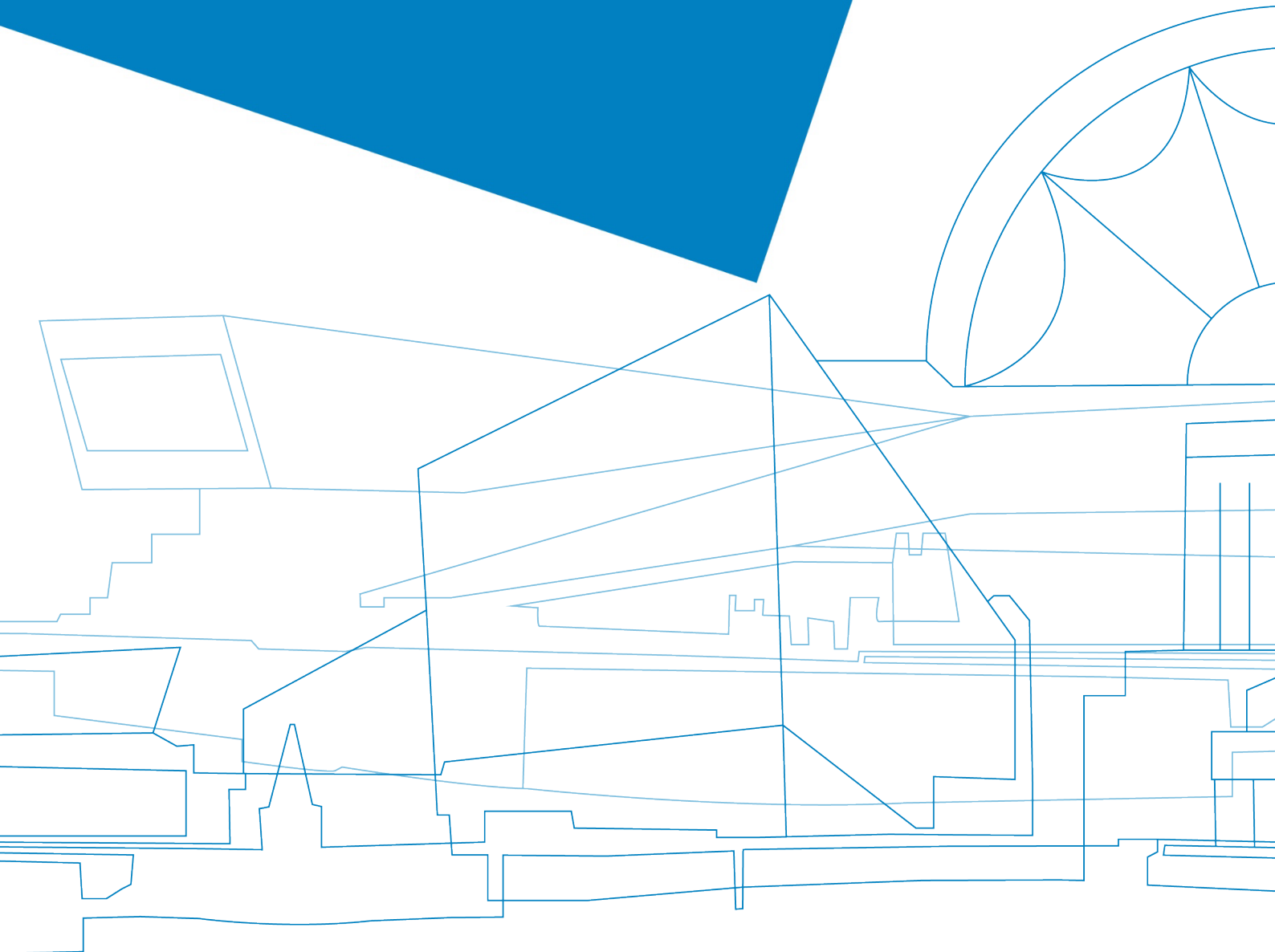




**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Scoping Report V1.3
Dunsfold Neighbourhood Plan
August 2026**



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Scoping Report

This is a scoping report, prepared as part of the process of undertaking an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in respect of the emerging Dunsfold Neighbourhood Plan. It has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which transposed European Directive 2001/42/EC into UK law.

1.2 Background

A previous SEA was prepared, in relation to a previous version of the Dunsfold Neighbourhood Plan. This version of the Neighbourhood Plan was not taken forward due to errors in the statutory process, and to allow housing site allocations to be reviewed. Also, the previous SEA was undertaken in 2018, so is now quite dated.

This latest version of the Neighbourhood Plan includes different housing site allocations. Following discussion with the Local Planning Authority, the need for a completely new SEA was identified.

1.3 The Dunsfold Neighbourhood Plan

The Dunsfold Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended, and associated regulations, policy and guidance. The Neighbourhood Plan will meet the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements set out in primary and secondary legislation. This includes a requirement to help achieve sustainable development.

Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan. The Plan relates to the use and development of land and contains planning policies and site allocations.

The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Dunsfold Parish Council, the qualifying body. The Dunsfold Neighbourhood Area was designated in August 2017 and includes the whole parish area. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period to the end of December 2032.

The Local Planning Authority is Waverley Borough Council.

This report relates to Version 3.1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 Basic Conditions and Legal Requirements for Neighbourhood Plans

The Basic Conditions and legal requirements that neighbourhood plans must meet have changed since the original neighbourhood plan, and are summarised as follows:

- must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- must have regard to national policy and guidance;
- must not deliver less housing development;
- must be compatible with EU obligations.

Regulations specify an additional basic condition that a plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, which set out the habitat regulation assessment process for land use plans, including consideration of the effect on habitat sites.

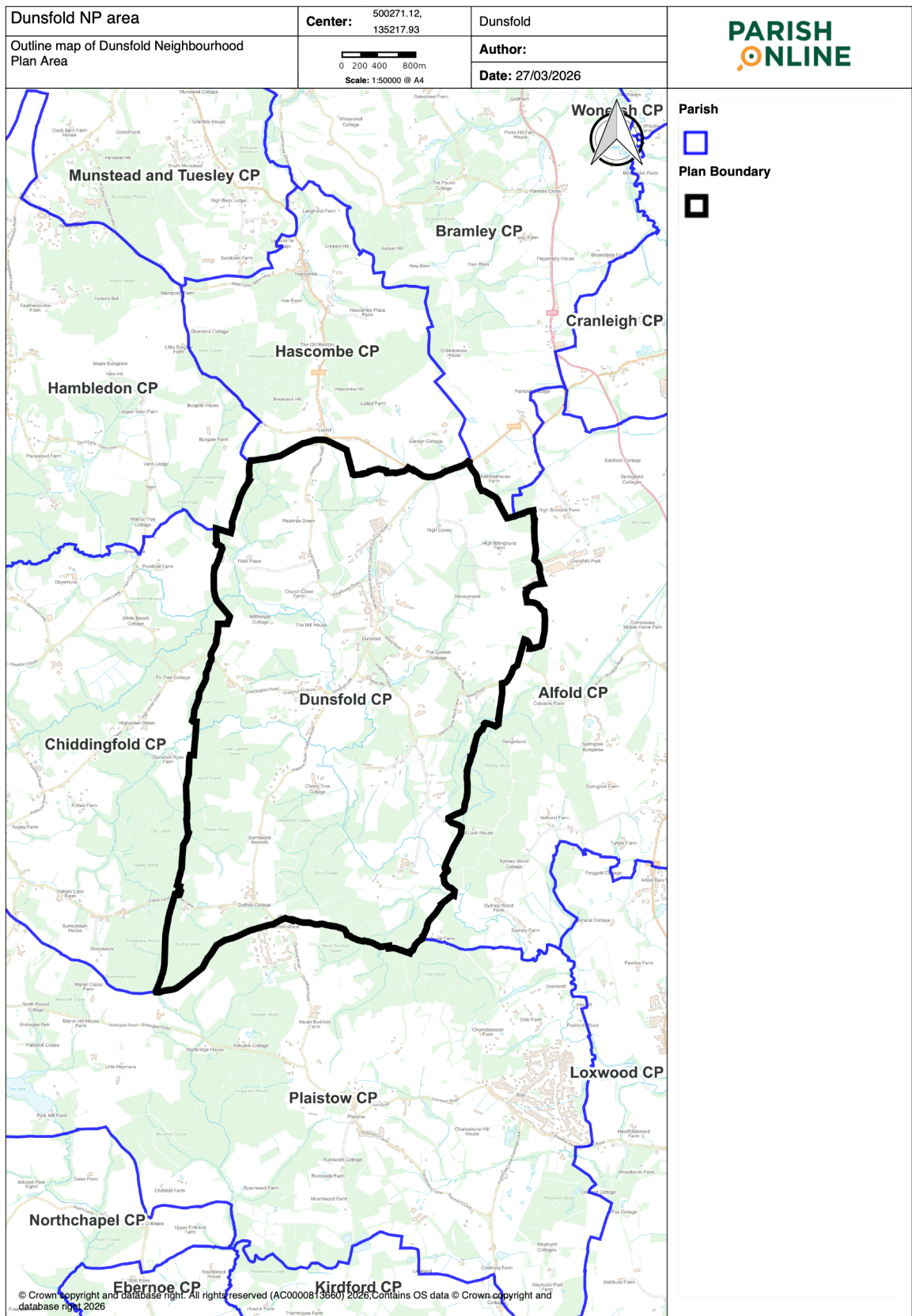
In addition, the plan:

- must meet requirements of human rights law;
- address climate change and mitigation;
- take account of any Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The previous requirement to be in general conformity with strategic local policies no longer applies.

This SEA is required to meet the Basic Conditions relating to environment and habitats.

Consideration of national policy includes the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024, amended in February 2025. A consultation on a new NPPF closed earlier in 2026 and the next version is expected after the summer recess. If this is issued, it will be referenced in the Environmental Report.



1.5 The SEA Process

1.5.1 Need for SEA

The original Neighbourhood Plan was screened by Waverley Borough Council and determined to have significant environmental impact, so requiring full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

SEA takes place under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). The SEA is concerned with likely significant effects resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan and considers the potential options or alternatives relating to key environmental issues and avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts.

1.5.2 Consultation

The Regulations require consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues on the scope and level of detail of the information being considered. This Scoping Report includes a suggested scope for the SEA, and will be subject to consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

In addition, an Environmental Report (which will follow this report) must be published for consultation (with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan) setting out the outcomes from the environmental assessment.

1.5.3 Scoping Stage

The preparation of this report involves:

- Identification of relevant policies;
- Compilation of baseline information;
- Identification of sustainability objectives and issues;
- Formulation of an environmental assessment framework;
- Preparation of a draft scoping report;
- Consultation with national bodies;
- Finalisation of the scoping report.

1.4.4 Later Stage (Environmental Report)

The following stage involves preparation of the Environmental Report, and this comprises:

- Testing the Plan against the assessment framework;
- Evaluating effects and considering alternatives;
- Consideration of mitigation of adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects;
- Formulating measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Neighbourhood Plan;
- Preparing the Environmental Report, based on the above;
- Subjecting the Report to consultation with environmental bodies and the public;
- Making any necessary amendments and finalising the Environmental Report.

1.6 Scoping Report Structure

Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and Annex 1(f) of the SEA Directive (directive 2001/42/EC) specify the environmental topics for consideration, including biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and their interrelationships.

The SEA Framework (SEA objectives and questions) is included in Chapter2.

The following chapters are then structured around the SEA objectives:

- Enhance the natural environment and biodiversity and protect landscapes, habitats and ecology;
- Reduce carbon use and support sustainable development;
- Support climate change resilience, including flooding;
- Support the efficient and effective use of land;
- Preserve or enhance Historic Environment (including architectural, cultural and archaeological);
- Meet the needs of current and future residents, including diverse sections of the community;
- Improve health and wellbeing of people living and working in the area.
- Protect air, water and soil quality.

2. SEA Framework

2.1 Methodology

The following table comprises a framework to assess SEA Objectives against relevant questions.

SEA Objective	Questions for assessment
Enhance the natural environment and biodiversity and protect landscapes, habitats and ecology.	Protect/enhance nationally designated landscapes? Protect/enhance locally designated landscapes? Protect/enhance landscape character and key landscape features? Protect/enhance priority habitats and species? Protect and enhance biodiversity and contribute to biodiversity net gain? Protect/enhance green and blue infrastructure networks? Protect soil resources including the best and most versatile agricultural land where appropriate?
Reduce carbon use and support sustainable development.	Support low-carbon and sustainable design in new development? Maintaining and creating walkable neighbourhoods (mixed use and with good permeability/connectivity)? Reduce energy consumption and promote local energy? Reduce the need to travel or the number of journeys made? Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport and active travel?

Support climate change resilience, including flooding.	Avoiding development in areas identified as being at risk from flooding, now and in the future? Avoiding adverse impacts on surrounding land from surface water run off? Protect/ Improve/enhance green and blue infrastructure networks? Considering potential risks associated with climate change in the location and design of development? Ensuring that development is well-designed, against the context of climate change and climate resilience? Encourage use of local, recycled and low-embodied energy materials and sustainable construction? Support the minimisation, reuse and recycling of waste?
Preserve or enhance the Historic Environment (including architectural, cultural and archaeological).	Conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Dunsfold and Dunsfold Church Conservation Areas? Protect the significance and setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and All Saints and other listed buildings? Conserve non-designated heritage assets and the wider historic landscape? Respect local distinctiveness through high-quality design and the use of materials appropriate to the Wealden vernacular? Conserve the historic character of Dunsfold Common and important views within and from the Conservation Areas?

	Support the productive and sustainable use of heritage assets, to create a sustainable future?
Support the efficient and effective use of land.	Make effective use of previously developed land and promote the re-use of buildings where appropriate? Minimise the unnecessary loss of greenfield and agricultural land, particularly any identified as being BMV agricultural land? Protect the character and function of the open countryside? Safeguarded mineral resources? Support development that respects the existing settlement pattern and makes the efficient use of land?
Meet the diverse needs of the community (current and future residents).	Support the delivery of housing that reflects identified local needs, including an appropriate mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures? Contribute to the provision of affordable housing where appropriate? Protect and enhance existing community facilities and services? Support the timely provision of infrastructure required to accommodate planned growth? Improve access to community facilities, healthcare, education, recreation and local services by sustainable modes of transport? Promote healthy, inclusive and socially cohesive communities? Ensure that new development is integrated with existing communities

	and contributes positively to local character and quality of life?
Improve health and wellbeing of people living and working in the area.	Improve access to healthcare, community facilities, recreation and local services? Support opportunities for physical activity, walking and cycling? Protect and enhance access to green infrastructure and the countryside? Promote development that supports social interaction and community cohesion? Address the needs of an ageing population and vulnerable groups? Ensure that new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure? Create safe, attractive and inclusive places that contribute positively to mental and physical wellbeing?
Protect air, water and soil quality.	Avoid development that would result in unacceptable impacts on air quality? Protect water resources (minimise water consumption) and prevent deterioration of water quality? Ensure adequate wastewater and drainage infrastructure is available? Minimise impacts on soils, including the loss of agricultural land and soil functions? Avoid or remediate land contamination where relevant? Promote sustainable drainage and

	nature-based solutions to manage water? Reduce the need to travel and promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including public transport and active travel?
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3. Natural Environment and Biodiversity

3.1 Natural Environment and Biodiversity Theme

The theme is:

Enhance the natural environment, biodiversity and protect landscapes, habitats and ecology.

This includes consideration of:

- nationally and locally designated landscapes;
- landscape character;
- priority habitats and species;
- biodiversity;
- green and blue infrastructure networks.

3.2 Legislative and Policy Context

3.2.1 Legal and Policy Framework

The Natural Environment theme is shaped by national legislation, national planning policy and the local development plan. Together these establish the principles for protecting landscape character, habitats, species and biodiversity, and green and blue infrastructure networks, in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

3.2.2 Environment Act 2021¹

The Act establishes a strengthened framework for environmental protection and nature recovery in England. It introduced mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for qualifying development, requiring these proposals to deliver at least a 10% measurable increase in biodiversity compared to the pre-development baseline. The Act also provides for the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) which identify priorities and opportunities for habitat creation, restoration and ecological connectivity. These measures reinforce the role of the planning system in protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

¹ Environment Act 2021: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents>

3.2.3 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations)²

The Regulations require that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a National Site Network site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment. This stage of Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is only required where preliminary screening cannot rule out likely significant effects. A HRA screening determination for the Dunsfold Neighbourhood Plan was carried out by Base Planning and Design Ltd in August 2021 on behalf of Waverley Borough Council. It concluded that an Appropriate Assessment was not required. Nevertheless, the Regulations remain an important part of the policy context for protecting internationally designated sites and species.

3.2.4 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act)³

Section 41 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. These habitats and species are a material consideration in plan-making and development management and provide an important baseline for the assessment of biodiversity effects.

3.2.5 Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

The Regulations transpose Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive) into UK law and require assessment of likely significant effects on biodiversity, landscape, soil, water, air quality and climatic factors. A Strategic Environmental Assessment of Neighbourhood Plans is required where significant environmental effects might arise.

3.2.5 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)⁵

This provides statutory protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), protected species and certain priority habitats.

² Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents>

³ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

⁴ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents>

⁵ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

3.2.6 National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024⁶

The NPPF sets out the government's economic, environmental and social policies for land use and development. It sets out national policy principles relevant to the natural environment theme, including:

- conserving and enhancing biodiversity, geodiversity and soils;
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now designated as National Landscapes);
- achieving measurable biodiversity net gain;
- safeguarding the best and most versatile agricultural land;
- managing flood risk, water quality, and water resources;
- supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation, including nature-based solutions;
- protecting dark skies, tranquillity and natural capital assets.

3.2.7 Planning Practice Guidance⁷

The PPG supports the implementation of the NPPF by providing detailed guidance on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment through the planning system. It explains how planning policies and decisions should consider biodiversity, ecological networks, protected sites, landscapes, green infrastructure and the conservation of habitats and species. The guidance supports an evidence-based approach to understanding the environmental value of places and ensuring that development avoids, mitigates and where appropriate provides compensation for impacts on the natural environment.

3.2.8 Waverley Borough Local Plan, Parts 1 (February 2018) and Part 2 (March 2023)⁸

The Local Plan provides the strategic planning framework within which the Neighbourhood Plan must be prepared. Policies relevant to the natural environment theme include RE3 (Landscape Character), NE1 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure), DM1 (Environmental Implications of Development) and DM11 (Trees, Woodland, Hedgerows and Landscaping).

⁶ National Planning Policy Framework: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁷ Planning Practice Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

⁸ Waverley Local Plan: <https://www.waverley.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building/planning-strategies-and-policies/local-plan/existing-local-plan>

3.2.9 Surrey County Council Policy and Guidance

This is a material consideration in assessing the natural environment effects of development. It ensures the Neighbourhood Plan follows recognised best practice in protecting biodiversity, landscape character and ecological networks. These documents support, but do not replace, the requirements of the Waverley Local Plan.

- **Waverley Climate and Nature Strategy and Action Plan 2026⁹**

This strategic framework co-ordinates the borough's joint response to the climate and ecological emergencies.

- **Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2025-2030)¹⁰**

The plan sets out strict design and environmental boundaries for areas in or bordering the designated National Landscape (formerly AONB). It seeks to restore habitats, safeguard ecosystems and mandates that all developments must legally conserve and enhance local natural beauty and biodiversity.

- **Surrey Nature Partnership¹¹**

The Surrey Nature Partnership provides guidance on ecological networks, priority habitats and nature recovery strategies.

3.3 Baseline Summary

3.3.1 Local Context

The natural environment baseline of Dunsfold includes a combination of nationally and locally designated landscapes, a diverse mosaic of priority habitat and species and an interconnected network of green and blue infrastructure. It sits in a sensitive rural landscape characterised by historic field patterns, extensive woodland and open agricultural land.

3.3.2 International and European Designations

There are no European or internationally designated sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas or Ramsar sites) in or immediately adjacent to

⁹ Waverley Climate and Nature Strategy and Action Plan 2026: <https://www.waverley.gov.uk/services/environmental-concerns/sustainability-and-conservation/climate-and-nature-strategy-and-action-plan>

¹⁰ Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2025-2030): https://surreyhills.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/management_plan_A4_final_spreads.pdf

¹¹ Surrey Nature Partnership website: <https://surreynaturepartnership.org/>

the Neighbourhood Plan area. The nearest European site is the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA located several kilometres to the west. While this is outside the typical zone of influence for neighbourhood-scale development, its presence reinforces the need to consider potential cumulative effects on the wider ecological network where relevant.

3.2.3 National Designations

Chiddingfold Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest¹²

Approximately 542.5 hectares of the Chiddingfold Forest complex is formally designated as a SSSI. Part of this lies in the western part of the Neighbourhood Plan area. It comprises an extensive network of semi-natural broadleaved woodland designated for its ancient woodland habitats, nationally important breeding bird assemblages, bat populations and rare invertebrates¹³.

The entire Neighbourhood Plan area is inside the SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) defined by Natural England. The IRZ identifies where development may pose risks to the SSSI's interest features. As such, the SEA framework should consider the potential for indirect effects arising from future growth including recreational pressure, changes to hydrology, air quality impacts and habitat fragmentation.

Surrey Hills National Landscape¹⁴

The northern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area borders the Surrey Hills National Landscape (Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), which carries the highest level of landscape protection in England. Public bodies have a statutory duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of this nationally important landscape. Any future policies or site allocations in this area must safeguard its defining characteristics including rural tranquillity, dark night skies, scenic qualities and key views into and out of the National Landscape. Development proposals must also have regard to the Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan and its objectives for conserving and enhancing landscape character.

A process is currently underway to extend Surrey Hills AONB, including a substantial part of Dunsfold Parish.

¹² Natural England Designated Sites View for Chiddingfold Forest SSSI:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1005561&SiteName=Chiddingfold%20forest&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=>

¹³ Forestry Commission, Chiddingfold Forest Plan:

https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Chiddingfold%20Forest%20Forest%20Plan_0.pdf

¹⁴ Surrey Hills National Landscape: <https://surreyhill.org/>

3.3.4 Local Designations

Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)

Dunsfold contains several SNCIs which are locally designated, non-statutory sites that form an important part of the parish's ecological network. Collectively these sites contribute to habitat connectivity, ecological resilience and biodiversity across the parish. They include:

- Botany Bay to Dursfold Wood;
- Burnwood Copse;
- Dunsfold Common and Green;
- Furnace Bridge Copse;
- Furtherfits;
- Hog Wood;
- Honeymead Copse;
- Hurlands Copse and Ireland Copse;
- Sayers Land, Jewings Hurst and Benbow Rew;
- Third's Copse and Merrow Farm Copse;
- Upper Ifold Farm Wood;
- Wrotham Great Copse.

3.3.5 Priority Habitats and Species

The Neighbourhood Plan area contains a diverse mosaic of woodland habitats, including Habitats of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (the NERC Act)¹⁵. The DEFRA Magic Map¹⁶ records areas of Deciduous Woodland, Wood Pasture and Parkland, and Ancient Woodland. This is closely linked to the nationally designated Chiddingfold Forest¹⁷, with the wider forest complex containing significant areas of broadleaf woodland including Oak, Birch, Ash, together with Conifer species such as Corsican Pine, Norway Spruce and Western Hemlock. The diverse habitats in the forest support numerous Species of Principal Importance listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act, together with a range of nationally important butterflies, moths, breeding birds and bats¹⁸. It is the only known location for Beton Casebearer (*Coleophora wockeella*) in the UK and the last stronghold for the Wood White butterfly (*Leptidea sinapis*) in east England, and supports rare and declining bird species such as the Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*). A wide variety of bat species have been recorded including barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) and Bechstein's bat (*Myotis*

¹⁵ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act):

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

¹⁶ Defra MAGIC Map (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside): <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

¹⁷ Forestry Commission, Chiddingfold Forest Plan:

https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Chiddingfold%20Forest%20Forest%20Plan_0.pdf

¹⁸ Defra MAGIC Map (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside): <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

bechsteinii). The Dunsfold Amphibian Rescue Team are very active in saving and recording amphibians.

Other Section 41 habitats present in the Neighbourhood Plan area include Wet Woodland, Wood Pasture and Parkland, Traditional Orchards and an extensive network of Hedgerows. Their presence is evidenced through the Surrey Nature Partnership's Biodiversity Opportunity Area profile for the Chiddingfold & West Weald Woodlands¹⁹, which explicitly includes Dunsfold and Alfold. This identifies orchard remnants, veteran trees, ancient hedgerows, riparian alder stands, and woodland-associated species such as Barbastelle and Bechstein's bats. The DEFRA Magic Map²⁰ also identifies areas to the east and west of the Neighbourhood Plan area as Countryside Stewardship targeting zones for the Brown Hairstreak butterfly (*Thecla betulae*), reflecting opportunities to conserve and enhance habitat for this priority species.

Dunsfold's woodland habitats are ecologically sensitive, interconnected and of high conservation value. The conservation, enhancement and connectivity of these habitats and associated species are important considerations in the assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policies and any proposed site allocations, and in relation to potential impacts from recreational pressure, habitat fragmentation and changes in land management.

3.2.6 Future Baseline

Dunsfold's natural environment will be subject to a range of ongoing pressures associated with climate change, changes in land management and land use, recreational activity and development in the wider area. These pressures have the potential to affect biodiversity, the condition and connectivity of priority habitats and landscape character. Nationally and locally designated sites, including the Chiddingfold Forest SSSI, the Surrey Hills National Landscape and the parish's SNCIs will continue to benefit from existing statutory and policy protections. However, these designations may still be vulnerable to indirect and cumulative effects from development and changing patterns of land management.

Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, including periods of drought, heavy rainfall and higher average temperatures. These changes may alter habitat condition, affect species distributions, increase pressure from invasive non-native species and place additional stress on woodland, wetland and freshwater habitats.

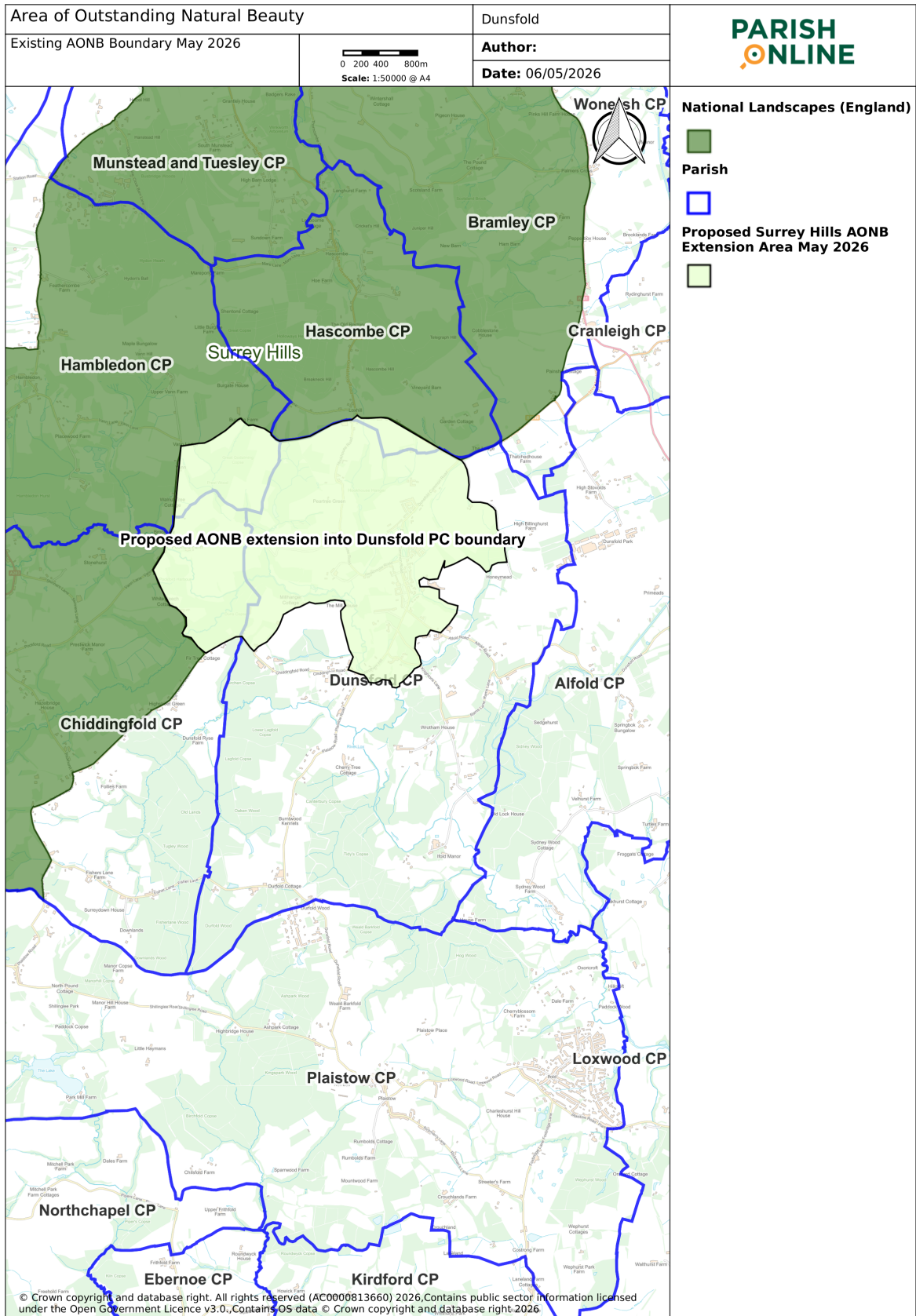
Habitat fragmentation and reduced ecological connectivity may also arise from incremental development unless opportunities for habitat enhancement are secured

¹⁹ Surrey Nature Partnership Biodiversity Opportunity Area profile, Chiddingfold & West Weald Woodlands: https://surreynaturepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/appendix-8_low-weald-biodiversity-opportunity-area-policy-statements.pdf

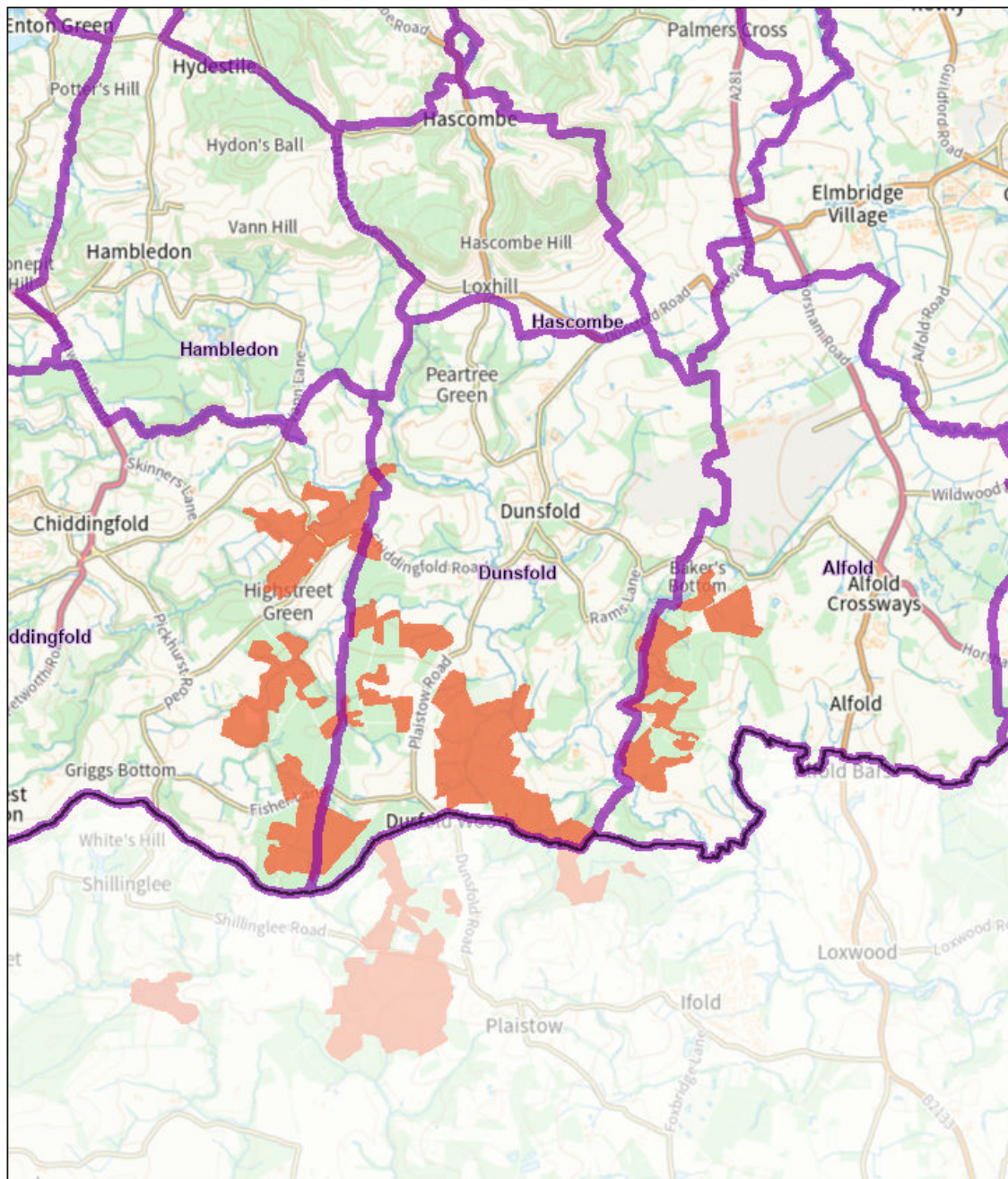
²⁰ Defra MAGIC Map (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside): <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

and qualifying development delivers biodiversity net gain.

The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to strengthen the protection and enhancement of Dunsfold's natural environment by supporting habitat conservation and restoration, reinforcing ecological networks, safeguarding landscape character and promoting biodiversity net gain where appropriate.



Surrey Interactive Map



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- Boundary - Parish
- Environment - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

