

Policy E6: Coastal change management areas (CCMAs)

CCMAs, as identified on the policies map, will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

New development in coastal change management areas

New residential development (including replacement dwellings and changes in use) will not be permitted in CCMAs.

Essential infrastructure and Ministry of Defence installations may be permitted in CCMAs provided:

- a. there are clear plans to manage any impacts arising from proposed development on coastal change; and
- b. the proposed essential infrastructure will not have an adverse impact on rates of coastal change elsewhere; or
- c. any adverse impacts on rates of coastal change elsewhere are minimised with suitable mitigation.

Other development may be permitted within a CCMA where it is supported by a vulnerability assessment that can demonstrate that the development will:

- d. be safe over its planned lifetime without increasing risk to life or property, or requiring new or improved coastal defences;
- e. not prevent communities from sustainably responding to the impacts of climate change;
- f. not restrict natural processes from responding to the impacts of climate change; and
- g. not affect the natural balance and stability of the coastline, or the rate of change to the shoreline elsewhere.

Replacement or relocation of existing development at risk from coastal change

Applications to replace existing development within a CCMA or relocate development elsewhere outside a CCMA, would be directed firstly to suitable sites within or adjacent to an existing settlement. Where it can be demonstrated that no suitable sites are available within or adjacent to an existing settlement, development may be granted elsewhere in Purbeck in exception to other policies in the Purbeck Local Plan, provided:

- h. the existing development in the CCMA is lawful;
- i. from the date of the planning application the applicant can supply evidence showing that the existing development is likely to be at risk from coastal change over the next 20 years;
- j. the site for the proposed replacement development is outside the CCMA identified in the Policies Map;
- k. the proposed replacement development will be used in the same way as the existing development;
- l. any proposed buildings or hardstandings are not materially larger than the size of any existing buildings or hardstandings in the CCMA;
- m. the type, scale or location of the proposed development is consistent with policies to protect areas or assets of particular importance; and
- n. the applicant provides details of a suitable site restoration scheme for the existing development in the CCMA.

Conserve and enhance Purbeck's natural habitat, biodiversity and geodiversity

- 86.** Purbeck includes some of the most special and heavily protected environments in the country. It has a wealth of biodiversity and geodiversity of international, European and national importance. Maintaining and enhancing a well-connected and healthy network of biodiversity assets is an integral part of sustainable development. New development has an important role to play in reversing biodiversity declines, and provides opportunities to secure a 'net gain' in biodiversity value.

Protected habitats

- 87.** In Purbeck, Sites of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI), the Dorset Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), Dorset heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site, Poole Harbour Ramsar site, St Alban's Head to Durlston Head and Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SACs and Poole Harbour SPA are key sites afforded statutory protection through national regulations, legislation and where relevant, European law. A number of additional designations next to, or potentially affected by, development in Purbeck is of relevance when considering direct and in-combination effects of development in the area.
- 88.** As the population grows, additional pressure is placed on sensitive habitats, which has the potential to cause an adverse effect on the protected species that live there. The Council is required by law to ensure that new development

does not have an adverse impact on important areas of nature conservation. The Council is also the competent authority under the Habitats Regulations and is advised by Natural England on how to fulfil these duties. Policies and proposals for development in the Purbeck Local Plan identified as having potential significant effects upon internationally designated sites have therefore been assessed through Habitats Regulations Assessment including Appropriate Assessment.

St Alban's Head to Durlston Head and Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SACs

89. The Dorset coastline is a World Heritage Site and the two SACs form a single unit of cliffed coastline some 40km in length. The cliffs support two internationally important habitats: the vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts and the semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland faces. A number of rare species are associated with the grassland. The HRA identifies that there is potential risk from increased recreation, but visits from new development will be a very small part of the already significant visitor pressure and the local authority should hold a watching brief.

Dorset Heathlands

90. Evidence considered through the Habitats Regulations Assessment including appropriate assessment demonstrates that the Dorset Heaths are under significant pressure from development. Natural England supports the findings of the HRA that adverse impacts upon the heathland arise from a range of urban affects, including harm caused by disturbance and predation by domestic pets and disturbance by visitors, and equestrian-related development.
91. Additional residential, tourist and equestrian development in close proximity to designated heathland increases such recreational pressures and has been identified as having a significant adverse effect. The majority of visitors to the heathland live within 5km of the site with particular direct pressure arising from new homes within 400m of designated heathland. The 5km zone includes all of Purbeck except for a small stretch of coastline and a small pocket of land in the north of the area.
92. The principle of the heathland buffer areas and a detailed strategy for mitigation are set out more fully within the Dorset Heathland Planning Framework SPD. The approach to mitigation falls into two main areas - managing and encouraging appropriate behaviour when visiting heathland sites and providing alternative areas of green space for recreation. Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) provide new areas of public open space that are convenient and dog friendly providing an alternative to heathland. The overarching aim of the provision of SANGs is to divert visitor pressure to ensure that there is no net increase in recreation pressure on internationally protected heathland.
93. The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-2025 SPD gives guidance on the type, scale and delivery of heathland infrastructure projects (including

SANG) and how these and strategic access management and monitoring will be secured. Other development proposals will be considered on a site by site basis and be subject to appropriate assessment in line with the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and/or any equivalent relevant legislation or regulations. The proposals may need to provide site specific mitigation.

94. The Council's 'Interim Mitigation Strategy for Heathland Habitat Sites (2018/19 to 2023/24)' and 'Annual update on interim mitigation projects' (November 2022) outline its approach to the delivery of strategic (i.e. heathland infrastructure projects for development which does not deliver site specific mitigation as part of the proposals) heathland infrastructure projects for the Purbeck area up to the date when the council expects to adopt the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan. The Council's approach identifies several 'priority' mitigation projects for delivery, which between them are estimated to have capacity to mitigate for around 680 new homes. The table below summarises the estimated mitigation capacity from each of the 'priority' mitigation projects.

Priority mitigation project	Estimated mitigation capacity expressed in numbers of homes
Wild Woodbury Heathland Infrastructure Project, Bere Regis	Around 430 homes
Extension to French's Farm SANG, Upton	Around 150 homes
Securing excess mitigation capacity from Flowers Drove SANG, Lytchett Matravers	Around 100 homes

95. The Council will monitor planning permissions for development within the 5km area around Dorset Heaths and progress on the delivery of the priority mitigation projects identified above. In circumstances, where there is an anticipated deficit in the quantities of mitigation for homes that are expected to be delivered during the interim period, the Council will seek to develop and deliver further heathland infrastructure projects as required.
96. Air quality monitoring shows that heathlands are exceeding the critical loads for pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and ammonia resulting from multiple sources including vehicle emissions. New housing and other developments can result in additional traffic and further deterioration of the protected sites. An interim air quality mitigation strategy will cover the period to 2025 and provide confidence that short term growth can be achieved without adverse effects on site integrity from air pollution. As necessary, a longer term approach will be established to address the cumulative impacts of development on air quality as part of the new Dorset Council Local Plan

supported by additional evidence such as traffic modelling and air quality monitoring.

Poole Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA)

- 97.** Poole Harbour provides a resource for a variety of local businesses and port activities. The quality of the natural environment in Dorset makes it an attractive place to live, work and for recreation and leisure. However, increasing nitrogen and phosphorus levels from wastewater and agricultural processes are contributing to the growth of algal mats in the harbour, restricting the growth, distribution and variety of important food available for wading birds protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and European law and smothering estuarine habitats. Evidence shows that there are two particular pressures on the harbour: nutrient pollution; and recreational issues.
- 98.** Most of the nutrient load in Poole Harbour arises from agricultural activity, but a proportion (approximately 15%) is generated from wastewater arising from urban areas. Currently there is concern over raised levels of both nitrogen and phosphorus and hence both phosphorus and nitrogen levels need to be reduced. However, the science suggests that if phosphorus levels within the harbour are reduced to below a threshold level¹ the need for further reductions in phosphorus would not be necessary.
- 99.** The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 includes provision for the Secretary of State to require wastewater treatment works within nutrient sensitive catchments to be upgraded to achieve the nutrient pollution standard. The legal requirement is expected to apply to sufficient wastewater treatment works within the Poole harbour catchment to achieve a threshold level, thereby removing the need for development specific phosphorus mitigation during the Plan period.
- 100.** In planning for development that would result in an increase in nutrient loading within the Poole Harbour catchment, applicants will need to ensure that any additional nutrient loading arising from development to Poole Harbour is in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, or any equivalent relevant legislation or regulations.
- 101.** Where a development would increase the nutrient loading within the Poole Harbour catchment and if the Regulations (or any equivalent legislation) require or necessitate nutrient neutrality, it will be the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that this would be achieved. Such circumstances may include mitigation in the form of on-site measures, by working with third parties to secure nutrient mitigation or by working with the Council to secure nutrient mitigation. Where nutrient mitigation proposals are required, they will need to be agreed with the Council prior to planning permission being given

¹ Poole Harbour Consent Order Technical Investigation and Recommendations, Results and recommendations from the schedule of work under High Court of Justice Consent Order (CO/3029/2015) 11 February 2021

for the development and the council will need to have some degree of certainty over the delivery and maintenance of the mitigation for the lifetime of the development proposed. The amount of additional nutrient load arising from the development, and therefore the amount of mitigation required, will need to be assessed and evidenced with detailed calculations using a robust methodology.

- 102.** The joint Nitrogen Reduction in Poole Harbour Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2017, sets out an approach to calculating nitrogen loads from development and to securing the necessary mitigation. Since this was adopted, Natural England have provided new direction around calculating nutrient load, necessitating a review of the SPD. In the interim, whilst this review is being undertaken, the Poole Harbour nutrient calculator² should be used to calculate the nutrient loading arising from residential development.
- 103.** Recreational pressures can also have a harmful effect on Poole Harbour. More activity within the harbour and on the shoreline, through activities like boating and dog walking, can disturb protected birds. The Council has adopted Poole Harbour Recreation 2019-2024 Supplementary Planning Document. This SPD provides detailed guidance on potential mitigation for development and projects to mitigate potential harm to Poole Harbour.
- 104.** The Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan (2006), supported by the Poole Harbour Steering Group of which the Council is a member, considers ways of maintaining sustainable levels of economic and social activity within the harbour and its hinterland, while protecting its natural environment.
- 105.** In planning for development that would result in an increase in nutrient loading within the Poole Harbour catchment, applicants will need to ensure that any additional nutrient loading arising from development to Poole Harbour is in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, or any equivalent relevant legislation or regulations.
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110. The Recreation in Poole Harbour SPD is intended to facilitate small developments coming forward which individually would be unable to provide sufficient mitigation measures over the necessary timescale.

Studland to Portland Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

111. This site lies off the Dorset coast and contains numerous areas of reef rich in geological variety and biological diversity. Features of particular interest within the Studland Bay to Ringstead Bay area include a series of limestone ledges (up to 15m across) protruding from shelly gravel at Worbarrow Bay, which support a rich sponge and sea fan community; dense brittlestar beds (*Ophiothrix fragilis*) on shale reefs extending from Kimmeridge; a unique reef feature, known as St Albans ledge, extending out over 10km offshore and subject to strong tidal action; and an area of large limestone blocks known as the “seabed waves”. The habitat and associated species are susceptible to a range of activities.
112. The Council's remit covers the shore down to mean high water mark, only a small part of the marine SAC. Natural England will be consulted on any proposals that may impact on the reefs and associated species in the Studland to Portland Marine SAC.

Solent and Dorset Coast SPA

113. The Solent and Dorset Coast SPA has been designated to protect important foraging areas at sea used by the protected birds from colonies within adjacent, already classified SPAs, including common tern, sandwich tern and little tern. The site extends from the Isle of Purbeck in the west to Bognor Regis in

² As part of its direction on the nutrient pollution issue (March 2022) Natural England have prepared a 'Poole Harbour nutrient budget calculator'. The calculator is published on the council's website

the east, following the coastline on either side to the Isle of Wight and into Southampton Water. Given the off-shore nature of this SPA the Council is unlikely to be called upon to make any planning decisions related to this SPA.

Corfe Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (part of the Dorset Heaths SAC and Heathlands Ramsar)

- 114.** Corfe Common is a designated SAC, listed Ramsar site and SSSI, but not a SPA. Its protected wetland and grassland habitats are home to the southern damselfly and the 400m heathland consultation area does not automatically exclude residential development as indicated in Policy E8(a) for all other heathlands. All development within a 400m consultation area will be considered on a site by site basis by Natural England. Residential applications may be acceptable if requirement for significant effects on Corfe Common can be avoided/mitigated Development within 5km of Corfe Common are subject to the same mitigation requirements for impacts on heathlands in general.