclusions in the Scoping Report with respect to biodiversity and geodiversity, with particular emphasis on protecting and enhancing the river Avon SAC. We recommend that the SEA considers the recommendations of the South West 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.</p> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain is already established in the National Planning Policy Framework 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 an as yet unconfirmed date, expected to be in November 2023. As 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 our planning decisions and strategic planning. Your plan should consider opportunities for how these requirements can be met and preferably where your plan can go beyond any minimum requirements to deliver wider environmental net gains.</p> <p>Flood Risk & Climate Change</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan has areas of flood zone 2 and 3, although we note the Scoping Report has identified these areas as being confined to relatively small areas outside of the main settlement. Your plan should ensure that any proposed development is steered away from areas at increased risk of flooding to areas at the lowest risk. The Local Authority’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Plans forms the evidence base to determine the level of flood risk in this area.</p>	<p>Comments noted. Advice for plan making will be considered by the Parish Council.</p> <p>The SEA will give consideration to the South West River Basin Management Plan, and will provide a high level assessment of the potential impacts of the neighbourhood plan on the River Avon.</p>

Consultee**Consultation response summary****AECOM response**

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.

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

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.

SPZs/Aquifers

Your plan includes areas which are located on Source Protection Zones, which are groundwater resources that are particularly sensitive to contamination. These should be considered within your 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 development proposals should be considered with reference to our Groundwater Protection guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater-protection>.

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 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:

Consultee	Consultation response summary	AECOM response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>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.</p> <p>Drainage and wastewater infrastructure</p> <p>Where your plan proposes development or promotes growth, we recommend early consultation with [insert water company]. Your 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.</p> <p>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 with alternative methods of disposal.</p>	
<p>Historic England</p>	<p>Our last involvement with this Plan was in 2019 when we offered initial generic advice at the time of the area’s designation.</p> <p>We note from the Scoping Report that the community has ambitions to allocate site(s) for development. This informed the decision that a full SEA would be required. We appreciate that if the decision is taken that a full SEA is required we do not need to be consulted on a Screening Opinion. But at present we have no information on the site(s) which the Plan might be contemplating for development and the particular heritage considerations which may be affected and which informed that SEA decision.</p> <p>While the level and nature of development aspired to may be modest the area possesses important heritage assets whose significance could well be affected and inadvertently underestimated by the sites being considered. I attach two letters of advice on development</p>	<p>Comments and advice noted.</p>

Consultee	Consultation response summary	AECOM response
	<p>proposals in the area we have issued in recent months as illustrations of the subtleties and sensitivities involved (open as read only).</p> <p>Otherwise, we are pleased to see reference to our guidance on relevant considerations in the preparation of the Plan and would encourage their explicit application in the preparation of the Plan and the SEA. To these we would recommend the addition of our guidance on Site Allocations which is as applicable to Neighbourhood Plans as to Local Plans and can be found at https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/</p>	
Natural England	<p>The SEA if you consider one is required should also consider recreational impacts on the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar which is less than 13.8km away from the NP area.</p> <p>The SEA should also 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 such commitments be delivered in the plan area.</p> <p>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 recognised as under serious water stress.</p>	<p>Comments noted. The SEA will consider recreational impacts on the European designated sites outside of the Neighbourhood Area, along with nationally set targets such as the 30 x 30 target.</p> <p>The SEA will also pay due regard to the serious water stress of the area. This SEA recognises that this will be an important consideration for plan making.</p>
Dorset Council	<p>The issue of recreational pressure upon the New Forest European Site is not included in the report, which is understandable since it is an emerging issue. However, it is likely to be a matter which must be addressed through the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>As some background to the issue, a study by Footprint Ecology in 2019 (Recreation Use of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar: Impacts of Recreation and Potential Mitigation Approaches (Ref: 499); Footprint Ecology (2019)) found that high footfall may be affecting the breeding success of SPA birds and resulting in adverse effects upon the New Forest SAC and Ramsar habitats through impacts including:</p>	<p>Comments noted. Key issues updated to include the issue of recreational pressure upon European Sites.</p> <p>Impact of air quality upon both the Dorset Heaths and New Forest European Sites will be considered through the HRA, the findings of which will inform the SEA.</p>

Consultee	Consultation response summary	AECOM response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance to birds: leading to avoidance of breeding habitat, physiological impacts, and reduced breeding success; • Fire: resulting in direct mortality, removal of breeding habitat, and long term changes to vegetation structure; • Contamination: litter; nutrient enrichment through dog fouling; pollution from dogs entering water courses; greywater from campervans; and • Trampling/wear: soil compaction, erosion, direct damage to breeding or wintering sites, expansion of path networks, churning up sediment in water bodies. <p>The studies undertaken by Footprint Ecology show that residential development within 13.8km of the New Forest European Site will result in a likely significant effect upon the New Forest European Site.</p> <p>However, a further report by Footprint Ecology in 2022 (Visitor use of the New Forest by residents of Dorset and implications for the Dorset Local Plan (ref: 658); Footprint Ecology (2022)) considered the interaction between the recreational impact issues at the Dorset Heaths and New Forest, and found that the mitigation provided through the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework, such as Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and Heathland Infrastructure Projects (HIPS), are sufficient to address the impacts upon the New Forest European Site where there is overlap in the 13.8km New Forest buffer zone and the 400m-5km Dorset Heathland buffer zone.</p> <p>Given that the New Forest European site is approx. 3km to the east of the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan area, and therefore within the 13.8km area around the New Forest and the 400,-5km Dorset Heaths buffer zone, the recreational pressure issue is relevant to future development in Alderholt. I think the suggested Sustainability Objective, which is to “Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity”, and the supporting questions, which include “protect and enhance internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites...?”, are sufficiently broad to cover this issue. However, I would suggest including this issue under the Key Issues section which commences at para 4.9 of the SEA Scoping Report to ensure that the issue is given full consideration through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Another issue which you may want to consider including in the SEA scoping report is the impact of air quality upon both the Dorset Heaths and New Forest European Sites.</p>	

Consultee

Consultation response summary

AECOM response

Air pollution from the additional exhaust emissions from extra traffic from new development may affect the condition of both European sites as a result of the deposition of airborne nitrogen-based pollutants causing the nutrient enrichment of soils, affecting particularly the grassland and heathland habitats within which typically require a low nutrient environment. This nutrient enrichment encourages faster growing plants to outcompete the heathland and grassland plant communities. It may also result in the toxic contamination of plant species.

The SEA scopes out the issue of Air Quality, partly given the proximity of AQMAs to the Neighbourhood Plan Area, which I support. The air quality issues highlighted above are probably best dealt with in Chapter 4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity rather than Chapter 3: Air Quality given that the receptor is ecological rather than human health, but I will leave this to your judgement.

Once again, the Sustainability Framework is probably sufficient to address the issue, through the Sustainability Objective for Biodiversity and Geodiversity, but you may want to include mention of this in the Key Issues part of the chapter. Furthermore, reference to the adopted Dorset Heathlands Interim Air Quality Strategy 2020-25 SPD, which aims to provide an approach to addressing the adverse effects of airborne nitrogen upon the Dorset Heathlands European Site, in the Policy Context section of the report (in Table 2.1) may be beneficial for completeness.

Overall the SEA Scoping Report is of a really high quality and I have no doubt that it provides a comprehensive Sustainability Framework upon which to assess the sustainability impacts associated with the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan.

Appendix C Assessment of reasonable alternative site options

This appendix presents the detailed findings of the appraisal of nine individual site options within the neighbourhood area, as established within Chapter 4 of the main report. These are set out below.

- Site 002: Alderholt Nursery
- Site 004: Cross Farm
- Site 006a: Paddock south of Daggons Road
- Site 007a: Land south of Ringwood Road
- Site 007b: Land west of Hilbury Road
- Site 009: Land south of Blackwater Grove
- Site 013: Presseys Corner
- Site 016a: Stroud Firs
- Site 020: Land at Blackwater House

The location of these sites are presented in Figure 4.1 of this report.

Methodology

For each of the site options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.2) as a methodological framework. Green shading is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst red shading is used to indicate significant negative effects, however this is also stated in the text. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted. Uncertainty is noted with grey shading.

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 site option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best.

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

Biodiversity and geodiversity									
Options	Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Rank	1	3	2	4	4	2	3	5	2
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>In terms of European designated sites, all sites are within the 5km Dorset Heathland SPA/SAC/Ramsar buffer. Natural England consider that within this area (400m -5km buffer zone) from a heathland site, the effect of residential development is less marked but still likely to be significant and is considered to be an in-combination effect with existing development across the southwest, so would need to contribute towards SANG provision. However, mitigation in these areas is possible, through the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2015 -2020 SPD, and in these instances residential development may be permitted, for example through the delivery of SANG. As all sites fall within the buffer zone, all sites perform equally in this respect, with uncertainty concluded in relation to significance of effects.</p> <p>Only three sites are constrained by nationally designated biodiversity sites, with Sites 007a, 007b and 009 falling within Cranbourne Chase SSSI IRZ for the type of development being proposed (50 residential units or above). Development in the area adjacent to the SSSI could lead to negative effects on biodiversity, for example through the loss or fragmentation of habitats, which reduces connectivity. Consultation with Natural England will be required if these sites are allocated for development.</p> <p>In terms of locally designated sites, Site 013 is constrained, being located adjacent to a SINC which includes priority habitat woodland. Priority habitat woodland is present throughout the Neighbourhood Area, within Site 016a and adjacent to Site 004. Deciduous Woodland covers the majority of Site 016a, and therefore development would likely lead to significant habitat loss. While not as significant of a constraint to development, the habitat along the boundary of Site 004 could be disturbed by development on this site through increased noise and light pollution.</p> <p>While not designated priority habitat, Sites 006a, 009 and 020 all hold local biodiversity value, with vegetation present on the site that should be retained and enhanced as far as possible to avoid biodiversity impacts and to help deliver biodiversity connectivity and net gains.</p> <p>The majority of sites (all except Site 002 and 007b), are also seen to be suitable for habitat creation and expansion by Natural England, as they overlap with Network Enhancement Zone 1 or areas of Network Expansion Zone, which surround the built up area of the village. According to guidance provided by Natural England, Network Enhancement Zones are land that connects existing patches of primary and associated habitats that is likely to be suitable for habitat creation, and Network Expansion Zones include land outside of the Network Enhancement Zones that are potentially suitable for expanding, linking and / or joining networks across the landscape. As such, development at these sites should focus on expanding and joining up existing habitat patches and improving biodiversity connectivity.</p> <p>While it is considered that all sites will be required to deliver minimum 10% net gain in line with emerging national policy, merit is given to larger sites 007a and 007b, and the increased opportunity to deliver biodiversity improvements and enhancements that are associated with strategic scale development /masterplanning. However a level of uncertainty clearly exists at this stage.</p> <p>Overall, Site 016a is worst performing as is almost wholly made up of valued biodiversity, including a significant area of priority habitat woodland. Sites 007a, 007b and 009 are also considered to perform poorly against other sites as have the potentially to adversely impact on nationally designated Cranbourne Chase SSSI. Site 009 also holds local biodiversity value, and does not present the strategic scale opportunities Sites 007a and 007b do, therefore is worst performing of the three. Site 013 performs</p>								

	less well as is constrained by an adjacent SINC, and Site 004 is similarly constrained by adjacent priority habitat. Sites 006a and 020 perform reasonably, but all hold local biodiversity value that could be lost or damaged as a result of development. Site 002 is therefore best performing as is not constrained by designated biodiversity sites, habitats or local biodiversity /ecological features.
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Climate change and flood risk									
Options	Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Rank	1	4	1	1	2	1	1	4	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>Development of all sites will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions, linked to the construction phase of development, the increase in the built footprint of Weymouth, as well as an intensification of uses. As the scale of development increases (i.e. housing capacity), it is considered that so does the potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Larger sites (sites 007a and 007b) are therefore likely to lead to effects of greatest significant in this respect, with increasing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions contributing to local climate change impacts. This could further impact other themes included under the SEA framework, community wellbeing (through potential impacts on health linked to emissions) and biodiversity and geodiversity (through potential impacts on habitats, species, and designated sites). However conversely, it is recognised that Site 007a and 007b present economies of scale, being more likely to deliver low carbon/ renewable energy infrastructure than smaller-scale proposals.</p> <p>Regarding flood risk, all sites fall within Flood Zone 1 and therefore are at low risk of fluvial flooding. In terms of surface water flooding, most sites are similarly not constrained. The exceptions to this are sites 016a and 004 which include areas at medium/ high risk of flooding; Site 020 which includes a small area of high risk of flooding, and Site 007b which has areas at medium risk of flooding.</p> <p>It is noted that groundwater flooding is an issue in the Neighbourhood Area, and should be investigated for all sites to inform the development of a sustainable drainage strategy.</p> <p>Overall, given any level of growth in Alderholt will lead to an increase in CO2 emissions, uncertain effects are concluded for all sites for this SEA theme. The extent to which the options have the potential to support climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts depends on the specific location, design, layout and scale of development, and the inclusion of features to support climate resilience. Options are therefore ranked by flood risk, given the uncertainty in relation to meeting climate mitigation objectives.</p>								

Community wellbeing									
Options	Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Rank	2	3	1	4	4	2	3	5	2
Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes - negative	Yes - positive
Discussion	<p>All sites perform well by delivering homes to meet local needs. Some sites perform better than others in this respect, with larger sites such as Site 5 and 6 exceeding the housing requirement while smaller sites 002, 004, 006a, 007a, 013 and 016a would make a partial contribution towards the housing requirement, if delivered in isolation.</p> <p>Larger sites 009 and 020, and strategic sites 007a and 007b are considered to be of a scale to deliver considerable affordable housing. With smaller sites 002, 004 and 016a also passing the threshold but delivering a lower level of affordable homes than sites mentioned above. Furthermore, the partial brownfield nature of Site 002 may impact viability to deliver 35% affordable housing in line with local policy. The smallest sites 006a and 013 are worst performing in this respect, being just marginally above the threshold to deliver affordable housing with no known viability concerns.</p> <p>Local amenities include the shop, school, pub and recreation ground. These are within short walking distance of sites located on the west of the settlement; notably site 002, 006a, 009, and 020. Sites to the east of the settlement are less well connected to the village centre (namely sites 004, 007b and 013). Given the size of site 009, it is considered that development to the east, furthest away from the existing settlement will be less well connected to the village centre; although the northern extent of the site is considered well connected.</p> <p>It is noted that Site 016a is being considered as being partially designated as a LGS in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. The site therefore performs poorly in relation to community objectives, as development of the site for housing would lead to loss of this locally valued recreational resource.</p> <p>Sites 004, 006a, 007a, 007b and 013 have been identified as having the potential to deliver small scale employment alongside new homes, and therefore perform positively in terms of providing access to employment opportunities and supporting self-containment in the village.</p> <p>As set out above, the delivery of a strategic scale site such as Site 007a or 007b could deliver a level of infrastructure alongside housing and employment proposed at these sites. This could support the sustainable development of the village and would be underpin by detailed masterplanning to deliver new homes that are connected and attractive, supported by green infrastructure and of high-quality design. However, at this early stage any positive effects in this respect are uncertain.</p> <p>Overall, strategic sites 007a and 007b are best performing in terms of delivering significant new homes, including affordable homes to meet local needs. However, at this early stage it is uncertain what would be delivered alongside new homes and employment at these sites, and what the residual effects would be on the village settlement. It is noted that these sites could be seen to be too large in the context of the village, and that their delivery might not best meet Neighbourhood Plan objectives. This includes protecting the strong sense of community, and Identifying suitable sites for the level of development required; i.e., not exceeding this requirement. Furthermore,</p>								

	<p>the delivery of associated infrastructure is unknown at this stage, and the capacity of Alderholt's services and facilities, road and sustainable transport network are all limited/ constrained.</p> <p>The delivery of smaller sites that are in keeping with the scale of the existing village, that have reasonable access to the village centre (such as site 002, 006a, 009 and 020) are arguably better performing at this stage (i.e. without knowing further details of the larger sites). However some smaller sites are unable to meet local housing needs in isolation and the Parish Council may need to consider delivering a combination of sites to meet the requirement of circa 50 homes. Sites that also include employment perform most positively overall, as would meet the Neighbourhood Plan's employment growth objectives and address identified community needs.</p>
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Historic environment									
Options	Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Rank	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Discussion	None of the sites are constrained by designated historic assets, and it is otherwise difficult to rank options in terms of their potential impact upon historic environment objectives at this stage.								

Land, soil and water resources									
Options	Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Rank	1	2	2	5	4	3	2	2	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	No	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No	No	Yes - negative
Discussion	<p>All sites are greenfield in nature, with the exception of Site 002 which is partially brownfield. Reusing a partially previously developed site is anticipated to lead to positive effects in terms of protecting natural resources, and therefore Site 1 is ranked most positively of the options.</p> <p>The indicative Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) for the south west region provided by Natural England identifies that Sites 002, 007a, and 007b fall within Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' ALC, Sites 004, 006a, 009, 013, 016a and 020 fall within Grade 4 'Poor' ALC, and Site 020 falls within Grade 5 'Very Poor' ALC. Sites falling within</p>								

	<p>higher quality ALC are considered worst performing as are most likely to lead to the loss of this important resource. However it is recognised that the data is predictive, and therefore a level of uncertainty exists without detailed site surveys.</p> <p>Development at any site should be sensitive to the NVZ and SPZ that covers the entirety of the neighbourhood plan area. All sites perform equally in this respect.</p> <p>Overall, Site 002 is best performing, being part brownfield in nature. All other options have the potential to lead to negative effects due to the loss of greenfield land, with significance increasing with the size of the site. Options are ranked by their indicative ALC grade and size (area of greenfield agricultural land lost), although it is noted that a level of uncertainty exists given the predictive data used.</p>
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Landscape									
Options	Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Rank	1	4	2	5	5	3	4	4	3
Significant effect?	No	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - negative	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>Alderholt parish is mainly rural in character. Much of the countryside within the parish (to the north and east) is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value. The South East Dorset Green Belt runs up to the southern edge of the parish, and the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) runs down to its northern edge.</p> <p>Site 002 performs well against landscape objectives, being partially brownfield, small in scale, and adjacent to existing development on Ringwood Road. While the site is south of the main settlement, it is contained within Ringwood Road, limiting impact on landscape character and setting. This is a similar case for Site 007b, which would extend the settlement south, but be contained within Ringwood Road. However, given the scale of development proposed at site 007b, this extension to the village would be significant, and would urbanise the approach to the village from the south, with the potential for significant negative effects.</p> <p>Other smaller sites 006a and 013 are likely to have more of an impact on the landscape than Site 002 given they are less connected to the main settlement; with the potential to set precedent for further growth to the west and east respectively, which could lead to urban sprawl towards Fordingbridge. Notably any further development east (Option 013) could impact on the AGLV in the longer term.</p> <p>Sites 004 and 016a on the northwestern boundary of the village fall within the AGLV and would be an extension to the village envelope. However sites are well contained by mature vegetation, with mature trees/ woodland being the land use of Site 016a. Option 004 therefore performs more positively than Option 016a as would not lead to the loss of significant mature vegetation, which contribute to the setting of the village.</p> <p>Similarly Sites 007a, 009 and 020 would extend the settlement to the west/ south of Ringwood Road, with the potential for adverse effects on village setting and views. Sites 020 and 009 are unlikely to significantly impact the landscape, with any effects likely to be localised in scale, for example impacting local views from existing residential properties. However Site 007a is larger in scale and as set out above, would significantly change the landscape and settlement pattern in this part of the village.</p>								

	<p>Furthermore development of Site 007a could set precedent for further growth to the south west, leading to urban sprawl towards the Green Belt, and loss of settlement identity.</p> <p>Overall, larger sites 007a and 007b, and sites 016a and 004 on the northern settlement edge perform less well than other smaller sites, given the potential for development to lead to urban sprawl and the likely significant change in settlement pattern. This is particularly important given the sensitivity of the wider landscape, i.e. reflecting the presence of the AONB to the north, and the AGLV. Sites 004 and 016a are most constrained in this respect, being on the northern settlement edge, however dense vegetation with Site 016a and surrounding Site 004 would likely limit long distance views. Larger sites 007a and 007b are more open in nature although further from landscape designations, while Site 013 is smaller in size but constrained by the AGLV to the east.</p> <p>It is difficult to meaningfully differentiate between site options at this stage, therefore taking a precautionary approach, Sites 007a and 007b are considered worst performing (reflecting their size and location) followed by Sites 016a and 004, with the potential to lead to adverse significant effects on the landscape. Smaller sites perform more positively, although the sensitivity of the landscape and the location of sites on the village edge could nonetheless lead to adverse effects. Site 013 is notably worst performing of the smaller sites reflective of the AGLV. Furthermore, uncertainty exists at this stage over development design and what mitigation could be achieved to lessen landscape and visual impacts.</p>
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Transportation									
Options	Site 002	Site 004	Site 006a	Site 007a	Site 007b	Site 009	Site 013	Site 016a	Site 020
Rank	1	3	2	5	5	2	4	3	1
Significant effect?	No	No	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	No	No	No	No
Discussion	<p>Sustainable transport opportunities in Alderholt are limited, and therefore it is difficult to make a meaningful distinction between site options based on their ability to support sustainable, and active travel use - i.e., while all sites are located in reasonable proximity to bus stops, local knowledge suggests these services are relatively unreliable, and there is not an easily accessible train station in or in close proximity to the village. Access to the nearest bus stop the majority of sites would rely on footpath access which is currently unsecure. If this were to be improved through development, those sites close to the village centre (Site 002, 006a, 020 and 009) could support walking or cycling to access local services and facilities. However, those remaining sites, further from the village centre, are likely to see continued reliance on the private vehicle for short journeys.</p> <p>None of the sites are served by the Public Rights of Way network, with the exception of Sites 004 and 016a which have a PRow extending through the edge of the sites towards station road. The trailway could provide a safe walking/ cycling route for residents, extending through the Neighbourhood Area north of the main settlement. Sites 004, 006a, 016a and 020 identified as having the potential to assist with delivering the Trailway project, given their location close to the old railway line. The delivery of this</p>								

	<p>project is a key objective for the Neighbourhood Plan, supporting reuse of the former railway for recreation and onward connection to Fordingbridge. It is noted that other options could support the project by securing developer contributions, however a level of uncertainty exists at this stage.</p> <p>Consideration is however given to the scale of development at sites. Larger scale sites 007a and 007b which could deliver 250 and 180 homes respectively, are likely to deliver associated infrastructure, which could include active travel and local road network improvements, connecting the site with the village centre. However the delivery of infrastructure in this respect is uncertain at this stage, and local consultation has highlighted that the highway network is considered inadequate for major traffic increases, recognising existing problems with speeding traffic.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that the development of any site for housing will lead to increased reliance on the private vehicle to an extent, notably for journeys outside of the parish for employment, education, shopping, etc. Therefore, focusing on localised journeys, it is considered that sites closest to the village centre, and that could support the Trailway are best performing. These sites are most likely to facilitate active travel uptake and modal shift, for day-to-day journeys within the village. Sites 004 and 016a perform reasonably as have a PRoW extending through the edge of the sites towards station road, however sites are relatively distant from the village centre, and it is uncertain whether this PRoW could be utilised for access to local services and facilities. Furthermore, the northern edge of the settlement location of sites 004, 013 and 016a is likely to lead to private vehicle use, connecting to the strategic network outside of Alderholt (via the A338).</p> <p>Larger sites 007a and 007b are noted for having the potential to deliver a level of infrastructure alongside new homes, which could support local transport objectives; however, uncertainty exists at this stage ahead of detailed proposals and master planning. Taking a precautionary approach and given the existing capacity issues on the local road network, large sites 007a and 007b are considered worst performing.</p>
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