

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRE-SUBMISSION STAGE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Prepared on behalf of Puddletown Area Parish Council

PUDDLETOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN NOVEMBER 2019

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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PUDDLETOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OCTOBER 2019

This non-technical summary explains the scope and main findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the pre-submission draft of the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan. The assessment has been undertaken to comply with the SEA Regulations. It considers the likely effects of the plan on the environment, and its evaluation includes an assessment of reasonable alternatives. It also considers appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures. It is subject to consultation with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, the public and any other interested parties.

The scoping exercise, which considered evidence on the environmental characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and the objectives of relevant plans and programmes, was undertaken by AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited in October 2018. This identified various objectives to be tested, together with assessment questions to guide that process.

The environmental issues noted as particularly relevant to the area included:

- Whilst there are no European designated sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area, a number of European designated sites are in close proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan area, and as such development within the area has the potential to lead to indirect effects. The ecological status of waterbodies in the Neighbourhood Plan area is 'poor' to 'moderate'. Potential loss of habitats and impacts on biodiversity networks, which may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change.
- Whilst outside any nationally designated landscapes, incremental but small changes including the loss of landscape features could detract from landscape and townscape character and quality.
- There are designated heritage assets within the Neighbourhood Plan area which are identified by Historic England as 'at risk' - mainly arising from arable ploughing. New development has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of cultural heritage assets; for example through inappropriate design and layout.
- Likely increased risks associated with climate change (including fluvial flooding).
- Future development within the wider area also has the potential to increase traffic and congestion, further contributing to climate change.
- New development within the area also has the potential to impact upon areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.
- Population trends and housing costs indicate an ageing population and reduced numbers of younger children in the plan area.

The views of the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England were also sought (with a response received from Natural England) who broadly concurred with the findings.

As a result of this work the following objectives were used to assess the plan proposals and reasonable alternatives:

- Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features
- Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes

- Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource within the Neighbourhood Plan area
- Ensure the efficient and effective use of land
- Reduce the level of contribution to, and support the resilience of the area to the potential effects of, climate change
- Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel
- Cater for existing and future residents' needs in an inclusive and self-contained community, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwellings
- Improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

The next step was to undertake an assessment of the policies themselves, together with any reasonable alternative options, against these environmental assessment objectives.

The main alternatives identified related to the choice of site options and the level of housing growth. A two stage approach was taken to first identify the reasonable alternatives for the site options (Coombe and Kite Hill were not considered to be likely to perform well), with the more sustainable options then assessed in more detail against the environmental objectives. The Coombe and Kite Hill were not considered to be reasonable alternatives, with land at Rod Hill Lane and Pastures Field being considered as alternatives to the site allocations in the second stage of the assessment.

The assessment showed that, overall, the adverse impacts of the neighbourhood plan are likely to be balanced or outweighed by positive impacts of the plan, with the most positive impacts scored against the objective of meeting local needs, and also protecting landscape character. The main adverse impact that has been identified is in relation to soils, due to the loss of productive farmland. However the scale (cumulatively) is still unlikely to be significant given the limited size of the site allocations and the amount of agricultural land in the wider area.

The reasons for rejecting the higher growth option were based on the lack of need (given that the preferred sites would more than meet the anticipated housing need, and the Local Plan's strategy is that the towns are the focus for meeting the strategic need) and site-specific issues. The lower growth option was rejected as it would not deliver the more significant benefits in terms of the quantity of affordable housing and community facilities, and that the potential harm of the proposed growth option (in terms of landscape impact and higher grade loss of agricultural land) were not regarded to be significant, and was balanced by potential biodiversity and increased connectivity benefits within the village.

Whilst the alternative option of Rod Hill Lane performed reasonably well (although not better than the allocated sites) against the various environmental criteria, the main concern related to the higher degree (and difficulty mitigating) the landscape impact given the landform in comparison to the preferred sites. There were also related concerns regarding the junction with Milom Lane – both in terms of the impact on the lane's character and that it would potentially be less successful at reducing vehicle speeds on the approach into the village from the east. Pastures Field similarly performed reasonably well against the various environmental criteria (although not better than the allocated sites), but its more limited size reduces the degree of community benefits likely, and it is more difficult to access (with access likely to cross existing public rights of way) and would also be impacted by higher levels of noise pollution due to its proximity to the bypass (although these are not likely to be at a significant level). Whilst the landscape impact of developing this site individually is not significant, there would be a greater cumulative impact with the existing extant consent for 41 dwellings on the adjoining land.

Comments are invited on this environmental report as part of the consultation on the pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan. The consultation is scheduled to run from Monday 25 November 2019 through to Friday 10 January 2020.

Responses can be made on the forms provided at the consultation events, dropped off at the collection points at the village shop, surgery and community library, emailed the Parish Clerk (puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk) or sent by post to 27 Brymer Road, Puddletown DT2 8SX.

Please make sure that we get your comments by the closing date, as we may not be able to consider late comments.

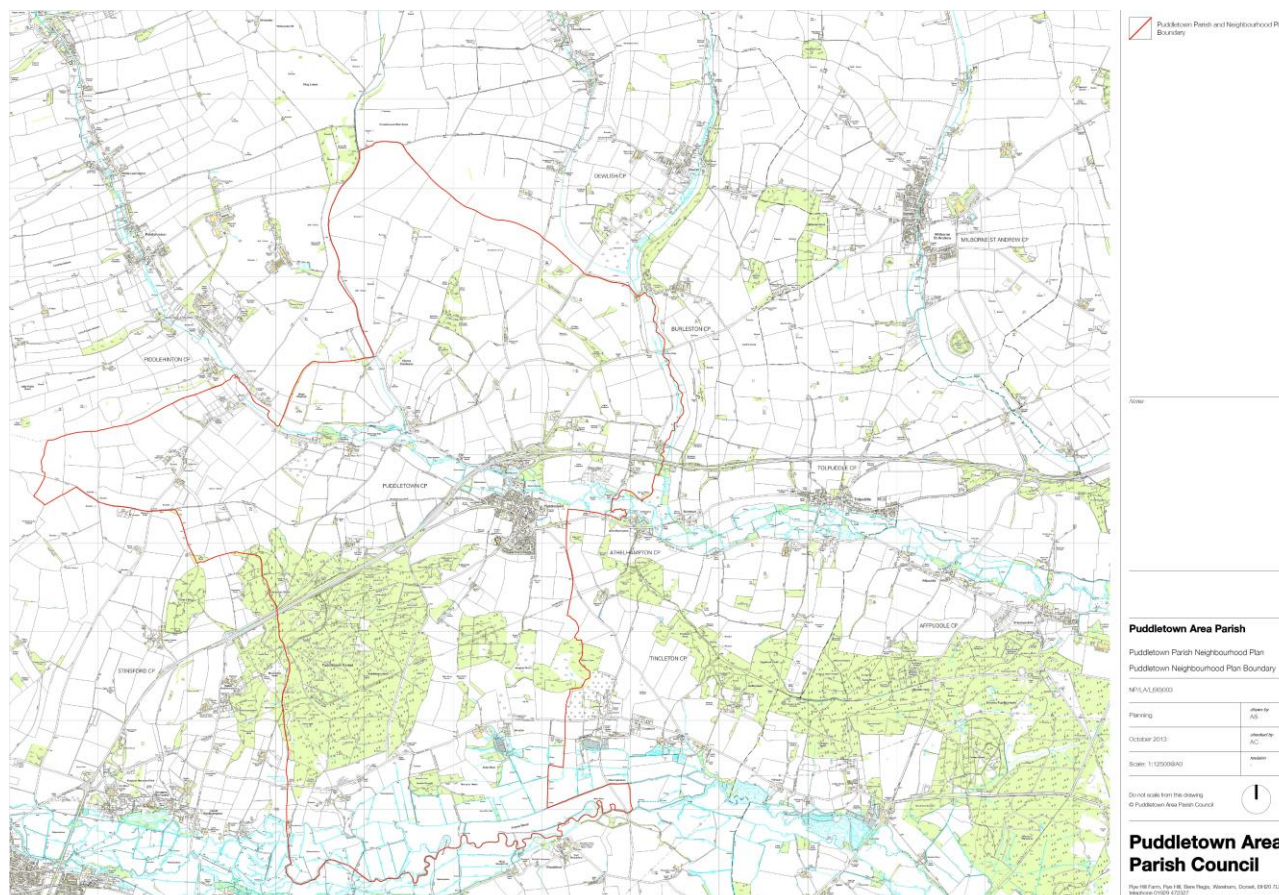
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This environmental report has been prepared by Jo Witherden BSc(Hons) DipTP DipUD MRTPI of Dorset Planning Consultant Ltd, on behalf of Puddletown Area Parish Council. The Parish Council is the qualifying body authorised to act in preparing a neighbourhood development plan in relation to the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan area.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

1.2 The Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan area was designated by West Dorset District Council in January 2014. It covers the civic parish of Puddletown, as shown below.

Figure 1. The Neighbourhood Plan area



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LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

1.3 Government guidance¹ recognises that where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) in accordance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).

1.4 There are other European directives that may also be of relevance to neighbourhood plans, such as Directive (1992/43/EC) on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive (2009/147/EC) on the conservation of wild birds (often referred to as the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives respectively) which aim to protect and improve Europe's most important habitats and species. If an SEA is not required it is highly unlikely that the need for more detailed assessments under these directives will be required.

1.5 The Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) or the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) may apply in particular circumstances.

¹ www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal

1.6 Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should therefore be assessed at a reasonably early stage to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. A “screening” assessment is the process for doing this formally, in consultation with Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The process for this is outlined in Appendix 1. If likely significant environmental effects are identified, an environmental report must be prepared².

1.7 Once a decision has been taken that an SEA is required, it is necessary to consult on its scope with the Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The legislation makes clear that they should respond within 5 weeks. Their responses have to be considered and should shape the scope of the final environmental report.

1.8 The next steps are the testing of any reasonable alternative options and the preparation of the environmental report. The significance of environmental effects that are likely to arise from the pre-submission draft neighbourhood plan are evaluated against objectives based on the issues raised through screening and scoping, and compared to the likely effects of any reasonable alternatives that have been identified. Suggestions for mitigation and techniques for monitoring policies are also made.

1.9 The environmental report is then published for consultation alongside the pre-submission draft Neighbourhood Plan. Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency have to be consulted.

1.10 The process as described above is outlined in **Appendix 2**.

MEETING THE SEA DIRECTIVE REQUIREMENTS

1.11 The table below identifies how the various parts of this environmental report address the requirements of the Directive.

Table 1. SEA Directive requirements

Directive Requirements	Where covered
A non-technical summary	Front
An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	Section 4
The environmental characteristics of the area (particularly those areas that could be significantly affected by the plan)	Section 2
Existing environmental problems and how these are likely to change over time if the plan was not implemented	Section 2
Relevant established environmental protection objectives and how these have been taken into account	Section 3
A description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how)	Section 5
An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives evaluated	Section 5 and 6
The likely significant effects of the plan on the environment (including secondary, cumulative, permanent and temporary effects)	Section 6 and 7
The measures envisaged to prevent / reduce / offset any significant adverse environmental effects of the plan or programme	Section 6 and 7
A description of monitoring measures	Section 7

2. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

2.1 The following summarises the findings of the scoping report undertaken by AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited in October 2018 (for further details please refer to the draft Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan - Scoping Report, dated October 2018).

² Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004

LANDSCAPE QUALITY

2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan area lies adjacent to the Dorset AONB. The Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase National Character Area (NCA).³ The NCA forms the south-western limb of England's Cretaceous Chalk outcrop and lies across the counties of Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire. The NCA has a strong rural and agricultural character. The area lies within the Cerne and Piddle Valleys and Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area as identified in the West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment⁴.

2.3 The landscape characteristics of this area are summarised as follows:

- Open and expansive chalk downland incised by flat-bottomed valleys and associated branching chalk streams and dry coombes;
- Regular pattern of large-scale arable fields, with trimmed hazel hedgerow boundaries at lower elevations and post and wire fencing at higher elevations offering long distance views;
- Many prehistoric monuments such as barrows and prehistoric field systems have survived and are often visible as humps along the skyline;
- Occasional small regular native woodlands and tree groups associated with built form and corners of fields, or functioning as shelterbelts;
- On the south facing dry slopes, surviving patches of semi-natural chalk habitat support a rich diversity of grassland, scrub and woodland including relic hazel coppice. Soil creep is often visible across the steep valley sides;
- Small-scale pattern of pasture fields within the valley floor. The fertile alluvial soils support a diversity of vegetation and wet grazing pasture enclosed by thick, species rich hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees. Historic water meadows are evident as subtle field patterns and some water meadow channels survive;
- Linear woods of riparian species such as willow and alder follow watercourses flanked by wet sedge and rush;
- The A35 road corridor is a major feature in this open landscape; and
- Lanes have a rural character with small humped bridges, and traditional fingerpost signs. Straight Roman roads radiate from nearby Dorchester.

2.4 Detrimental features include

- The A35 corridor has localised major impact within this open landscape. The majority of the road in this area is dual carriageway with the associated grade separated junctions and substantial, very angular cuttings. The associated noise and lighting also add to the impact;
- Pylons and masts are visually prominent creating visual clutter and interrupting the characteristic open views;
- Unsympathetic *Laylandii* and conifer planting has a detrimental impact on landscape character;
- A growth in the use of pastures for horse grazing is changing the rural character of settlement edges;
- Historic loss of traditional orchards around settlements; and
- Some traditional barns and farm buildings are in a poor state of repair.

2.5 There is an area designated as 'Land of Local Landscape Importance' under the previous (2006) Local Plan, which will be reviewed as part of the Local Plan Review. The designation currently applies an area to the east of the village, surrounding the Grade: II* Ilsington House and is entirely within Conservation Area.

BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY ASSETS

2.6 There are no European designated sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area; however, there are significant areas of land designated for its biodiversity value to the east and south of the plan

³ Natural England (2013) National Character Area Profile 134: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase [online] available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5846213517639680?category=587130>

⁴ West Dorset District Council (2009) West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment [online] available at: https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/pdf/m/r/Landscape_Character_Assessment_February_2009.pdf

area, particularly leading out to the coastal areas around the Isle of Purbeck and Poole. A number of European designated sites are in close proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan area, and as such development within the area has the potential to lead to indirect effects⁵.

2.7 The River Frome Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) runs along the southern border of the Plan area, and this is the only nationally designated site within the Neighbourhood Plan area⁶. The River Frome SSSI is a major chalk stream covering an area of over 150ha and overlapping with the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar. The majority of the component units are considered to be in an 'unfavourable-no change' condition. There are species-rich plant communities and the site supports rare and scarce aquatic invertebrates, a characteristic assemblage of breeding riverside birds and a range of fish species. The River Frome is mostly fed by tributaries from the chalk of the South Wessex Downs but then drains into a geology of sands, gravels and clays below Dorchester. This gives rise to a chalk stream community which differs from the classic type found on the rivers Test and Itchen in Hampshire.

2.8 Thorncombe Wood Local Nature Reserve is located in the south west just adjacent to the Neighbourhood Plan area boundary and connected to Puddletown Forest.¹⁴ The site incorporates an area of around 25ha of deciduous and mixed woodland and Black Heath. There is great habitat diversity with mature oak, sweet chestnut, beech and mixed woodland giving way to birch and open areas of bracken and fragments of heath.⁸

2.9 The Neighbourhood Plan area also includes seven Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) which are areas of local wildlife importance.⁹ The sites are:

- Hills Coppice – 7.7ha site of ash/hazel coppice with good ground flora;
- Home Eweleaze – 2.3ha site consisting of a west-facing chalk bank;
- Stafford Park Copse – 4.1ha site of mixed plantation and semi-natural woodland;
- Yellowham Wood – 49.8ha site that lies partly within the PNP area, it is a large mainly deciduous woodland with a rich flora and butterfly populations;
- Ilsington Wood – 82.2ha site that lies partly within the PNP area, it is a very large woodland, which is mostly deciduous with a rich ground flora;
- Puddletown Forest – 26.1ha site of areas of open managed heathland;
- Duddle Heath – 16.6ha site, a large area of heathland restoration; and
- Druce Watermeadows – 7.7ha site of old watermeadows with a relic flora.

HERITAGE ASSETS

2.10 There are 19 Scheduled Monuments in the PNP area, 5 of which are listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register¹⁰; the condition of these 5 assets is identified as 'extensive significant problems' with a 'declining' trend and a principal vulnerability of arable ploughing.

2.11 Further to this, Puddletown contains 58 of Listed Buildings, predominantly concentrated within Puddletown village, and along the B3142 stretch to Piddlehinton; but also in Ilsington, Tincleton and around the edges of Puddletown Forest. The majority (53) of these are Grade II Listed Buildings, however Ilsington House, the Old Vicarage adjoining it, and No.8, The Square, are Grade II*, and the Church of Saint Mary and Waterston Manor are both Listed Grade I.

⁵ JNCC provides detailed information for each European designated site, available at:

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4>

⁶ Natural England (2018) Magic Map Application [online] available at: <http://magic.gov.uk/>

⁷ Natural England (2018) Magic Map Application [online] available at: <http://magic.gov.uk/>

⁸ Natural England – Search for designated site details [online]

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx>

⁹ West Dorset District Council (2018) Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

¹⁰ Historic England (2018) Heritage at Risk Register [online] available at:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-atrisk/search-register/>

2.12 At Lower Waterston in the east is also Waterston Manor Registered Park and Garden. Athelhampton Registered Park and Garden also lies partially within the Neighbourhood Plan area in the east.

2.13 Puddletown lies within the Puddletown, Stinsford & Lower Bockhampton & Tolpuddle Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal¹¹ identifies that the key points of quality analysis for Puddletown are:

- A fine landscape setting, with undulating topography, an attractive river course, remnants of managed water meadows and mature trees;
- Good clean edges to the settlement to the north, north-east and east;
- Related to this, well defined entry points, particularly from the west and east, on the former A35;
- A rich archaeological heritage, with a range of sites from Prehistoric barrows and cultivation remains, a Roman road, a Medieval settlement site, and Post-medieval vernacular buildings, industrial and farming structures and the earthworks and channels relating to water meadow management;
- 39 Listed Building entries, including a Grade I church, three Grade II* gentry houses, a strong underpinning of smaller cottages and substantial buildings relating to a major mid-Victorian development of a model farming estate;
- Over a dozen unlisted buildings and building groups of character and/or group value;
- Coherent groups of Listed and unlisted buildings, boundary walls, railings, trees and details, notably on the western part of High Street, Mill Street, The Square, the ancillary buildings of Ilsington House and The Green;
- Consistent use of South Dorset limestone, cob, local brick clays, thatch and vernacular building details that given an overall unity to the village;
- Some good quality modern infill and building conversions that add to the sense of place and enhance the historic core; and
- Some good details, including shop fronts, doorways, walling and ironwork.

2.14 Further to this, it is also noted that there are some detrimental features, such as;

- Unsympathetic alterations to unlisted buildings of value;
- The loss of details such as chimney pots;
- Poles and wires around Mill Street and The Square;
- A shop front with inappropriate colours and materials;
- A boundary on High Street with potential for landscaping enhancement; and
- The intrusion of modern development into green space on Blandford Road.

2.15 There are also a number of Important Local Buildings identified through the Conservation Area Appraisal, not only do they contribute individually as attractive and interesting unlisted buildings, but they also contribute to the value of larger groups.

AGRICULTURAL LAND VALUE AND MINERALS RESOURCES

2.16 A belt of land surrounding Puddletown is graded agricultural land. Much of this belt in the south is Grade 2 best and most versatile agricultural land and an area of Grade 1 best and most versatile land is in the south east. The remainder of the belt is Graded 3a and 3b, interspersed with further areas of Grade 2 in the east and west. This belt however is only immediately adjacent to the settlement area in the north (Grades 3a and 3b north of High Street and largely concentrated west of Blandford Road / The Moor) and in the south (Grade 2) below White Hill. The land south of the

¹¹ West Dorset District Council (2007) Puddletown, Stinsford & Lower Bockhampton & Tolpuddle Conservation Area Appraisal [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning/planning-constraints/conservationareas/west-dorset/pdfs/puddletown-stinsford-and-lower-bockhampton-and-tolpuddle-conservation-area-appraisal.pdf>

Neighbourhood Plan area is largely Grade 1 and 2 best and most versatile agricultural land. Overall therefore it is considered that there is a strong presence of the highest quality agricultural land within, and surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan area.

2.17 Parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area are particularly rich in minerals resources. There are mineral safeguarding areas identified by the Local Planning Authority with particular reference to sand and gravel, most notably in the southern part of the parish (albeit that the main site allocations for the current Minerals Site Plan are not within the Neighbourhood Plan area)¹².

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FLOOD RISK

2.18 In relation to GHG emissions, source data from the Department of Energy and Climate Change suggests that West Dorset District has had consistently higher per capita emissions total than that of both the South West of England and England as a whole since 2005. The transport sector is also identified as the biggest contributor to these emissions.

2.19 The outcome of research on the probable effects of climate change in the UK was released in 2009 by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) team¹³. UKCP09 gives climate information for the UK up to the end of this century and projections of future changes to the climate are provided, based on simulations from climate models. Projections are broken down to a regional level across the UK and are shown in probabilistic form, which illustrate the potential range of changes and the level of confidence in each prediction. The effects of climate change for the South West by 2050 for a medium emissions scenario are likely to be as follows:

- The central estimate of increase in winter mean temperatures is 2.1°C and an increase in summer mean temperature of 2.7°C
- The central estimate of change in winter mean precipitation is 17% and summer mean precipitation is -20%

2.20 Resulting from these changes, a range of risks may exist for the Neighbourhood Plan area. These include:

- Effects on water resources from climate change, including reduction in availability of groundwater for extraction and adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain
- Increased risk of flooding, including increased vulnerability to 1:100 year floods, flooding of roads and soil erosion due to flash flooding
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their southerly distribution, and spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution
- Increased demand for air-conditioning
- Risk of road surfaces melting more frequently due to increased temperature

2.21 The areas at highest risk of flooding in the Neighbourhood Plan area are largely concentrated around the river corridors of the Frome and Piddle¹⁴.

WATER RESOURCES / QUALITY

2.22 The Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the Poole Harbour Rivers operational catchment, as part of the wider Dorset management catchment. Within the parish there are two waterbodies; the River Piddle (Upper), and the River Frome Dorset (Lower) downstream of Louds Mill Dorchester. Further to this, Devils Brook also lies adjacent to the area in the east (just north east of Athelhampton).

¹² <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/dorset-county-council/minerals-planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-local-plan.aspx>

¹³ Data released 18th June 2009 [online] available at: <http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/21684>

¹⁴ Environment Agency (2018) Flood Map for Planning [online] available at: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

2.23 The River Piddle (Upper) is classified by the Environment Agency as having 'good' chemical quality, but 'poor' ecological quality, while the River Frome Dorset (Lower) downstream Louds Mill Dorchester is considered to have 'good' chemical quality and 'moderate' ecological quality. Both Rivers are linked to the Nitrates Directive and Shellfish Water Directive (Poole Harbour West), and the River Frome Dorset (Lower) downstream Louds Mill Dorchester is also linked to the Habitats and Species Directive affecting the Poole Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Dorset Heaths and Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) & Studland Dunes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Devils Brook is also linked to the Nitrates Directive and Shellfish Water Directive (Portland Harbour West), and is classified as of 'good' chemical quality and 'bad' ecological quality.

2.24 The entire Neighbourhood Plan area lies within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone for eutrophic water and groundwater.

2.25 Water resources (water supply and sewerage services) in the area are managed by Wessex Water. The Draft Water Resources Management Plan¹⁵ identifies that there is access to enough water to meet the needs of customers in the plan area for at least the next 25 years, without the need to develop new sources of water.

AIR QUALITY

2.26 There are no Air Quality Management Areas identified in the area. The Dorchester AQMA is located at High East Street (over 7km to the south west of the Plan area), and connected to Puddletown by the B3150/A35. Declared in 2009 for exceedances in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), the Dorchester AQMA encompasses High East Street and any dwellings and their associated curtilage within 15 metres of the road centreline. Actions to address the exceedances include the implementation of the Dorchester Transport and Environment Plan to improve traffic flows and create a one way system through High West Street.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

2.27 In 2011, the Puddletown LSOA was ranked 22,602 out of 32,844 in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (where 1 is the most deprived), indicating low levels of deprivation in the area.¹⁶ Population trends indicate an ageing population and reduced numbers of younger children in the plan area.

2.28 The health profile for West Dorset¹⁷ identifies that the health of people in West Dorset is generally better than the England average. Around 13% (2,000) of children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average.

2.29 The area profile produced by Dorset Statistics for Puddletown¹⁸ identifies that 48% of residents are in very good health, and 35.4% are in good health. 2.5% of residents are identified as having bad health and 0.9% as having very bad health. Whilst there are limited leisure facilities within the Neighbourhood Plan area, there are wider health and leisure facilities available at Dorchester.

EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL ISSUES

2.30 From the above assessment, the following existing environmental problems have been identified and consideration given to how these may change over time:

¹⁵ Wessex Water (2017) Draft Water Resource Management Plan [online] available at: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/waterplan/>

¹⁶ MHCLG (2015) English indices of deprivation 2015 [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/englishindices-of-deprivation-2015>

¹⁷ Public Health England (2017) West Dorset District Health Profile 2017 [online] available at: <http://fingertipsreports.phe.org.uk/health-profiles/2017/e07000052.pdf>

¹⁸ Dorset Statistics (2018) Area Profile for Puddletown [online] available at: <https://apps.geowessex.com/stats/AreaProfiles/Ward/puddletown>

Biodiversity, Geology, Flora and Fauna

2.31 Habitats and species will potentially face increasing pressures from future development within the Neighbourhood Plan area, with the potential for negative impacts on the wider ecological network. This may include a loss of habitats and impacts on biodiversity networks, which may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Whilst there are no European designated sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area, a number of European designated sites are in close proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan area, and as such development within the area has the potential to lead to indirect effects. The ecological status of waterbodies in the Neighbourhood Plan area is 'poor' to 'moderate'.

2.32 The Neighbourhood Plan presents an opportunity to maximise benefits for biodiversity by including consideration of important habitats, species and designated sites at an early stage of planning for future growth. Planning for growth can ensure that suitable mitigation measures (for example the provision of recreational space to minimise residents travelling outside of the plan area to access sensitive sites for recreational purposes) are in place to alleviate the pressures of growth on biodiversity.

Landscape

2.33 New development has the potential to lead to incremental but small changes in landscape and townscape character and quality in and around the area. This includes from the loss of landscape features and visual impact. However, new development also has the potential to enhance the historic setting of the town and better reveal assets' cultural heritage significance, educating both local residents and visitors.

Cultural Heritage

2.34 There are designated heritage assets within the Neighbourhood Plan area which are identified by Historic England as 'at risk' - mainly arising from arable ploughing. New development also has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of cultural heritage assets; for example through inappropriate design and layout. It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations offer a degree of protection to cultural heritage assets and their settings.

Material Assets, Soil, Water, Air and Climatic Factors

2.35 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the Neighbourhood Plan area, with increases in mean summer and winter temperatures, increases in mean precipitation in winter, and decreases in mean precipitation in summer. This is likely to increase the risks associated with climate change (including fluvial flooding) with an increased need for resilience and adaptation.

2.36 In terms of climate change contribution, the transport sector is identified as the greatest consumer of energy and the biggest contributor to GHG emissions in the wider area. GHG emissions may be reduced with wider adoption of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies. Future development within the wider area also has the potential to increase traffic and congestion. This has the potential to exacerbate levels of NO₂ at the Dorchester AQMA. However the likely scale of new growth in the village is unlikely to have significant effects on air quality in the AQMA.

2.37 It is considered unlikely that limited development proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant impact on the wider area's Nitrate Vulnerable Zone unless agricultural intensification occurs.

2.38 New development within the area also has the potential to impact upon areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.

Population and Human Health

2.39 Population trends indicate an ageing population and reduced numbers of younger children in the plan area. An ageing population may have implications for housing, and may indicate a need for more specialist accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly in the future. Furthermore, smaller housing types are relatively high priced in comparison to Dorset and England averages,

which could have implications for the younger population as first-time buyers are more likely to experience difficulty in terms of accessibility to and affordability of housing.

3. RELEVANT PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Based on the above appraisal, the following plans and programmes have been identified as potentially relevant, and the issues they highlight identified for consideration. In drawing up this list reference has been made to the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (July 2016) and the SEA scoping report undertaken by AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited in October 2018.

Table 2. Plans, Programmes and Key Objectives

Topic	Plans and Programmes	Key Objectives
Biodiversity, geology, flora and fauna	EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (2011), EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directive (92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC as amended) EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) and Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011) Dorset Biodiversity Strategy (Mid Term review) (2010) Dorset Biodiversity Protocol West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015)	Retain the protection and improvement of the natural environment as core objectives of the planning system Seek to protect and conserve habitats and wild flora and fauna and avoid adverse effects upon nature conservation sites, including terrestrial and water environments Take into account legal protection of species in developing policies relating to biodiversity and habitat protection. Identify and map components of the local ecological networks Where development takes place, buffers should be provided to environmental assets to improve their biodiversity value and facilitate adaptation to climate change, mitigation achieved and biodiversity enhancements secured.
Landscape	European Landscape Convention (2000) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015)	Recognise landscapes as an essential component of people's surroundings, their cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity. The landscape character of the District will be protected through retention of the features that characterise the area.
Cultural heritage	Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015) Puddletown, et al Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)	Have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses" Conserve and enhance heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance and secure a viable use consistent with its conservation.
Material Assets, Soil, Water, Air and Climatic Factors	Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) U.K Climate Change Act (2008) and UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report (2017) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) South West River Basin Management Plan	Promote the sustainable use of water and prevent further deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and associated wetlands, surface and groundwaters. Reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, and mitigate against further climate change by reducing carbon emissions. Reduce carbon emissions to meet the UK target and move towards a low carbon

Topic	Plans and Programmes	Key Objectives
	Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England (2009) Dorset County Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2014) Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan (2011-2026) Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Minerals Strategy (2014) West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015) Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Energy Efficiency Strategy (2009) and Renewable Energy Strategy (2013) West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2018) West Dorset Climate Change Strategy (2009)	economy Tackle the environmental and health problems relating to air quality Steer development away from areas of highest flood risk, apply sequential & exceptions test, seek opportunities to relocate development to more sustainable locations. Improve the quality of soils and safeguard their ability to provide essential services for future generations Prevent the unnecessary sterilisation of valuable mineral resources and negative impacts of incompatible development on existing minerals operations or facilities. Provide opportunities to reduce car use; improve safety; ensure convenient and appropriate public transport services; and seek greater network efficiency for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians and better access to services for everyday needs.
Population and human health	European Sustainable Development Strategy (2006) UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (2005) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy (2016) Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020 (2010) Dorset Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019 (2016) West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015) West Dorset Community Plan 2010-26 (2013) West Dorset Weymouth and Portland Joint Housing Strategy 2014-19	Promote a prosperous local economy, create the conditions for enterprise to flourish Identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing to reflect local demand, to boost the supply of housing and ensure everyone can live in a good quality home Meet identified local and essential rural needs Contribute towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities that are socially inclusive Promote safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion Promote good public health, access to healthcare and opportunities for healthy, active and independent lifestyles - reduce inequalities; and working better together to deliver prevention and early intervention.

4. PROPOSED SCOPE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER RELEVANT PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

4.1 Any Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan for that area, in order to meet the basic conditions and be made¹⁹. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains may take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a Local Plan that would otherwise conflict, until superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted later.

4.2 The Local Plan for West Dorset was adopted in October 2015 (and its review has now commenced). The Local Plan's spatial strategy focuses the majority of new development on the

¹⁹ As required under Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 section 8(2)e

main towns, including nearby Dorchester. The main settlement in the Neighbourhood Plan area - Puddletown – does not have any specific site allocations but does have a defined development boundary, and as one of the larger villages is considered to be a potentially a suitable location for some development (primarily to meet local needs) at an appropriate scale to the size of the settlement.

4.3 The Neighbourhood Plan cannot deal with county matters (mineral extraction and waste development), nationally significant infrastructure or development that falls within Annex 1 to Council Directive 85/337/EEC as these are specifically excluded by the legislation.

THE PLAN'S CONTENTS AND MAIN OBJECTIVES

The scope of the plan is follows.

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

“In 2031 Puddletown will be a safe, thriving, and well-connected village, maintaining its unique character and sense of community spirit, and welcoming residents of all ages and abilities”.

4.4 The following objectives reflect the resulting scope of the plan:

- retain the character of the village and surrounding countryside, maintaining our much-loved green spaces and views within and out of the village, archaeological sites, historic buildings and the links to Thomas Hardy, with any new development being well-designed and environmentally-friendly. There should be no inappropriate infilling or unplanned sprawl.
- look after our environment for today's and future generations, protecting ecological habitats, providing adequate flood defences, and avoiding harmful levels of noise from the A35.
- develop its housing stock, including the development of significant quantities of genuinely affordable housing for local people, at a pace commensurate with the desire to keep the village thriving.
- maintain and improve opportunities for social interaction within the village, addressing all age groups, to create a safe, secure and welcoming environment, and ensure that infrastructure is planned to meet the needs at the heart of our community, including but not limited to, schools, doctors, vets, broadband, bus services, children play areas and a shop, post office and pub.
- encourage new, and support existing, businesses and services in order to increase local job opportunities. This may include an increase in the number of shops and services and help improve social opportunities for villagers, and increasing tourism opportunities based on the area's unique history and character, but without harming the environment.
- be a well-connected and pedestrian safe village, with public footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways designed to provide a choice of inter-connecting routes within the village and beyond, and roads designed to ensure that traffic speed is maintained at a safe level and there is sufficient public and private car parking to avoid associated parking problems.

HOUSING NEEDS

4.5 In terms of the likely need for further development, a housing needs assessment was undertaken, and advice taken from the Local Planning Authority, in order to identify an appropriate housing target. The conclusion from this was that a housing target based on 7 dwellings per year would seem appropriate at this point in time. For the 12 year period from April 2019 – March 2031 this equates to 84 new dwellings in total. As of September 2019, there were 9 sites which had planning permission for a total of 62 houses, which would count towards the supply, leaving a requirement to find land for about 22 more dwellings.

EMPLOYMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

4.6 No clear evidence of employment need was identified as part of the research underpinning the Neighbourhood Plan, and as such no specific employment land target has been set. The main infrastructure requirements relate to the potential need to expand the Middle School, and also (to a lesser extent) the cemetery. Discussion with Wessex Water have highlighted that, whilst the sewer

networks have limited capacity, once allocations are made in the Neighbourhood Plan, Wessex Water should be able to design and construct any necessary improvements to accommodate the anticipated level of growth, and will look to ensure that the works are programmed to match the rate of development.

5. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

DETERMINING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

5.1 From the above assessment of environmental issues and relevant plans, programmes and objectives, the following are considered to be the important issues that should be included in the assessment of options and alternatives. These have been adapted and slightly simplified from the objectives proposed in the scoping report (the main changes being the omission of waste and water management objectives which were not considered to be significant environmental issues, and the inclusion of minerals sterilisation as a specific issue):

Table 3. SEA Objectives and assessment basis

Objective	Assessment basis – will the option...
Biodiversity Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features	Avoid impacts on designated wildlife sites within and outside of the parish, including sites such as Thorncombe Wood
	Avoid impacts on important (priority) habitats or species that may be within or close to the site
	Be able to include enhancements to achieve a net gain in biodiversity
Landscape Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes	Avoid adversely impacting on the Dorset AONB - including its immediate setting (as seen from views within the AONB)?
	Conserve and enhance landscape character, including key landscape and townscape features?
Heritage Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource within the Neighbourhood Plan area	Conserve and enhance buildings / structures of historic interest (and their settings)?
	Conserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area (and its setting)?
	Conserve and enhance sites of archaeological interest, and support understanding of the historic environment if possible?
Material Assets Ensure the efficient and effective use of land	Promote the use of previously developed land?
	Avoid the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1 – 3a)?
	Avoid the sterilisation of important minerals resources
Climate Change Reduce the level of contribution to, and support the resilience of the area to the potential effects of, climate change	Be sufficiently close to facilities (by foot / cycle) and to public transport routes to reduce the need to travel / journeys made?
	Be able to include options to generate energy from low or zero carbon sources?
	Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change?
	Improve and extend green infrastructure networks to help with sustainable drainage and climate resilience objectives?
Transport Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	Facilitate working locally - including from home and remote working?
	Avoid exacerbating existing traffic problems (especially on roads used by pedestrians) and improve road safety?
Population Cater for existing and future residents' needs in an inclusive and self-contained community, and	Promote the development / availability of a range of high quality, accessible community facilities?
	Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents - including privacy and amenity of adjoining residents?
	Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes to meet

ensure an appropriate mix of dwellings	identified needs?
Human health Improve the health and wellbeing of residents	Provide and enhance access to green infrastructure (including areas for play and the countryside RoW network)?
	Avoid and reduce noise pollution, including noise from the A35?

IN THE ABSENCE OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

5.2 There is no legal requirement to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for all areas, and in its absence planning decisions would be made in line with the development plan (which in this case is the West Dorset and Weymouth Local Plan 2016), unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.3 The strategic approach of the Local Plan is that “development opportunities in rural areas will be focused primarily at the larger villages and should take place at an appropriate scale to the size of the village (unless identified as a strategic allocation). Neighbourhood development plans will also bring forward new development, and may allocate additional sites, or extend an existing (or add a new) development boundary to help deliver growth. Away from existing settlements, development opportunities will be more limited and focussed on those activities that will help meet essential rural needs and support the rural economy.”

5.4 In order to be made, a Neighbourhood Plan must meet the basic conditions. These include the requirement that the Plan has had appropriate regard to national policy and is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the area, and that the plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

5.5 In the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan, although development may still take place within the defined development boundary, the potential for development outside of this area is strictly controlled (unless delivered through an exception-type policy or if the Council lacks a 5 year housing land supply). This is likely to have an adverse social and economic impact if local needs cannot be met. Features of local environmental importance (such as valued green spaces) may not be readily apparent and therefore some environmental harm could also occur.

5.6 The Neighbourhood Plan provides the opportunity to achieve a more co-ordinated and planned pattern of development that takes into account environmental, social and economic issues, giving greater certainty to local communities, local businesses and service providers, to enable more sustainable patterns of development.

SCOPING CONSULTATION

5.7 The Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England were consulted by AECOM on the scope of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. The consultation ran between 8th October 2018 and 12th November 2018, for the statutory 5 weeks, in line with the requirements set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

5.8 The responses to the consultation and how these were acted upon are summarised below:

Table 4. Scoping consultation responses

Respondent	Summary of response	Actions taken
Environment Agency	We are satisfied that the process will be considering the relevant environmental impacts, plans and programmes associated with any development. Please note that whilst the document has extracted the current flood map for planning the outlines may change due to updated modelling work for the Piddle Valley that is due to be finalised in 2019/20.	Noted Undertake further flood risk map checks at this stage
Historic England	We have no comments to offer on the Report itself. It will be important that the SEA process engages in a robust and informed assessment of the possible sites being considered, as far as their relationship	Noted

	with relevant heritage assets is concerned	
Natural England	Natural England agree with the objectives of the SEA	Noted

TECHNICAL OR OTHER DIFFICULTIES WITH THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

5.9 Evidence is constantly updated which can make elements of the assessment out of date (such as the appraisal of relevant policies and programmes), although this is unlikely to materially affect the objectives and scoring.







5.10 Whilst it was not practical to carry out detailed technical assessments of all the site options (such as a landscape visual impact assessment), a site assessment was undertaken by AECOM and this independent report has been used as the primary basis for the site options conclusions, supplemented by further information where available.

5.11 National planning guidance on plan-making advises that this should be based on proportionate evidence. Given the scale of development proposed and likely environmental impacts the above difficulties are not considered to be of significant concern.

6. TESTING

TESTING OF THE PLAN'S POLICIES AND REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES

6.1 This section provides a summary of the sustainability impacts associated with each policy area in the pre-submission draft Neighbourhood Plan. The results of the analysis of each policy is provided in table format against each of the sustainability objectives in Section 5, and graded as follows:

Key:		significant positive impact likely
		positive impact likely
	-	neutral impact likely
		adverse impact likely
		significant adverse impact likely
		impact uncertain but unlikely to be adversely significant
		impact uncertain but potentially adversely significant

LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT POLICIES:

6.2 Policies 1-5 deal with the objective of retaining the character of the village and surrounding countryside, maintaining much-loved green spaces and views within and out of the village, archaeological sites, historic buildings and the links to Thomas Hardy, with any new development being well-designed and environmentally-friendly. There should be no inappropriate infilling or unplanned sprawl. No reasonable alternatives were identified for further assessment – the only other option being the omission of the policies and reliance on the Local Plan (ie the baseline).

Table 5. Policies 1 – 5 assessment scores

Environmental assessment objective								
Policies and reasonable alternatives	Biodiversity,	Landscape	Heritage	Material Assets	Climate change	Transport	Population	Human Health

1. Local Green Spaces	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓
2. Local Landscape Features	✓	✓✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
3. Village character	✓	✓✓	✓	x	x	-	-	-
4. Respecting the history of Puddletown	-	✓	✓✓	-	-	-	-	-
5. Design	-	✓✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-

6.3 The following table sets out the basis for the above summarised scores.

Table 6. Policies 1 – 5 assessment basis

Objective	Assessment basis
Biodiversity Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features	In general many of the policies will support biodiversity – in particular the protection given to the existing features that support wildlife (such as the trees on the Green and wildlife corridor created by the Coombe) and avoiding overdevelopment within the village.
Landscape Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes	Whilst none of the policies are likely to impact on the Dorset AONB, they will also help to conserve and enhance landscape character, including key landscape and townscape features, and in particular Policies 2, 3 and 5 which include much more detail on these specific points.
Heritage Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource within the Neighbourhood Plan area	In general many of the policies will support the conservation and enhancement of the area's many heritage assets. Several LGS provide the setting to Listed Buildings, the design character draws on the area's local vernacular whilst recognising that changes may be appropriate to achieve zero carbon buildings. Policy 4 in particular seeks to raise the profile of the non-designated heritage assets and cultural connections.
Material Assets Ensure the efficient and effective use of land	Most of these policies are likely to have a neutral or negligible impact against this objective. Whilst the limitation on infill development (under Policy 3) will potentially increase the need to use greenfield sites, garden land does not come under the definition of previously developed land, and in any event the level of additional development pressure that this would generate is not considered to be significant.
Climate Change Reduce the level of contribution to, and support the resilience of the area to the potential effects of, climate change	The retention of green spaces and trees in and around the village will help mitigate flood risk and climate change impacts to a small degree. Whilst the limitation on infill development (under Policy 3) will potentially increase the need to use greenfield sites that may be less accessible, the level of additional development pressure that this would generate is not considered to be significant and managed through the site allocations process. Policy 5 in particular seeks to encourage zero-carbon solutions.
Transport Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	Most of these policies are likely to have a neutral or negligible impact against this objective. Policy 5 does include a number of advisory points that should encourage walking and cycling, such as that providing a choice of connections from new development to adjoining areas should be one of first considerations in good design.
Population Cater for existing and future residents' needs in an inclusive and self-contained community...	Most of these policies are likely to have a neutral or negligible impact against this objective. Policy 5 does include a number of advisory points that should encourage good design and a variety of house types and sizes, and help reinforce a sense of place and belonging.
Human health Improve the health and wellbeing of residents	Most of these policies are likely to have a neutral or negligible impact against this objective. Several LGS protected under Policy 1 are of particular recreational value to the local population.

THE ENVIRONMENT POLICIES:

6.4 Policies 6-9 deal with the objective of looking after our environment for today's and future generations, protecting ecological habitats, providing adequate flood defences, and avoiding harm to health from the noise levels near to the A35. No reasonable alternatives were identified for further assessment – the only other option being the omission of the policies and reliance on the Local Plan (ie the baseline).

Table 7. Policies 6 – 9 assessment scores

Environmental assessment objective								
Policies and reasonable alternatives	Biodiversity,	Landscape	Heritage	Material Assets	Climate change	Transport	Population	Human Health
6. Wildlife and Natural Habitats	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
7. European protected sites	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8. Flood Risk	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
9. Noise Assessments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓

6.5 The following table sets out the basis for the above summarised scores.

Table 8. Policies 6 – 9 assessment basis

Objective	Assessment basis
Biodiversity Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features	Whilst the adopted Local Plan ENV2 encourages opportunities to incorporate and enhance biodiversity in and around developments, and protects European sites in line with national policy, Policies 6 and 7 will require this in a more comprehensive manner. Policy 8 includes reference to the need to consider measures to improve the ecological quality of the River Piddle and the Devils Brook within any drainage schemes.
Landscape Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes	Most of these policies are likely to have a neutral or negligible impact against this objective. Policy 9 specifically highlights the need to avoid the requirement for noise mitigation measures that would have a significant adverse impact on local landscape character, and the requirement to consider ecology under Policy 8 is likely to mean that any drainage scheme is not over-engineered.
Heritage Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource within the Neighbourhood Plan area	Most of these policies are likely to have a neutral or negligible impact against this objective. Policy 9 specifically highlights the need to avoid the requirement for noise mitigation measures that would have a significant adverse impact on heritage assets, and the requirement to consider ecology under Policy 8 is likely to mean that any drainage scheme is not over-engineered.
Material Assets	No relevant impacts identified.
Climate Change Reduce the level of contribution to, and support the resilience of the ... climate change	Policy 6 refers specifically to the climate change resilience of the local wildlife and habitats as a key consideration. Policy 8 clarifies the particularly local issues with regard to flood risk to ensure these are considered in any planning decisions. The text notes the updated modelling which is shortly due from the Environment Agency.
Transport	No relevant impacts identified.
Population	No relevant impacts identified.
Human health Improve the health and	Whilst the adopted Local Plan ENV16 ensures that developments which are sensitive to noise or unpleasant odour emissions are not

wellbeing of residents	permitted in close proximity to existing sources where it would adversely affect future occupants, Policy 9 will require this in a more comprehensive manner
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HOUSING POLICIES:

6.6 Policies 10-13 deal with the objective of develop the area's housing stock, including genuinely affordable housing for local people, at a pace commensurate with the desire to keep the village thriving.

6.7 In considering reasonable in relation to the site allocations, these were chosen from those with 'potential' identified through the initial site assessment appraisals undertaken by AECOM (ie Rod Hill Lane and Pastures Field). The evidence suggested that the other sites identified and appraised by AECOM (ie The Coombe and Kite Hill) had no realistic potential, and these were not considered to be reasonable alternatives. A lower and higher level of growth have also been assessed against Policy 10 – with the lower level suggesting no additional growth other than that already with consent or possible through infill / windfall development (which reflects the minimum level suggested as appropriate by the Local Planning Authority) and a higher level of 10 dwellings per annum (ie 120 dwellings over the plan period) that reflects the higher target suggested in the Housing Needs Assessment. As this would amount approximately 30 – 40 additional dwellings, the assessment has been based on the potential impact of including a further site option (ie the least harmful reasonable alternative site allocation). No reasonable alternatives were identified in relation to Policy 11 (House Types) – with the fall-back position being the policy basis in the Local Plan.

Table 9. Policies 10 – 13 assessment scores

Environmental assessment objective	Biodiversity,	Landscape	Heritage	Material Assets	Climate change	Transport	Population	Human Health
Policies and reasonable alternatives								
10. The scale and location of new housing	✓	x	-	x	✓	✓	✓✓	-
10 alt (a): lower growth option	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
10 alt (b): higher growth option	✓/✓✓	x/xx	✓	x/xx	✓	-	✓✓	-
11. House types	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓✓	-
12. Site allocation: Chapel Ground	✓	x	-	x	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
13. Reserve site: Northbrook Farm	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	x
12/13 alt (a): Rod Hill Lane	✓	x/xx	-	x	✓	-	✓/✓✓	✓
12/13 alt (b): Pastures Field	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x

6.8 The following table sets out the basis for the above summarised scores.

Table 10. Policies 10 – 13 assessment basis

Objective	Assessment basis
Biodiversity Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features	In terms of the site allocations, no adverse impacts were identified, and the requirement for a biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan should ensure a net biodiversity gain. Whilst the larger Chapel Ground site adjoins Little Knoll Copse (ancient and semi-natural woodland habitat), the site allocation does not abut the woodland (there is a 40m buffer) and the policy specifically retains the hedgerow along Milom Lane, and would include a wildlife corridor and tree planting along the undeveloped ridgeline to the south to Little Knoll

	<p>Copse. Similar provision for biodiversity enhancement is made in relation to Northbrook Farm. On this basis, given the scope for enhancement, the site allocations have been scored as positive. Given the wider landownership such benefits should be possible on the alternative sites. In respect of Policy 10, the policy has scored positively in light of the biodiversity benefits arising from the two allocations, which would not be achieved under the lower growth scenario, but possible (and more-so) with a higher growth option. No biodiversity implications were noted in respect of Policy 11.</p>
<p>Landscape Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes</p>	<p>Whilst none of the site allocations or alternatives are likely to impact on the Dorset AONB, the greenfield sites would inevitably impact on the local landscape character and would require the loss of some hedgerows to gain access. The Chapel Ground site allocation is limited to the lower-lying area and includes the requirement for a combined landscape strategy and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan, including retention of the view to the copse. Given the landform there is less scope to limit development to the lower lying land in relation to the Rod Hill Lane alternative, and as such this has been scored as having a potentially greater adverse impact. In respect of Policy 10, the policy has scored negatively (but not significantly) in light of the landscape impacts arising from the Chapel Ground site allocation, which would not be felt under the lower growth scenario, but possible (and more-so) with a higher growth option. No landscape implications were noted in respect of Policy 11.</p>
<p>Heritage Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource within the Neighbourhood Plan area</p>	<p>Both the Chapel Ground site allocation and the Rod Hill Lane alternative have the potential to be viewed from the front of the Grade II* Islington House (and the Rod Hill Lane alternative site is on the direct line from the house marked by an avenue of trees), but any visual link is screened by a band of mature trees (which are subject to a TPO). As such the impact is unlikely to be significant, and could be mitigated by ensuring the design respects the potential view at this distance. Similarly they adjoin the Conservation Area but any impact should be mitigated through the use of high quality design as they land they occupy is not identified in the Conservation Appraisal as being of any particular significance to the setting. The Northbrook Farm site adjoins the rear of the Grade II Stafford Park Farm House – and any development would have the potential to impact on its setting. The farm buildings that would be replaced are of no aesthetic or historic value the farm, and arguably the development of this site has the potential to improve as opposed to detract from the setting, subject to careful design (as noted in the Policy). The greenfield area to the east of the farmhouse is not proposed for development (which would have an adverse impact). Whilst the Pasture Field alternative would not impact on any Listed Buildings or the Conservation Area, there is potential for archaeological finds on the land which could be documented in any development of this site. In respect of Policy 10, the policy has scored neutrally in light of the heritage impacts benefits arising from the two allocations, with the same neutral impact likely under the lower growth scenario, and slight benefits (through the additional archaeological evaluation of Pastures Field) possible with a higher growth option. No heritage implications were noted in respect of Policy 11.</p>
<p>Material Assets Ensure the efficient and effective use of land</p>	<p>The Northbrook Farm site is previously developed land (albeit in agricultural use). Both the Chapel Ground site allocation and the Rod Hill Lane alternative are potentially Grade 2 (as is land to south), and . Pasture Field potentially Grade 3a. However the extent of land that would be lost to development is not considered significant. None of</p>

	the greenfield sites are safeguarded for minerals extraction. In respect of Policy 10, the policy has scored negatively (but not significantly) in light of the loss of higher grade farmland arising from the Chapel Ground site allocation, which would not be felt under the lower growth scenario, but possible (and more-so) with a higher growth option. No implications were noted in respect of Policy 11.
Climate Change Reduce the level of contribution to, and support the resilience of the area to the potential effects of, climate change	Both the Chapel Ground site allocation and the Rod Hill Lane alternative are within reasonable walking distance of a range of facilities and subject to appropriate planning conditions would improve and extend green infrastructure networks to help with sustainable drainage and climate resilience objectives. The same applies to the Pastures Field alternative – although there is some surface water flood risk associated with the western end of the site which may reduce its capacity. The Northbrook Farm site is slightly more remote from facilities, but this is not considered to be likely to give rise to significant harm, and the scheme will provide green infrastructure benefits (and therefore on balance score a neutral impact). In respect of Policy 10, the policy has scored positively in light of the climate change benefits arising from the two allocations, which would not be achieved under the lower growth scenario, but possible with a higher growth option (although the cumulative score has remained the same taking into account the Local Plan focus of growth on the towns to reduce trips overall). The potential benefits of a local connection criteria (in relation to reducing the need to travel) is reflected in the positive score for Policy 11.
Transport Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	The Chapel Ground site allocation include a new junction from Athelhampton Road design to help slow traffic speeds in this location, and therefore scores positively against this objective. In terms of Northbrook Farm, whilst there are no pavements in this part of the village, an off-road connection is proposed which will benefit both the existing dwellings as well as future occupants. The Rod Hill Lane alternative potentially could help secure an alternative route to the south-west linking to the school (however the feasibility of this needs further investigation and therefore this has not been included in the score). The same applies to the Pastures Field alternative is likely to require a vehicular access across the public right of way network, and any access is likely to be dependent on adjoining landowners to help resolve. In respect of Policy 10, the policy has scored positively in light of the transport improvements arising from the two allocations, which would not be achieved under the lower growth scenario. With a higher growth option there is a more balanced mix of benefits and potentially adverse impacts. No specific implications were noted in respect of Policy 11.
Population Cater for existing and future residents' needs in an inclusive and self-contained community, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwellings	All the site allocations and alternatives have the potential to provide a range of house types and sizes to meet identified needs, including affordable housing. The Chapel Ground site allocation includes land for a community facility in addition to public open space and the provision of allotments. Whilst the Rod Hill Lane alternative could potentially also accommodate a community facility there is less clarity on this point. Adverse impacts on the quality of life of existing local residents - including privacy and amenity of adjoining residents – are likely to be avoided through suitable site layouts. In respect of Policy 10, the policy and the higher growth option have scored positively (and significantly so) in light of the housing and community benefits the development would bring, which would not be achieved to the same extent under the lower growth scenario. Policy 11 also scores as a significant positive given the potential to ensure that the dwelling

	provided reflect the local housing need to a much greater extent than the generic Local Plan policies could achieve.
Human health Improve the health and wellbeing of residents	The Chapel Ground site allocation would provide and enhance access to green infrastructure, as will the Northbrook Farm site and potentially the alternatives (subject to landowner agreement). Both Northbrook Farm and the Pastures Field alternative may be impacted by noise, and the policy for Northbrook Farm includes the requirement that a detailed noise assessment is undertaken and a mitigation strategy agreed with the Local Planning Authority. In respect of Policy 10, all options are neutral (with any benefits balanced against adverse impacts). No specific implications were noted in respect of Policy 11.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES:

6.9 Policy 14 deals with the objective of maintaining and improving the area's facilities and infrastructure. Whilst the policy does allocate land for the expansion of some of these facilities, the alternatives are either dealt with under the alternatives to policies 12/13 above (and the site-specific impacts of the community facilities that would be delivered in conjunction with the housing site allocations are similarly dealt with above), and, in the case of the middle school and cemetery extension, no reasonable alternatives have been identified.

Table 11. Policy 14 assessment scores

Environmental assessment objective								
Policies and reasonable alternatives	Biodiversity,	Landscape	Heritage	Material Assets	Climate change	Transport	Population	Human Health
14. Supporting Facilities and Services	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓✓	✓

6.10 The following table sets out the basis for the above summarised scores.

Table 12. Policy 14 assessment basis

Objective	Assessment basis
Biodiversity Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features	The cemetery site falls under the site threshold normally required for a biodiversity survey. Existing legislation exists to safeguard protected species should any exist at the time of the cemetery's extension. The need for a biodiversity survey and enhancement plan is highlighted with reference to the school site expansion.
Landscape	No relevant impacts identified. The need for a landscape strategy plan is highlighted with reference to the school site expansion.
Heritage Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource within the area	No relevant impacts identified. The cemetery extension would not harm the setting of the church or the Conservation Area. The school site expansion is not likely to impact on any heritage assets, and the online HERS records do not identify any specific archaeological interest in relation to this area of land.
Material Assets	No relevant impacts identified.
Climate Change	No relevant impacts identified.
Transport Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	The cemetery extension would not give rise to a significant number of traffic movements. Whilst the school site expansion is likely to generate a higher number of vehicular trips, the policy acknowledges that the potential impact will need to be assessed and appropriate mitigation measures included. The policy read as a whole, which ensures that community facilities are well-placed in relation to the

	catchment population, should reduce the need to travel means that on balance the policy scores positively.
Population Cater for existing and future residents' needs...	The policy promotes the development / availability of a range of high quality, accessible community facilities and is likely to have a significant positive impact in this respect. No adverse impacts identified.
Human health Improve the health and wellbeing of residents	The community facilities include the protection and improvements of the green infrastructure used for recreational purposes. No adverse impacts identified.

BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT AND TOURISM POLICIES:

6.11 Whilst one of the plan's objectives is to encourage new, and support existing, businesses and services, there are no specific business or tourism policies or site allocations, given that the current local plan policies are considered to provide an appropriate framework.

TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC POLICIES:

6.12 Policies 15 and 16 relate to the objective of being a well-connected and pedestrian safe village. These specifically highlight the importance of the pedestrian and cycle routes in the area, and also the need to ensure sufficient parking provision. No reasonable alternatives were identified for further assessment – the only other option being the omission of the policies and reliance on the Local Plan (ie the baseline).

Table 13. Policies 15 – 16 assessment scores

Environmental assessment objective								
Policies and reasonable alternatives	Biodiversity,	Landscape	Heritage	Material Assets	Climate change	Transport	Population	Human Health
15. Safer roads and ped / cycle routes	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
16. Parking Provision	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-

6.13 The following table sets out the basis for the above summarised scores.

Table 14. Policies 15 – 16 assessment basis

Objective	Assessment basis
Biodiversity	No relevant impacts identified.
Landscape Protect and enhance the character ...	Both policies include provision for landscaping within the requirements for improved pedestrian / cycle routes and parking areas, and should therefore enhance landscape character.
Heritage	No relevant impacts identified.
Material Assets	No relevant impacts identified
Climate Change Reduce the level of contribution to...	Policy 15 promotes sustainable travel options around the village and into Dorchester, and whilst Policy 16 highlights the need to consider the practicality of electric charging points in the positioning of parking areas.
Transport Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	Policy 15 seeks to ensure that the safe pedestrian use of the quiet lanes around the village and the advisory cycle route into Dorchester are not compromised by traffic generated from new developments. Whilst Policy 16 recognises that the area has a high reliance on cars (and this is unlikely to change given the limited bus service and employment opportunities) it does seek to address the road safety

	problems that poorly parked cars may generate. Overall this is therefore considered to have a neutral impact.
Population	No relevant impacts identified.
Human health	No relevant impacts identified.

CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES - OVERVIEW

6.14 The main alternatives identified related to the choice of site options and the level of housing growth. A two stage approach was taken to first identify the reasonable alternatives for the site options, with the more sustainable options then assessed in more detail against the environmental objectives. The reasons for rejecting the higher growth option and/or the alternative sites were based on the lack of need (given that the preferred sites would more than meet the anticipated housing need, and the Local Plan's strategy is that the towns are the focus for meeting the strategic need) and site-specific issues as identified in the following table. The lower growth option was rejected as it would not deliver the more significant benefits in terms of the quantity of affordable housing and community facilities, and that the potential harm of the proposed growth option (in terms of landscape impact and higher grade loss of agricultural land) were not regarded to be significant, and balanced by potential biodiversity and increased connectivity benefits within the village.

Table 15. Rejected alternatives

Rejected alternatives		Reasons the sites were rejected
12/13 alt (a):	Rod Hill Lane	Whilst this site performed reasonably well against the various environmental criteria (although not better than the allocated sites), the main concern related to the higher degree (and difficulty mitigating) the landscape impact given the landform in comparison to the preferred sites. There were also related concerns regarding the junction with Milom Lane – both in terms of the impact on the lane's character and that it would potentially be less successful at reducing vehicle speeds on the approach into the village from the east.
12/13 alt (b):	Pastures Field	Whilst this site performed reasonably well against the various environmental criteria (although not better than the allocated sites), its more limited size reduced the degree of community benefits likely, and it would be more difficult to access (with access likely to cross existing public rights of way) and would also be impacted by higher levels of noise pollution due to its proximity to the bypass (although these are not likely to be at a significant level). Whilst the landscape impact individually is not significant, there would also be a greater cumulative impact with the existing extant consent for 41 dwellings on the adjoining land.

CUMULATIVE AND OTHER EFFECTS OF THE PLAN'S POLICIES

6.15 While some of the policies may individually have a relatively minor impact on the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan area, collectively this impact could be much more significant. So, as part of this assessment, the combined impacts of the policy proposals have been considered, by reviewing the potential impacts in one table, and considering the potential for synergies that may make this impact more significant than the sum of these impacts alone.

Table 16. Cumulative impacts

Environmental assessment objective	Biodiversity,	Landscape	Heritage	Material Assets	Climate change	Transport	Population	Human Health
Policies and reasonable alternatives								
1. Local Green Spaces	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓
2. Local Landscape Features	✓	✓✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
3. Village character	✓	✓✓	✓	x	x	-	-	-
4. Respecting the history of Puddletown	-	✓	✓✓	-	-	-	-	-
5. Design	-	✓✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-
6. Wildlife and Natural Habitats	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
7. European protected sites	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8. Flood Risk	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
9. Noise Assessments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓
10. The scale and location of new housing	✓	x	-	x	✓	✓	✓✓	-
11. House types	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓✓	-
12. Site allocation: Chapel Ground	✓	x	-	x	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
13. Reserve site: Northbrook Farm	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	x
14. Supporting Facilities and Services	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓✓	✓
15. Safer roads and ped / cycle routes	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
16. Parking Provision	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-

6.16 This analysis indicates that, overall, the adverse impacts are likely to be balanced or outweighed by positive impacts of the plan, with the most positive impacts scored against the objective of meeting local needs, and also protecting landscape character. The main adverse impact that has been identified is in relation to soils, due to the loss of productive farmland. However the scale (cumulatively) is still unlikely to be significant given the limited size of the site allocations and the amount of agricultural land in the wider area.

6.17 Looking further afield (more than 5km from the village of Puddletown), the adopted Local Plan does include proposals for Crossways (where there is a strategic allocation for 500 dwellings plus employment land), and the recently made Milborne St Andrew Neighbourhood Plan includes provision for at least 32 dwellings plus employment and community facilities through a site allocation. These plans were both subject to strategic environmental assessment, and the main cumulative impact from these would be in relation to the protected heathland sites (however the Puddletown site allocations fall outside of the 5km heathland zone) and Poole Harbour (and all of these plans include provision for nitrate neutrality).

6.18 The potential for secondary (indirect) impacts has also been considered but no specific issues identified. Whilst there may be temporary impacts related to construction, and the landscape mitigation is unlikely to be fully effective in the short term, these are not considered to be so significant as to justify further evaluation or additional measures that cannot be satisfactorily accommodated through standard planning conditions.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSED MONITORING

LIKELY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

7.1 There are no likely significant adverse impacts identified as a result of the assessment of plan's proposed policies. The only significant impacts identified for this Neighbourhood Plan are positive ones in relation to the delivery of housing and community facilities, and to a lesser extent landscape and heritage benefits mainly due to the protection given to particular areas and features that are not protected through national designations (and the requirement for biodiversity gains that is not currently embedded into the adopted Local Plan policy).

MONITORING

7.2 It is suggested that the delivery of housing (by size and type) is monitored on an annual basis.

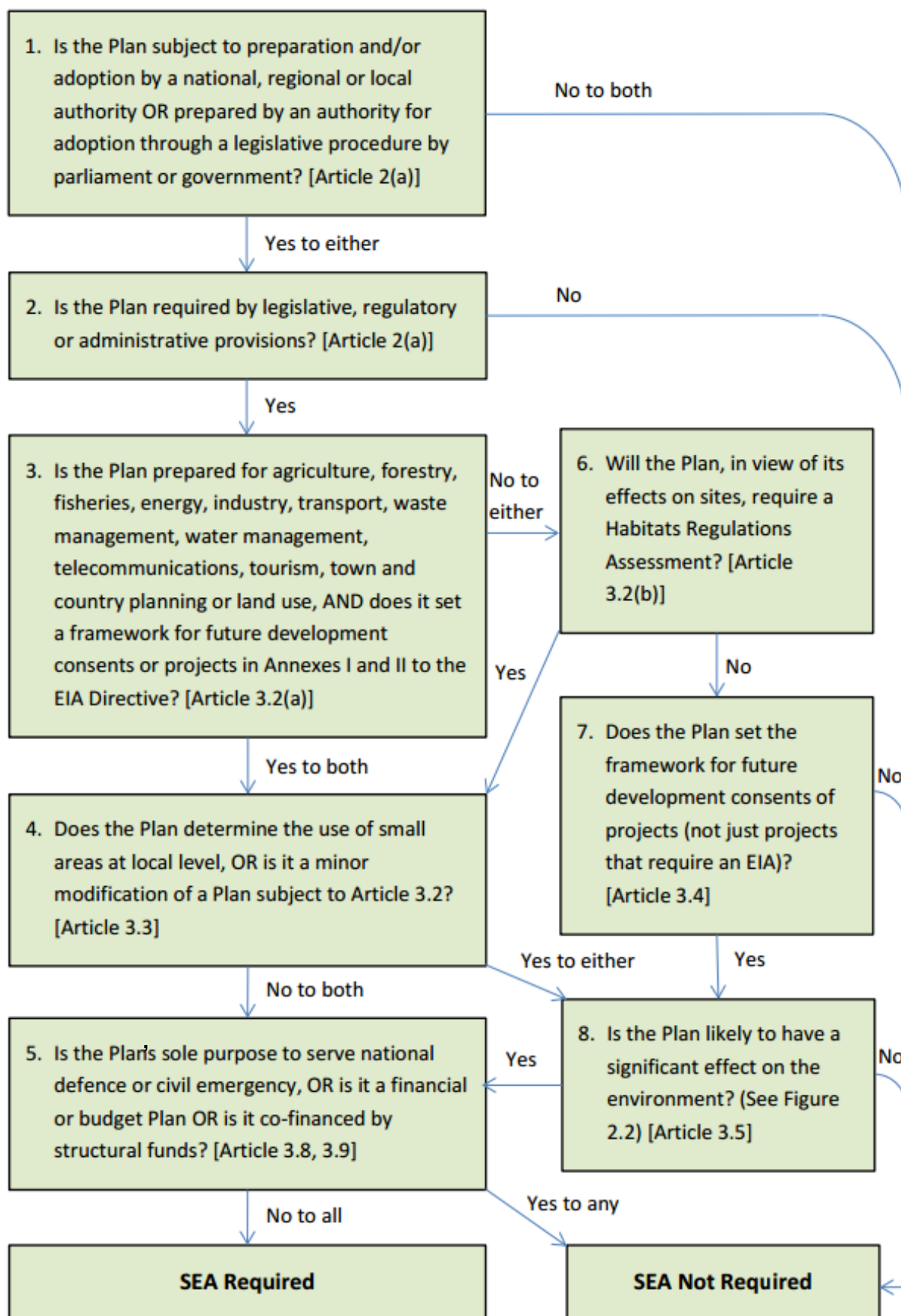
CONSULTATION

Comments are invited on this environmental report as part of the consultation on the pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan. The consultation is scheduled to run from Monday 25 November 2019 through to Friday 10 January 2020.

Responses can be made on the forms provided at the consultation events, dropped off at the collection points at the village shop, surgery and community library, emailed the Parish Clerk (puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk) or sent by post to 27 Brymer Road, Puddletown DT2 8SX.

Please make sure that we get your comments by the closing date, as we may not be able to consider late comments.

APPENDIX 1: A DIAGRAM SUMMARISING THE SEA SCREENING PROCESS.



APPENDIX 2: SEA STAGES

Strategic environmental assessment process

Stage A: Screening

1. Determine whether the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects
2. Consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies

Stage B: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

1. Identify other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives
2. Collect baseline information
3. Identify sustainability issues and problems
4. Develop the strategic environmental assessment framework

5. Consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies on the scope of the strategic environmental

Stage C: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects

1. Test the neighbourhood plan objectives against the strategic environmental assessment framework
2. Develop the neighbourhood plan options including reasonable alternatives
3. Evaluate the likely effects of the neighbourhood plan and alternatives
4. Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects
5. Propose measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the neighbourhood plan

Stage D: Prepare the Environmental Report

Stage E: Publish and consult the consultation bodies and the public on the environmental report

Neighbourhood plan preparation

Evidence gathering and engagement

Prepare the pre-submission neighbourhood plan

Pre-submission publicity and consultation on the neighbourhood plan

Submit draft neighbourhood plan to local planning authority