

Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment
Screening Report

September 2018

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether or not the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) through a process known as SEA screening.

This report provides details of the proposed Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan and explains the legislative background to SEA screening, before providing an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan.

This report meets the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment and the Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations (2004).

2. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment ('SEA Directive') introduces the need to undertake a strategic environmental assessment ('SEA') during the development of some plans and programmes. The main purpose of SEA, according to Article 1 of the SEA Directive, is:

“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

The SEA Directive is transcribed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which establishes the requirement to undertake a sustainability appraisal ('SA') for some documents used for planning purposes. The SA process incorporates the requirement for SEA, but typically has a broader scope and considers the social and economic issues in addition to the environmental effects.

The requirement to undertake an SA of supplementary planning documents (SPD) was removed by the Planning Act 2008. However, the need to establish whether the planning document requires an SEA, through the SEA Directive, remains.

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive explain which plans and programmes require SEA. The Government's Planning Practice Guidance suggests that an SPD will only require an SEA “in exceptional circumstances...if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan”.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 amends the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 to provide clarification on the SEA related documents which must be submitted alongside neighbourhood planning proposals. Regulation 2(4) of the amendment regulations 2015 adds to the list of documents that a neighbourhood planning group must submit to a local planning authority with a proposal for a neighbourhood plan, which is presented in regulation 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. The additional document which must be submitted is either an environmental report, should an SEA be required, or a statement of reasons why an environmental assessment is not required.

3. THE SUTTON POYNTZ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUTTON POYNTZ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan occupies an area of approximately 193ha, comprising a small rural community of 217 households and an estimated 456 inhabitants¹.

The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area and surrounding areas include a number of environmental designations, some of which are of international importance, indicating the importance and sensitivity of the plan area from an environmental perspective (Figure 3.1).

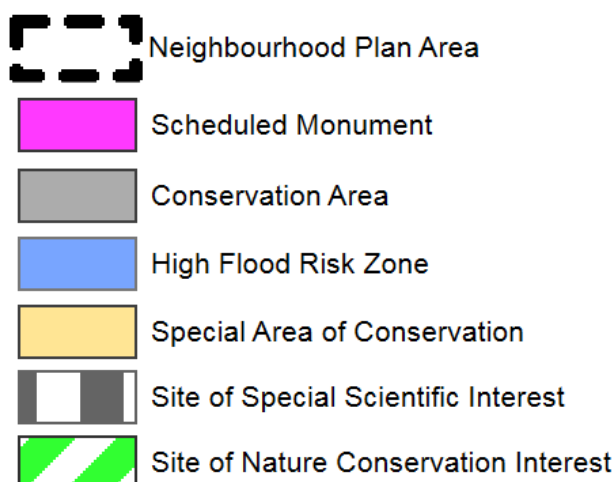
Figure 3.1: Environmental designations within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area



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¹ According to the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan; Place Appraisal (December 2017)

Legend



In addition to the areas shown in Figure 3.1, the neighbourhood plan area and its surroundings are within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, reflecting the particularly high quality of the landscape in this area. Also, the coastal areas to the south of the Neighbourhood Plan are within the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site, which recognises the worldwide importance of the coastline in terms of its outstanding geological and geomorphological value.

The wildlife designations within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area include the White Horse Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which occupies the northern area of the site. The White Horse Hill (SSSI) forms part of the steep south-facing scarp at the southern edge of the Dorset chalk, overlooking the valley of the River Jordan, north of Weymouth. The SSSI overlies bands of Upper, Middle and Lower Chalk on which herb-rich grassland communities have developed. These communities, unmodified by agricultural improvement, are now nationally rare and here support a wide range of uncommon butterfly species.

The wildlife designations in the areas surrounding the site include the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and South Dorset Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which occupy the coastal areas approximately 1.2km to the south of the plan area. This European wildlife designation is of great importance, and is characterised by vegetated sea cliffs, drift lines which support rare species of annual vegetation, and semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland.

The wildlife designations in those areas closer to the neighbourhood plan area include Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) which are local wildlife designations. These include the Coombe Valley SNCI and Bincombe Hill SNCI approximately 165m and 495m to the west of the plan area respectively, both of which are characterised by unimproved or semi-improved chalk grassland. The Came Wood SNCI, which is a large deciduous woodland over chalk, is located 930m to the north of the site.

The heritage assets within the plan area and surrounding areas include a series of Scheduled Monuments, which are nationally important sites of importance, including:

- A group of barrows on the northern site boundary, some of which are within the plan area;

- “Multi-period archaeological landscape centred on and including a slight univallate hillfort called Chalbury, two bowl barrows, part of a Bronze Age urnfield and a series of medieval strip fields” located adjacent and to the west of the site;
- “George III, chalk-cut hill side figure” located adjacent and to the east of the site;
- “Preston Roman villa” located 535m to the south of the site.

The developed areas within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan are designated as the Sutton Poyntz Conservation Area and include a series of Grade II Listed Buildings.

A High Risk Flood Zone is located adjacent to the River Jordan, occupying central and southern parts of the plan area.

THE VISION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SUTTON POYNTZ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan has the following vision:

“By the end of the plan period we want Sutton Poyntz to be somewhere that makes the most of its strengths. It will therefore be a thriving and friendly community, whose residents can enjoy an attractive village centre, can reach nearby shops and facilities, and can easily access the beautiful surrounding countryside.

Issues which otherwise detract from residents’ quality of life will be less evident. By the end of the plan period housing will better suit local needs, any new development will add to the village character, recreation facilities will exist, more people will work locally and traffic or parking concerns will be better managed.”

The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan has the following objectives:

- Retain and promote housing which meets the needs of residents;
- Protect the character of the village and its buildings of heritage value;
- Sustain and improve community facilities and assets which add to residents’ quality of life;
- Promote safe and accessible transport options for all those travelling from and to the neighbourhood;
- Promote biodiversity and conserve our natural environment with its wildlife habitats;
- Retain and enhance important green spaces found in and around the village;
- Support small-scale opportunities for business and local employment.

SCOPE OF THE SUTTON POYNTZ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is at an early stage of development, with evidence currently being collected to facilitate the development of the plan.

Whilst specific details of the contents of the plan are not known at this stage, early indications are that the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan will not allocate sites for development.

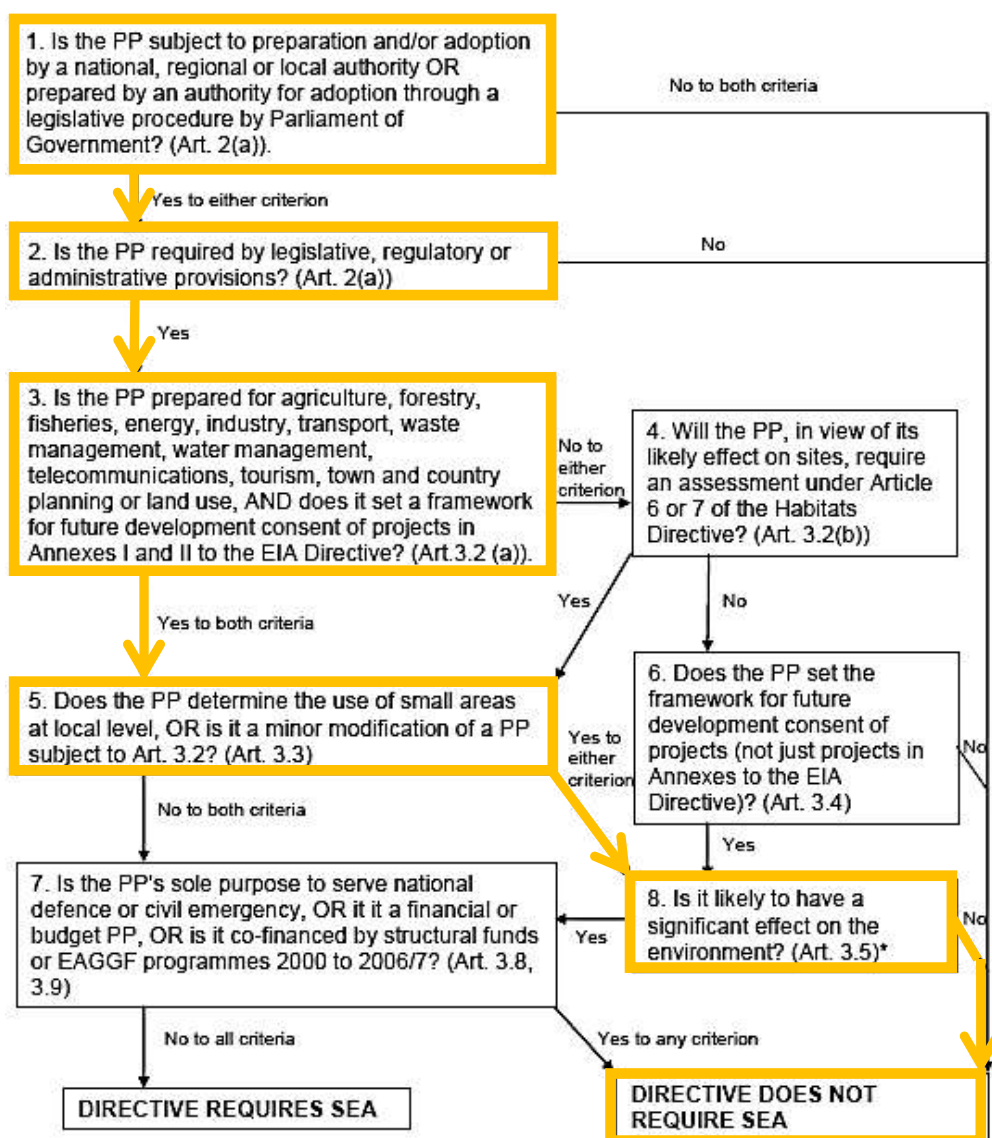
4. SEA SCREENING OF THE SUTTON POYNTZ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This Chapter provides an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan.

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive provide the legislative framework for defining the types of plan and programme that require SEA.

The SEA screening process is summarised in diagrammatic form in the flowchart shown in Figure 4.1². The screening for the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is highlighted in orange and justification for the decisions made at each stage in the SEA screening process is given in Figure 4.2.

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



² Diagram taken from the Government guidance on the Strategic Environmental Assessment regulations titled 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive', published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005

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

Question in SEA screening flow chart (Figure 4.1)	Response
1. Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament of Government?	YES The intention is for the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted by West Dorset District Council, a local authority, through a legislative procedure.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	YES The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan would be a Statutory document, prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?	YES The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes, and may indicate where future development which falls under Annex II of the EIA Directive which includes urban development projects under paragraph 10(b).
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2?	YES The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan determines the use of small areas at a local level.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment (Article 3.5)?	NO Justification for this decision is given later in this chapter.

IS THE SUTTON POYNTZ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

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

In asking this question, the SEA Directive refers to Article 3.5, which states that the relevant criteria in Annex II of the SEA Directive shall be taken into account when determining whether there are likely to be significant effects. Therefore, the criteria in Article 3.5 have been taken into consideration when determining whether the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA, as presented in Figure 4.3.

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

Criteria in Annex II of the SEA Directive	Response	Is there a significant effect?
(1) Characteristics of the plan and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size, and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The framework for development projects within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area is set by the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan ('Local Plan'), which provides the overarching policy for the location, size and nature of development projects in this area. The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan builds upon this framework by providing further details of the development projects within this area.	No
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted alongside its parent document, the Local Plan. It will expand upon the existing policies in the Local Plan and provide supplementary information on a local scale rather than influencing the Local Plan.	No
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Any development which comes forward in Sutton Poyntz will be subject to the environmental considerations of the Local Plan in addition to the neighbourhood plan, the aim of which is to achieve sustainable development.	No
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The environmental problems within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area are not considered exclusive to the area, and are similar to those considered and addressed in the Local Plan. The environmental problems for the Sutton Poyntz neighbourhood plan include flooding, and the impacts of new development upon the landscape, wildlife, areas of geological interest and heritage assets.	No

e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan.	No
(2) Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects.	It is anticipated that the plan period will run until 2036. Whilst some effects of the plan may be irreversible, it is not considered probable that the plan will have significant effect since it is looking to maintain the recent rate of housing delivery of around 20 new homes over the next 20 years whilst ensuring that the environment is protected.	No
b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>The coastal town of Weymouth is located to the southwest of the neighbourhood plan area. Preston, which is an area of Weymouth, is located adjacent and to the southwest of the plan area, with the area of Littlemoor beyond. The settlement of Osmington is located approximately 870m to the east of the plan area.</p> <p>The Local Plan allocates land for in the region of 500 new homes in Littlemoor in the period up to 2031, approximately 1.4km to the west of the site. The Local Plan is currently being reviewed, to provide development for the period up to 2036, and it is proposed that the number of new homes in Littlemoor is increased to 600. In addition, the Local Plan Review proposes approximately 150 new homes at Wyke Oliver Farm, approximately 1.5km to the southwest of the site.</p> <p>Since the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan will not allocate land for development, and will maintain the current rate of development of approximately 20 new homes over 20 years, it is unlikely that cumulative effects will result from the proposed development in the surrounding areas and the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>	No

c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	The transboundary impacts, beyond the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area, are unlikely to be significant in light of the nature and scale of the proposals.	No
d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g due to accidents).	The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to introduce significant risks to human health and the environment, for example due to accidents, in light of the scale and type the development.	No
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area occupies approximately 193ha and holds a population of approximately 456 people. The spatial extent of the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area and the magnitude of the population affected are not considered of a significant scale for the purposes of SEA.	No
<p>f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p>	<p>The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area and its surroundings contain environmental designations which reflect its special natural characteristics and rich cultural heritage.</p> <p>The special natural characteristics of the plan area include the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area of national importance for landscape which occupies the entire neighbourhood plan area. The Dorset AONB designation may be vulnerable to new development, which has the potential to compromise the special qualities of this designation.</p> <p>Other special natural characteristics which may be affected include the White Horse Hill Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the northern section of the site, a site of national wildlife importance. This SSSI forms part of the steep south-facing scarp at the southern edge of the Dorset chalk on which herb-rich grassland communities have developed. These communities, unmodified by agricultural improvement, are now nationally rare and here support a wide range of uncommon butterfly species. A key element of the management of this area of chalk grassland is to ensure that it doesn't get dominated by certain grass species, suppressing less vigorous species and resulting in a build up of dead plant matter, the outcome</p>	No

	<p>generally being that the area ‘scrubs over’. This is traditionally achieved through grazing. An element of managed scrub can be important for certain birds and invertebrates, and rotational cutting can be used to maintain patches of scrub. The application of pesticides or any fertiliser should be avoided also to prevent nutrient enrichment. These management practices are highly unlikely to be compromised by the neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>The coastal areas approximately 1.2km to the south of the plan area include European and national wildlife designations, which are sites of great ecological importance. In addition, the coastal areas to the south of the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site. This recognises the worldwide value of the coastline within the plan area in terms of its outstanding geological and geomorphological value. These areas of great importance are unlikely to be vulnerable to due to their distance from the plan area and the small scale development which is likely to come forward in the neighbourhood plan area.</p> <p>The areas surrounding the neighbourhood plan area also include Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) which are of local importance to wildlife and are therefore less sensitive than the European and national wildlife designations. These sites are unlikely to be vulnerable given the distance from the plan area and scale of development which is likely to come forward.</p> <p>The cultural heritage within the plan area and surroundings include a series of Scheduled Monuments, which are heritage assets of national importance, including the group of barrows on the northern site boundary, archaeological landscape to the west of the site including the Chalbury Hillfort, the George III chalk-cut hill side figure to the east of the site, and the Preston Roman Villa to the south of the site. Whilst these heritage assets could be vulnerable to the effects of development, both directly and indirectly through their setting, these Scheduled Monuments are not upon the Heritage At Risk register. The urban areas within the plan area include the Sutton Poyntz Conservation Area and a series of Grade II Listed</p>	
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	Buildings, which are local designations which may be vulnerable to new development.	
ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values	The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in the exceedance of environmental quality standards, such as those relating to air, water and soil quality, due to the nature and scale of the development.	No
iii) Intensive land-use	The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent which would result in a significant intensification of land use in light of the scale of development.	No
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>The environmental designations within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area and its surrounding areas of national, community or international protection status include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; • World Heritage Site; • Special Area of Conservation; • Site of Special Scientific Interest; • Site of Nature Conservation Interest; • Scheduled Monument; • Conservation Area; and • Listed Buildings (Grade II). <p>The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan area is within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in recognition of the national importance for landscape of this area. The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan will not allocate land for development and will maintain the current level of housing delivery of about 20 dwellings over the plan period, within the defined development boundary. In addition to the scale and level of development which the plan proposes, policy ENV1(i) of the Local Plan will prevent development which results in harm to the character of the Dorset AONB.</p> <p>The Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site is unlikely to be affected by the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan since the plan will not allocate land for development, and will maintain a housing delivery rate of about 20 dwellings over 20 years. In addition to the modest scale of development, the World Heritage Site is</p>	No

	<p>approximately 1.2km from the site. Furthermore, the plan will be in general conformity with policy ENV 1 of the Local Plan, which prevents significant harm to the world heritage site.</p> <p>The plan area includes the White Horse Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is characterised by chalk grassland. The Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to affect the management practices at the SSSI, such as grazing, which are crucial in maintaining the condition of this wildlife site. Appreciable impacts upon the SSSI are also unlikely due to the modest level of development which the plan will enable, and its location within the defined development boundary at the existing settlement of Sutton Poyntz, rather than in areas closer to the SSSI. Furthermore, the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan includes the policy to “Promote biodiversity and conserve our natural environment with its wildlife habitats” and will be in general conformity with policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan, which prevents significant harm to wildlife designations.</p> <p>The cultural and heritage designations within the plan area and its surroundings include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and a Conservation Area. The neighbourhood plan will not allocate land for development, and will look to maintain the current rate of delivering 20 dwellings over 20 years within the existing settlement of Sutton Poyntz. This scale and location of development is unlikely to result in a significant impact upon the setting of the Scheduled Monuments within the plan area and its surroundings. The neighbourhood plan will have the objective to “Protect the character of the village and its buildings of heritage value”, and considering also the quantum of development which is likely to come forward, then significant impacts upon the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area are considered unlikely.</p>	
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5. CONCLUSION

The SEA screening exercise explained in this report concludes that the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental impacts. This is largely due to the plan not allocating land for additional housing and maintaining the current rate of housing delivery (20 homes over the next 20 years), directing new development towards the existing urban area, the vision and objectives of the neighbourhood plan, and the environmental protection provided by the existing policy in the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek confirmation from the statutory environmental consultees that the conclusion that the full SEA process is not necessary to support the production of the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan.