

Strategic Environmental Assessment of Arne Neighbourhood Plan

‘Non-technical summary and recommendations from
environmental report’

Prepared by Dorset Council on behalf of Arne Parish Council, April 2019

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Non-technical summary

What is a strategic environmental assessment?

1. A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) has been completed as part of the process of preparing the Arne Neighbourhood Plan. Groups or organisations preparing certain types of plan are required to complete an SEA under European Regulations. The SEA process has allowed Arne Parish Council to use a set of sustainability objectives (developed in consultation with interested parties) to assess environmental effects arising from the plan. The assessment has allowed the parish council to identify adverse environmental and socio-economic effects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan, to explore environmental effects of alternative approaches and develop the best approach to securing improvements to the environmental quality of the area and residents quality of life.

What is the Arne Neighbourhood Plan?

2. The Arne Neighbourhood Plan is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The plan is being prepared in the context of the existing Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 (2012) and the emerging Purbeck Local Plan (2018 – 2034). Consultation has been completed on a pre-submission draft of the neighbourhood plan between December 2018 and January 2019.

Purpose of this Environmental Report

3. This Environmental Report has been prepared for consultation in advance of submission of the neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood plan was screened as needing an SEA because of the likely significant effects of the plan on internationally protected Dorset Heathlands and Poole Harbour. An SEA scoping report was prepared in August 2016 and includes information about the Neighbourhood Plan area's environment and community.
4. The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:
 - identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Arne Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives; and
 - provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.
5. The Environmental Report contains:
 - an outline of the contents and main objectives of the Arne 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;
 - the SEA Framework of objectives against which the Arne Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed;

- the appraisal of alternative approaches for the Arne Neighbourhood Plan;
- the likely significant environmental effects of the Arne Neighbourhood Plan;
- the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the Arne Neighbourhood Plan; and
- the next steps for the Arne Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying SEA process.

Assessment of the current (pre-submission publication) version of the Arne Neighbourhood Plan

6. Some of the key aims of the Arne Neighbourhood plan are to deliver the numbers and types of homes needed by the local community whilst conserving the appearance and character of natural and historic environment. The plan outlines a flexible strategy to meeting these needs through a criteria based policy, requiring an appropriate mix of different house types/tenures and supporting specially designed housing for the elderly. The plan also seeks to support the local community by safeguarding key services and facilities, supporting appropriate economic development and maintaining the quality of the built and natural environment.
7. A set of SEA objectives were developed after completing the scoping exercise, taking account of the neighbourhood plan area characteristics and the requirements in other plans and programmes.
8. After completing an assessment of the neighbourhood plans policies and objectives against SEA objectives that were developed for this assessment it was concluded that only those policies relating to delivering new homes in the neighbourhood plan area were likely to have significant environmental effects on Dorset Heathlands and Poole Harbour. Moreover, The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework and Nitrates in Poole Harbour SPD already provide a mechanism for mitigating the harmful effects of the plan on these protected habitats.

Assessment of alternative approaches to the Arne Neighbourhood Plan

9. This environmental report outlines four potential alternative approaches to meet the objectives of Arne's Neighbourhood Plan and considers the significance of environmental effects arising from these alternatives.
10. The alternatives include:
 - the housing strategy in the Arne Neighbourhood Plan pre-submission draft;
 - relying on the Purbeck District Plan Part 1 (2012) to provide the framework that will allow the new homes needed by the local community to be delivered;
 - relying on the emerging Purbeck Local Plan (2018 – 2034) to provide the framework that will allow the new homes needed by the local community to be delivered; and
 - specifically allocating land to meet the local communities housing needs.
11. The assessment found that each alternative was likely to have similar significant effects on protected Dorset Heathlands and Poole Harbour as the strategy in the

Neighbourhood Plan. As with the strategy in the plan there is an opportunity to mitigate these effects.

Next steps

12. Next steps will involve the plan steering group taking account of the findings in this report, they will then consider whether the plan should be altered due to the findings of this report, before publishing the environmental report for consultation. After taking account of consultation responses and considering changes to the neighbourhood plan and this environmental report, the plan steering group will submit their neighbourhood plan, and supporting documents, for examination.

Recommendations from environmental report

13. The Arne Neighbourhood Plan pre-submission draft will lead to positive effects to 'Material Assets, Population and Human Health' SEA sub theme. The land use policies relating to housing in the plan create the opportunity to deliver further homes that will help meet the local housing need and create a context that will support economic growth. The criteria based small sites policy in the neighbourhood plan housing strategy provides a flexible approach that allows the landscape and cultural heritage assets to be taken into consideration in decision making on individual applications. The policy criteria reflect local preferences and the desire for high quality development for the local community.
14. The Arne Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant effects on 'Biodiversity, Geology, Flora and Fauna' assets. The effects are not likely to be more significant than alternatives and other plans provide a mechanism for mitigating the adverse effects on European sites. The specific limits on the numbers of new homes permitted on small sites in the neighbourhood plan provide a further safeguard on preventing residential development from adversely affecting the integrity of European sites.
15. The Arne Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have some effect on soil, water, air and climatic assets. The scale of development envisaged in the neighbourhood plan, and drafting of planning policies, will limit the significance of these effects.
16. The alternatives assessed through this environmental report are also likely to have significant effects on European sites and similar positive effects in meeting the local community's needs. The strategy that involves allocating specific sites provides greater certainty that local housing needs can be addressed, but as a consequence is less flexible than the criteria based small sites policies in the neighbourhood plan and emerging local plan.
17. Environmental considerations have been taken into consideration when preparing the neighbourhood plan and the assessments in this report demonstrate that the strategy in the neighbourhood plan is appropriate and likely to encourage sustainable patterns of development.