

1 Introduction and Policy Context

- 1.1 This background paper supports the `Environment` policies in the Island Planning Strategy (IPS). It sets out the specific policy context provided by the National Planning Policy Framework, 2023 and provides a summary of each of the draft plan policies. An outline is included of the key points made in the Island Planning Strategy (IPS) Regulation 18 consultation.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.2 Paragraph 10 seeks that plans apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means that:

“... (a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects ...”.

- 1.3 There are three further relevant chapters in the NPPF - Chapter 14 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change, Chapter 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment and Chapter 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. There is also a section relating to open space and recreation (paras 102-107), which is relevant to these policies.

- 1.4 Also, in terms of planning and flood risk, strict tests are set to protect people and property from flooding. The main steps to be followed (paras 165-175) are summarised as, designing policies to ensure that if there are better sites in terms of flood risk, or a proposed development cannot be made safe, it should not be permitted.

- 1.5 Planning Practice Guidance sets out detailed guidance for the environment in:

Air Quality

Biodiversity Net Gain

Climate Change

Flood Risk and Coastal Change

Historic Environment

Land Stability

Land Affected by Contamination

Light pollution

Natural Environment

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

Water Supply, Wastewater and Water Quality

2. Island Planning Strategy Policies

ISLAND PLANNING STRATEGY EXPLAINER DOCUMENT – ENVIRONMENT

- 2.1 The overall vision for the Island Planning Strategy seeks to ensure that the Isle of Wight is an inspiring place in which to grow up, work, live and visit. The environment policies in Section 4 of the Plan support this vision and are consistent with national planning guidance and supporting Planning Practice Guidance.
- 2.2 The Environment policies are wide ranging covering for example, historic and ecological assets, trees, open space, flood risk and coastal flooding. Additional evidence work has been undertaken and includes: -
- Isle of Wight Council Conservation Area Appraisals
 - Newport and Ryde HAZ Commercial frontages Design Guide
 - Isle of Wight Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
 - Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)
 - Bird Aware Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy
 - Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy
 - Nutrient Mitigation Supply and Demand Analysis
 - Isle of Wight Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - Isle of Wight Council Tree Planting and Management Strategy
 - Isle of Wight Open Space Assessment
 - Isle of Wight Playing Pitch Strategy
 - Isle of Wight Settlement Coalescence Study
 - Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan
 - South East River Basin Management Plan
 - Isle of Wight Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
 - Isle of Wight SFRA & Level 2 Fact Sheets
- 2.3 A brief overview of each of the `Environment` policies is set out below.

EV1 Conserving and Enhancing our Historic Environment - The policy sets out criteria to protect important heritage assets in line with their significance. The approach seeks sustainable development balancing the historic environment with economic and social factors. The policy supports sympathetic changes to the historic environment where the significance and impact on significance is fully understood, documented and balanced against public benefit.

EV2 Ecological Assets and Opportunities for Enhancement – Development proposals must demonstrate how they will protect and enhance the integrity of habitats, networks and species important to biodiversity or of geological value. The principles supporting the proper assessment of ecological considerations are set out in the policy, including achieving a net gain of at least 10% for biodiversity. The loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats is not permitted unless in wholly exceptional cases and then only when a suitable compensation strategy is provided. A hierarchy of nature conservation designations is included in the policy.

EV3 Recreation Impact on the Solent Marine Sites – Development within 5.6km of the Solent Special Protection Areas must provide mitigation for likely significant impacts on the Solent Marine Sites mostly through disturbance to protected species from recreational activity. Developers can provide this mitigation through financial contributions to the Bird Aware strategic mitigation strategy that is in operation across the Solent region.

EV4 Water Quality Impact on Solent Marine Sites (Nitrates) – The policy requires certain development proposals to demonstrate nutrient neutrality to protect the Solent Marine Sites.

EV5 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows – The policy seeks to provide new tree planting and protect existing trees, woodlands and hedges. Ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees are protected.

EV6 Protecting and Providing Green and Open Spaces – The policy seeks to protect green and open spaces and sets criteria for new provision and to address any deficiencies.

EV7 Local Green Spaces – The principle is established that losses of Local Green Space will not be permitted unless in very special circumstances. Many designated Local Green Spaces have been suggested by the community and are identified on the Policies Map.

EV8 Protecting High Grade Agricultural Land – Criteria are set out to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from development.

EV9 Protecting our Landscapes and Seascapes – This policy criteria seek to support proposals that conserve, enhance and promote the seascape and landscape.

EV10 Preserving Settlement Identity – gaps between settlements are defined and protected with only limited exceptions.

EV11 Isle of Wight National Landscape (formerly AONB) – Only in exceptional circumstances will major development be permitted in the National Landscape. In these cases, remediation and improvement of damaged designated landscape features will be sought in compensation. Other development must meet the criteria set out in the policy.

EV12 Dark Skies – the policy criteria seek to reduce light pollution in the proposed Dark Skies Park.

EV13 Managing our Water Resources – Criteria to be met by new development are set out to conserve and manage water resources, including a limit of 100 litres per day from new houses.

EV14 Managing Flood Risk in New Development – Development proposals are expected to meet the policy criteria to reduce on site and off site flood risk on the island.

EV15 Monktonmead Catchment Area – Development proposals in the Monktonmead Catchment Area are expected to demonstrate how they meet the policy criteria. New development may be required to make a financial contribution towards flood alleviation projects.

EV16 Managing our Coast – Policy criteria limit development in Areas of Coastal Change. Development proposals must be time limited, are expected to undertake a coastal erosion vulnerability assessment, and not include new residential development.

EV17 Facilitating Relocation from Coastal Change Management Areas – Criteria are set out to assess the relocation of development or infrastructure where it is forecast to be affected by erosion or permanent inundation within twenty years.

EV18 Improving Resilience to Coastal Flooding and Coastal Risks – Where areas have a `hold the line` policy in the Shoreline Management Plan, development proposals are expected to provide and maintain on-site coastal defences or where appropriate land raising. The policy sets out circumstances where developer contributions may be required and how new or replacement coastal defence schemes will be assessed.

EV19 Managing Ground Instability in New Development – Policy criteria seek to prevent unacceptable risks to new development from the threat of ground instability and land sliding in known potential areas.

3. Key Issues Arising from the Plan Consultation

3.1 Key environment issues arising from consultation on the draft Island Planning Strategy are briefly summarised below, together with a description of changes made in the Regulation 19 version of the IPS.

- Revise the policy wording to better reflect the NPPF. The wording in **Policy EV1** has been strengthened to better protect the significance of historic and heritage assets and the need to avoid, minimise and mitigate any harm to them.
- Revisions to policy wording should reflect biodiversity net gain (BNG) calculator, hierarchy of sites and the importance of LNRS and potential for this to be an SPD. **Policy EV2** has been amended to at least 10% BNG, the hierarchy of sites and reference added to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).
- The policy should include a reference to SANGs and how these will be implemented and be updated to reflect the latest terminology. A reference to SANGs has been added to **Policy EV3** and text added to the supporting text to make clear what is expected and how it will operate.
- Clarification is needed on how increasing tourist accommodation is considered in assessing the impact of nitrates on the Solent Marine Sites.

Policy EV4 has been amended by adding no harm to Solent Marine Sites through a net increase in nitrates must be demonstrated in tourism proposals. Text is added on private package treatment solutions in sewered areas.

- At least a 15m buffer is required between new development and ancient woodland together with a measure of the level of compensation where damage or loss to ancient woodland occurs. **Policy EV5** and supporting text on buffers has been amended. Policy wording has been revised to strengthen the role of trees and role in BNG.
- Add clarification on how the standards for open space have been derived. **Policy EV6** has been amended and reference added to the Playing Pitch Strategy.
- Add major development within the National Landscape will be refused except in exceptional circumstances or the public interest. **Policy EV11** has been amended.
- Flooding evacuation plans need to consider those with reduced mobility or other access needs. Add requirement for Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. **Policy EV14** and its supporting text have been amended to ensure Flood Warning and Evacuation Plans take account of reduced mobility.
- Clarify the role of the IOW Shoreline Management Plan, Coastal Strategy and committed coastal defence projects on seeking developer contributions. **Policy EV18** and its supporting text have been amended to provide clarity on how development contributions will be sought.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Together, the `Environment` policies seek to achieve the aspirations linked to protecting the historic and natural environment on the island.

Frequently Asked Questions – Environment

1. How do you make sure the Local Plan doesn't have an impact on the environment?

It is a legal requirement for Local Plans to be scrutinised through environmental reports, called the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment. These consider the impact of the plan on the environment/wildlife, people and the economy and set out how any negative impacts will be addressed. All of these evidence reports will be considered by an independent inspector at the local plan examination.

2. How will wildlife be protected from development pressures?

The Island supports rare species of plants, animals and habitats, which are currently protected under European (to be superseded) and English law.

Ecological factors and sensitivities have been taken account of when assessing individual sites and the draft Island Planning Strategy has been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) at all stages of the Plan. In addition, the draft Island Planning Strategy includes various specific policies (EV2, EV3, EV4, EV5, EV9, EV11, EV12, EV13) which require new development to protect existing wildlife and promote biodiversity.

3. What are you doing to tackle the climate emergency?

The Island Planning Strategy has assessed the draft development allocations in relation to the impact on climate change through the Sustainability Appraisal process. The Island Planning Strategy includes various policies which will contribute to tackling climate change e.g., requiring all new development to be built to net zero standards, requiring electric vehicle charging points in new development (supporting the Building Regulations), supporting renewable energy and low carbon technology and requiring development to provide and improve accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and public transport.

Policy BIO1 seeks to embed the UNESCO biosphere designation in shaping a sustainable island life including supporting the island's ability to achieve net zero.