



Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Screening Determination Statement

2 July 2019

This statement has been produced to comply with Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations implement European Directive 2001/42/EC. This requires that the effect on the environment of certain plans and programmes should be assessed, including plans prepared for town and country planning or land use. An exception is made for plans that determine the use of a small area at a local level if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan was submitted in February 2019 (see Appendix A). On 25 February 2019 the Screening Report was made available to the statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency). Dorset Council received responses from all of the statutory consultation bodies by 3 April 2019 (see Appendices B, C and D).

In assessing whether an SEA is required, Dorset Council considers the following to be a summary of the key issues:

1. The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) was adopted in January 2016. A Sustainability Appraisal was produced alongside it, which included a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
2. Policy 2 ('Core Spatial Strategy') of LPP1 states: "*Blandford (Forum and St Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton are identified as the main towns in North Dorset. They will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development.*"
3. Policy 6 ('Housing Distribution') of LPP1 states that at least 1,140 homes will be delivered at Shaftesbury during the period 2011-2031. This equates to approximately 20% of the overall strategic need for the District over the 20-year period. This level of growth reflects Shaftesbury's role as one of the District's four main towns.
4. Proposals for growth in the Neighbourhood Plan as indicated by the 'draft neighbourhood plan policy intentions' in the Screening Report will be of a limited scale. It therefore does not exceed growth envisaged by LPP1 which positions Shaftesbury as one of North Dorset's 'Four Main Towns'. Page 8 of the screening report states: "We are not looking to change the settlement boundary, or identify further land for housing."

5. The Screening Report identifies a comprehensive range of spatial constraints in and around Shaftesbury. These include landscape, bio- and geo-diversity assets, heritage assets, agricultural land value, pollution risks, minerals and waste proposals, and flood risk and water quality.
6. In coming to its conclusion, the Screening Report uses the 'Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Effect on the Environment', as set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. This is set out on pages 16 and 17.
7. Page 16 of the Screening Report states: *"The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan will be part of the development plan for the local area, but it does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development or amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan."*
8. Page 17 of the Screening Report states: *"The majority of the policy intentions relate to respecting the town's character and environmental features. The only additional development outside of the settlement boundary that may be enabled through the draft plan would [be] small scale affordable housing sites adjoining the settlement boundary."* (A June 2019 draft of the neighbourhood plan has since confirmed that it is no longer intended to have a specific policy on affordable housing.)
9. Page 17 of the Screening Report goes on to state: *"Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development or amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan, no significant impacts are considered likely. If a policy is included allowing for small scale affordable housing sites adjoining the settlement boundary it may be appropriate for the selection criteria to include consideration of the environmental characteristics of the area."* (As with point 8 above, an early draft of the neighbourhood plan (June 2019) confirms that there is no longer an intention to have a specific policy on affordable housing.)
10. In its conclusions on page 17, the Screening Report states that: *"there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan. In light of this, at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan's progress, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that the SEA Directive does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan."*
11. Natural England stated in their response that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan and that they concur with the conclusions of the Screening Report. (see Appendix B)
12. Historic England stated in their response that they tend to focus on whether a Plan allocates sites for development. As the Shaftesbury Plan has not such intentions, they confirm that in their view an SEA is not required. (see Appendix C).
13. The Environment Agency responded to say that they agreed with the conclusion that the plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment (see Appendix D).

Conclusion

Having considered the contents of the Screening Report, the responses from the consultation bodies, and taking into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to the regulations, **Dorset Council has determined that an SEA of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan is not required.**

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Schedule 2, paragraph 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 sets out the prescribed basic condition that the making of a neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).

Page 17 and 18 of the Screening Report states:

The closest European sites are Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, which lies within the south-eastern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area. There are no other sites within a 10km search area. The citation for this site explains that it is part of the edge of the chalk escarpment and holds unimproved chalk grassland and scrub communities which have high botanical interest (including some rare orchids that do not occur locally elsewhere) and high entomological interest (the diversity of grassland and scrub provides excellent habitat for many insects, including rare butterflies).

In light of this, at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan's progress, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that a full Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan will not be required.

Dorset Council has consulted Natural England as to the requirement for a habitats regulation assessment. Natural England's response stated:

Natural England concurs with the conclusions of the Neighbourhood Plan SEA and HRA screening report. It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils), that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Conclusion

Based on these considerations, Dorset Council has determined that the proposed neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site, and therefore **an HRA of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan is not required.**

NOTE: The statements above are based on the information provided. If the contents of the plan are revised and/or there is a material change in the environmental characteristics in the locality (e.g. the designation of any additional nature conservation or other environmental sites), then the information would need to be reconsidered and potentially this determination statement would need to be revised accordingly.

APPENDICES

- A. Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Request (February 2019)

SEA Statutory Consultation Bodies Responses:-

- B. Natural England – received 1/04/2019
- C. Historic England – received 1/04/2018
- D. Environment Agency – received 3/04/2019

Appendix A

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT SCREENING REQUEST

Prepared on behalf of Shaftesbury Town Council

SHAFTESBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
FEBRUARY 2019

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan is likely to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitat Regulations Assessment in order to comply with the requirements set out in European legislation relating to the environment.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

One of the basic conditions for a Neighbourhood Plan is that it must be compatible with EU obligations. The Neighbourhood Planning regulations confirm that Neighbourhood Plans must not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This ensures that a competent authority may not authorise a plan or project that may adversely affect the integrity of a European site, subject to the exceptions set out in the regulations (considerations of overriding public interest).

One of the prescribed documents at the time of submitting a Neighbourhood Plan for its examination is either a Strategic Environmental Assessment or, where it has been determined under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 that the plan proposal or the modification proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment is required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. This looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. European wildlife sites are:

- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

In addition to SPAs and SACs sites Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although they are not covered by the Habitats regulations, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites should be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites. European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.

The legislation sets out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan for internationally designated sites. The first stage of this process is a “screening” exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the Plan to have an impact on the site.

Although a Habitat Regulations Assessment screening determination is not specified on the list of documents that needs to be submitted by a qualifying body, the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations do make clear in para 17 that the local planning authority must provide the Examiner with information in accordance with regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Government guidance¹ summarises the position by saying that, in some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should therefore be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. A “screening” assessment is the process for doing this, and follows the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. If likely significant environmental effects are identified, an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of those Regulations.

A screening assessment is therefore needed in order to understand whether a fuller environmental assessment of the plan will be required in line with European Directives, and whether further information needs to be provided in relation to the possible requirement for a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Following consultation with the statutory bodies (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) the screening determination is normally made by the Local Planning Authority in agreement with the qualifying body for the Neighbourhood Plan, given their respective responsibilities for preparing and making the Neighbourhood Plan.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan area was designated by North Dorset District Council in September 2017. It follows the parish boundaries, as shown in Figure 1.1.

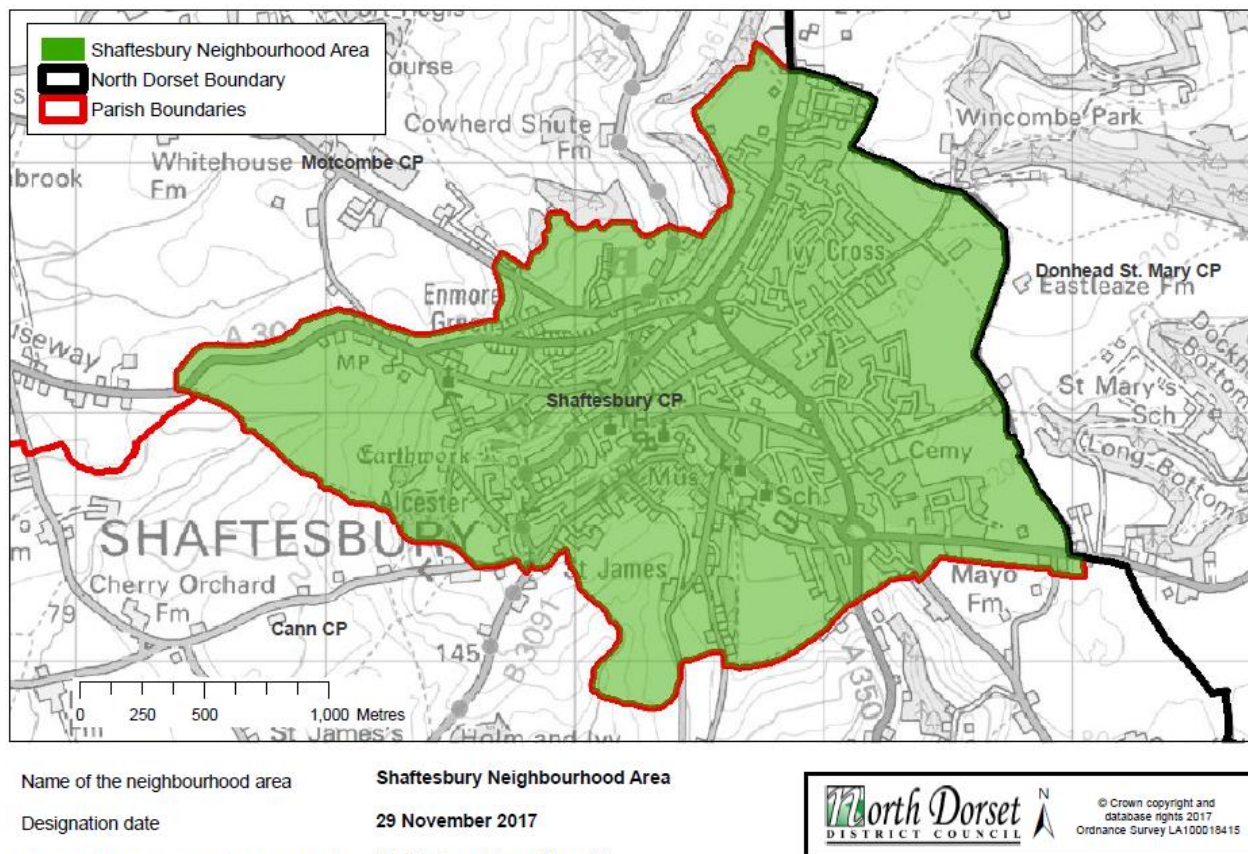


Figure 1.1: the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan area

¹ NPPG Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 11-027-20150209

THE LOCAL PLAN CONTEXT

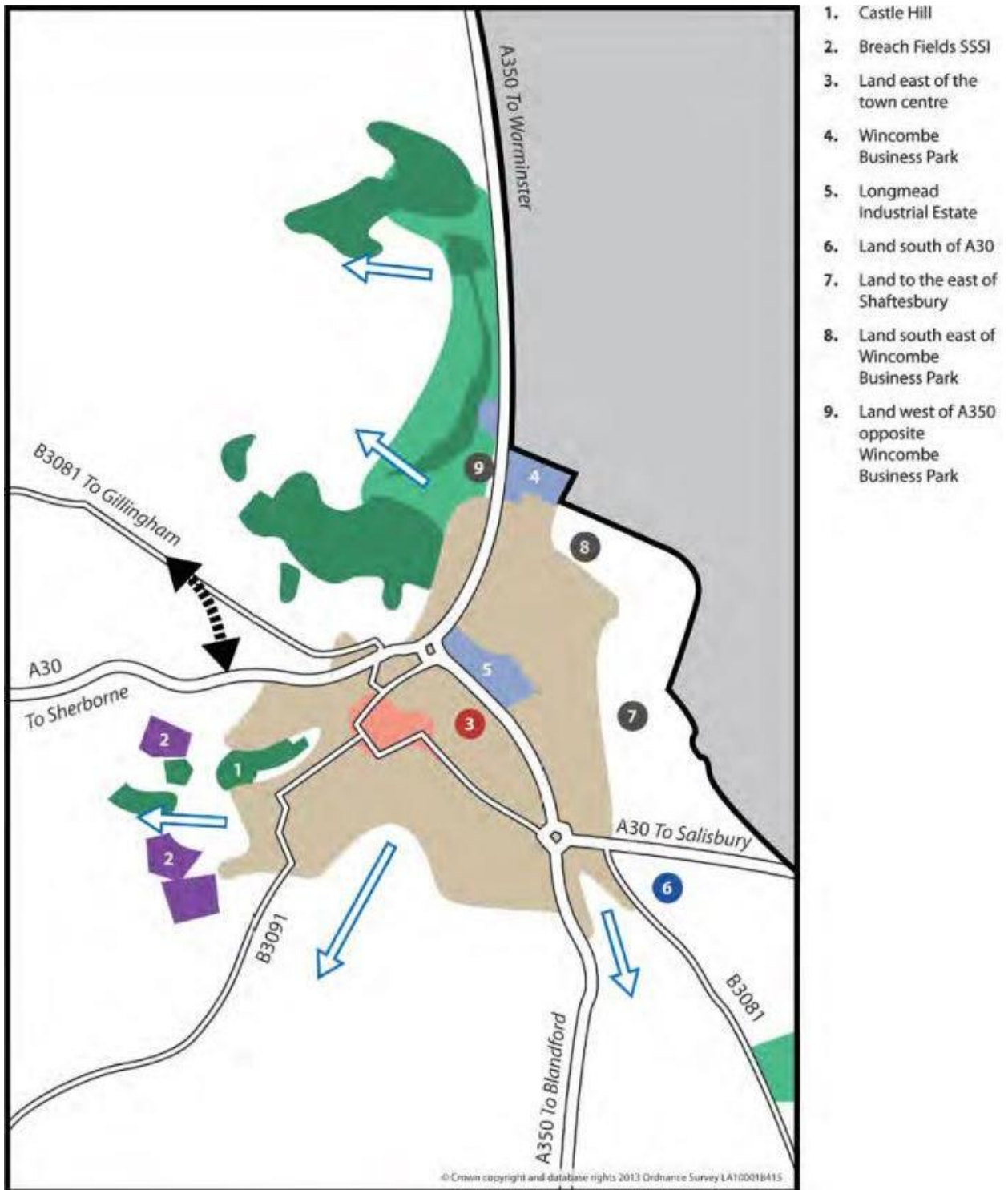


Figure 1.2: the 2016 Local Plan key diagram for Shaftesbury

The Local Plan was adopted in January 2016, replacing much of the 2003 Local Plan (although some non-strategic policies remain saved).

The 2016 Local Plan anticipates at least 1,140 dwellings will be built in Shaftesbury between 2011 and 2031. A minimum of 7.1 hectares of employment land is also to be provided by 2031.

The key spatial aspects of the refreshed 2016 Local Plan strategy are:

- focusing housing growth on the flat plateau land to the east of the town, north of the A30 (as at April 2015 some 523 dwellings had been built, a further 167 dwellings had consent, and land identified for about 80 more dwellings)
- allowing some growth (in the region of 400 new homes) on smaller sites to the north of the town on either side of the A350 (near Wincombe Business Park);
- locating the bulk of new employment uses on land to the south of the A30 (on a greenfield site comprising 7 hectares of land as allocated in the 2003 Local Plan) – noting that additional sites could also be allocated through the neighbourhood planning process;
- making the land to the east of the town centre (west of Christy's Lane) the focus for regeneration that could include community facilities with supporting retail and housing provision (no estimate of housing potential given);
- ensuring that all development, is accommodated within landscape and biodiversity constraints and enhances the town's historic character.

Work is already progressing on a review of the Local Plan, which will include the provision of site specific sites allocations and the review of the more detailed saved policies carried forward from the 2003 Local Plan. An Issues and Options paper was issued for consultation in November 2017. This suggests an increase in the housing delivery rate across the district (from 285 to 366 dwellings per annum), a continued focus on the four towns as the main locations for growth. It considers that there is no need to allocate additional employment land around Shaftesbury, but is exploring the potential for further housing growth.

2 INFORMATION ASSESSED

The significance of the effect of a Neighbourhood Plan on the environment depends on the proposals within the plan, and the environmental sensitivity of the area.

THE FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

VISION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The vision for the neighbourhood plan (as drafted) is:

Shaftesbury will become the best example of how an historic hilltop market town can adapt and thrive in the 21st century without losing its unique identity and character or compromising the town's beautiful countryside setting. In planning for our future we want to have real regard for this heritage and community spirit, and make sure we provide the basis for a prosperous, lasting future that provides a high quality of life for all who live and work in the town and surrounding villages.

The key objectives identified are that planning decisions should:

- Respect the unique character and history of Shaftesbury and its hilltop
- Support the vibrancy of its town centre, with its independent shops and market, and strong association with arts / crafts
- Ensure further housing and employment provision reflects the needs of local residents and businesses
- Ensure that the social, educational, healthcare and road infrastructure is sufficient for future needs, and that any improvements are delivered in a timely manner
- Protect important green spaces and corridors, and maximise their potential for recreation, walking and cycling links and as wildlife areas
- Ensure that new buildings are of high quality that complements the best of Shaftesbury whilst being environmentally friendly
- Support projects and proposals that go beyond the current standards for sustainable development, including zero carbon, significant biodiversity benefits and the take-up of sustainable transport modes

DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY INTENTIONS

At its meeting on 5 February 2019 the Town Council approved the following policy intentions that (subject to consultation) will form the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan:

Topic: Town Centre	Policy Intentions
<p>Shaftesbury has some powerful advantages that set our town centre apart: the unique hilltop location with the iconic views from Gold Hill; its historic and picturesque character; and the range of its independent shops. It is holding up reasonably well compared to other towns.</p>	<p>To define the Town Centre and our priorities for development in that area.</p> <p><i>This includes independent shops, enhanced leisure and tourism, the potential for commercial offices and flats above shops, and a welcoming and charming historic environment</i></p>
<p>However, if our town centre is to continue</p>	<p>To define the primary shopping area and main frontages, and the different uses /</p>

<p>to thrive, it will need to adapt and make the most of its assets to create a distinct and compelling offer. Enhancing the leisure offer is one area where the town could be stronger.</p> <p>Surveys of public opinion carried out as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process have also highlighted concerns with traffic congestion and parking. Although the Neighbourhood Plan cannot solve traffic problems, we do cover parking and will be recommending projects that could help.</p>	<p>changes allowed that should support the vitality of the town centre.</p> <p><i>Whilst shops remain important, other uses that bring people to and generate activity in the town centre will also be encouraged</i></p> <p>To preserve and enhance the character and design of our historic town centre through the application of character and design guidance to any proposed future development or redevelopment.</p> <p><i>An important emphasis is that any new building will be of very high quality that enhances the town centre, both in its architecture and materials used. This does not mean that it must reference the surrounding historic architecture or local building materials, but that in its design and realisation, it is a development of which the town can be proud.</i></p> <p>To ensure that planning decisions pay full regard to congestion and the need for parking in the town centre, as the provision of sufficient and affordable parking is critical to the centre’s continuing success.</p> <p><i>Town Centre car parks and on-street parking areas are at capacity at peak times, although this may ease when the Cattle Market site is redeveloped.</i></p>
<p>Topic: Community and Leisure</p>	<p>Policy Intentions</p>
<p>Previous community surveys have highlighted the desire to improve community and leisure facilities, including a leisure centre and swimming pool and more outdoor recreation space. Our latest survey highlighted local concerns about healthcare and education provision. We have spoken with the various organisations that run local services and provide the many facilities that operate locally. There is no immediate need to plan for a new school or surgery based on projected population growth. There is no need for a new community hall. There is a need for an indoor fitness centre, and if opportunities</p>	<p>To improve and increase the range and availability of community facilities, sports, and leisure provisions where these bring benefits to the community.</p> <p><i>Everyone should have easy access to such facilities – and although provision is generally good, some facilities are lacking (the most notable being an indoor fitness centre), some could be better advertised, and facilities in easy walking distance of the area to the east of Christy’s Lane are extremely limited.</i></p> <p>To support the growth of the tourist economy, by encouraging development proposals that are likely to have a positive</p>

<p>do arise to improve what we have, then of course this would be welcomed.</p> <p>Linking with the town centre theme, we are also providing a greater emphasis on tourism and leisure provision. This includes making sure we have safe and attractive walking and cycling routes around the town, which crosses over with the green infrastructure theme.</p>	<p>impact on tourism and that respects and reinforce the different character areas of the town.</p>
<p>Topic: Green Infrastructure</p>	<p>Policy Intentions</p>
<p>Shaftesbury's distinctiveness comes from its place in the landscape. Our historic town rests on an even more ancient Saxon settlement at this high point. We have evolved and grown yet our hilltop town nestles amongst trees and from the surrounding countryside much of the town is hidden from view.</p> <p>It is clear from our research that townspeople attach great importance to protecting and enhancing our green infrastructure. So we have spent a lot of time undertaking an audit of all the green spaces and also identified the key views, and why they are important.</p> <p>We also found out that Cranborne Chase AONB, which wraps around the eastern edge of our town, is bidding to be recognised as an international dark skies area – so this too is considered in our plan.</p>	<p>To protect the most important and locally valued green spaces, including spaces that have historic and cultural significance (many of which are associated with scheduled monuments or give access to beautiful long views); spaces with high recreational value; and spaces and corridors that are rich in wildlife and contribute to biodiversity</p> <p>To ensure development respects Shaftesbury's topography and its position in the landscape, recognising that the steep slopes, hilltop, and the lower settlements of St James and Enmore Green are all highly sensitive to development, and the extent to which tree cover is important to the incorporation of new development on the shallower slopes.</p> <p>To ensure development respects and enhances the Green Infrastructure network: its green spaces and green corridors; and the contribution this makes to the character of the town, its sustainability and biodiversity, and the general well-being of its residents.</p> <p>To protect our dark skies, particularly considering the adjoining AONB and its potential international Dark Sky Reserve status.</p>
<p>Topic: Housing and Employment</p>	<p>Policy Intentions</p>
<p>Taking into account the amount of homes</p>	<p>To ensure that the need for and sustainability</p>

<p>built since 2011, and sites with planning permission, we have already 'fulfilled' our own town quota of 1,245 new dwellings for the period 2011 – 2031, which was set in the adopted Local Plan. However in the absence of a 5 year housing land supply across the district, the local planning authority is under immense pressure to allow more housing, through granting planning applications on sites outside the settlement boundary and through the review of the Local Plan. Under these circumstances our Neighbourhood Plan cannot simply say 'no' to further housing, particularly affordable housing for local people. Furthermore, much of the land that could be targeted for development is outside of our Neighbourhood Plan area – so we need to have a good working relationship with adjoining Councils.</p> <p>We are not looking to change the settlement boundary, or identify further land for housing. We feel strongly that the general release of further housing land should be after the existing growth has been completed, and that there is much to learn from how recent large-scale developments have been handled. Our emphasis is making sure that what is built, is something we can all be proud of. And if we are to make an exception and allow further development, this should be to build affordable housing for local people, as this is the only housing for which there remains a clear need.</p> <p>We have as part of work obtained data on growing levels of traffic on Christy's Lane, which continues to strengthen the arguments for the eastern bypass to be built if further housing is planned.</p>	<p>of new developments is carefully considered in the context of the existing supply in Shaftesbury (houses with planning permission but not yet built) and the latest traffic information and implications of further planned growth.</p>
	<p>To encourage the provision of new affordable housing, particularly through Community Land Trusts and other not for profit organisations, including new sites outside the established settlement boundary as exceptions to normal policy</p>
	<p>To learn from the issues that have arisen from previous large-scale housing developments in Shaftesbury.</p> <p><i>This includes how incremental changes have watered down the original intent, and how delays and underperformance against planning obligations and conditions have undermined the quality of development and the delivery of critical elements of the scheme.</i></p>
	<p>To encourage conditions for attracting and retaining employment.</p> <p><i>The availability and attractiveness of employment sites is a key factor, alongside other factors such as housing availability, a thriving town centre, and an attractive environment that employers and employees will be happy to live and operate from.</i></p>
<p>Topic: Design and Heritage</p>	<p>Policy Intentions</p>
<p>To quote Renzo Piano “Architecture is a very dangerous job; if a writer makes a bad book, people don’t read it. But if you make bad architecture, you impose ugliness</p>	<p>To preserve and enhance the character and design of our historic town and the different character areas.</p> <p>To protect and celebrate locally important</p>

<p>on a place for 100 years”</p> <p>Up to now, we are the only town in North Dorset that does not have its own adopted design guidance. The design guide that was drafted for the eastern extension hasn't been followed.</p> <p>There is also a lot of information that has been produced on the history of the area, and even more known to local people, which perhaps has not been brought to the attention of the local planning authority as effectively as it should.</p> <p>This is about to change...</p>	<p>buildings, and ensure that landmark buildings (that may or may not be Listed) are given proper consideration in how development is planned and how views are considered.</p> <p>To encourage high quality design that ensures development complements and contributes positively to Shaftesbury's character and engenders a sense of civic pride and social inclusion.</p> <p>To ensure that thorough archaeological assessments are undertaken for developments taking place on any sites of potential historic interest and where possible we preserve Shaftesbury's unique and fascinating past that lies hidden beneath our houses, gardens, shops and streets</p> <p><i>History is important for our sense of local community as well as tourism. Shaftesbury has more Scheduled Monuments (6) than any other town in North Dorset, including the ruined Abbey, a nationally significant Royal nunnery founded in Saxon times by Alfred the Great. But much still remains to be discovered, including where buildings stood and underground tunnels may lie. Every development proposal involving surface or subsurface works could put at risk archaeological assets, but properly managed is an opportunity to find out more.</i></p>
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ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

In appraising the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, the environmental problems relevant to the plan area, together with the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

- > the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, or higher levels of protection
- > special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
- > exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, and intensive land-use

all need to be taken into account. The following therefore provides an overview of the potential environmental issues relevant to Neighbourhood Plan area.

LANDSCAPE QUALITY

Most of the Plan area, including the town of Shaftesbury, sits within the rolling vales of the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour character area. The countryside around Shaftesbury is

described as a tranquil, peaceful landscape, of undulating, rolling hills with an irregular pattern of farmland, fields, small streams and brooks, dense hedgerows and copses. It provides a rural setting for Shaftesbury which overlooks the area. Shaftesbury is a major source of light pollution, together with Guy's Marsh prison to the south-west of the town.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a nationally important landscape which covers a small section of the neighbourhood plan area and extends to the east, north and south of the town. As such, development within the AONB, and also on those edges of the town facing out to the AONB, may impact on the enjoyment of this nationally valued landscape.

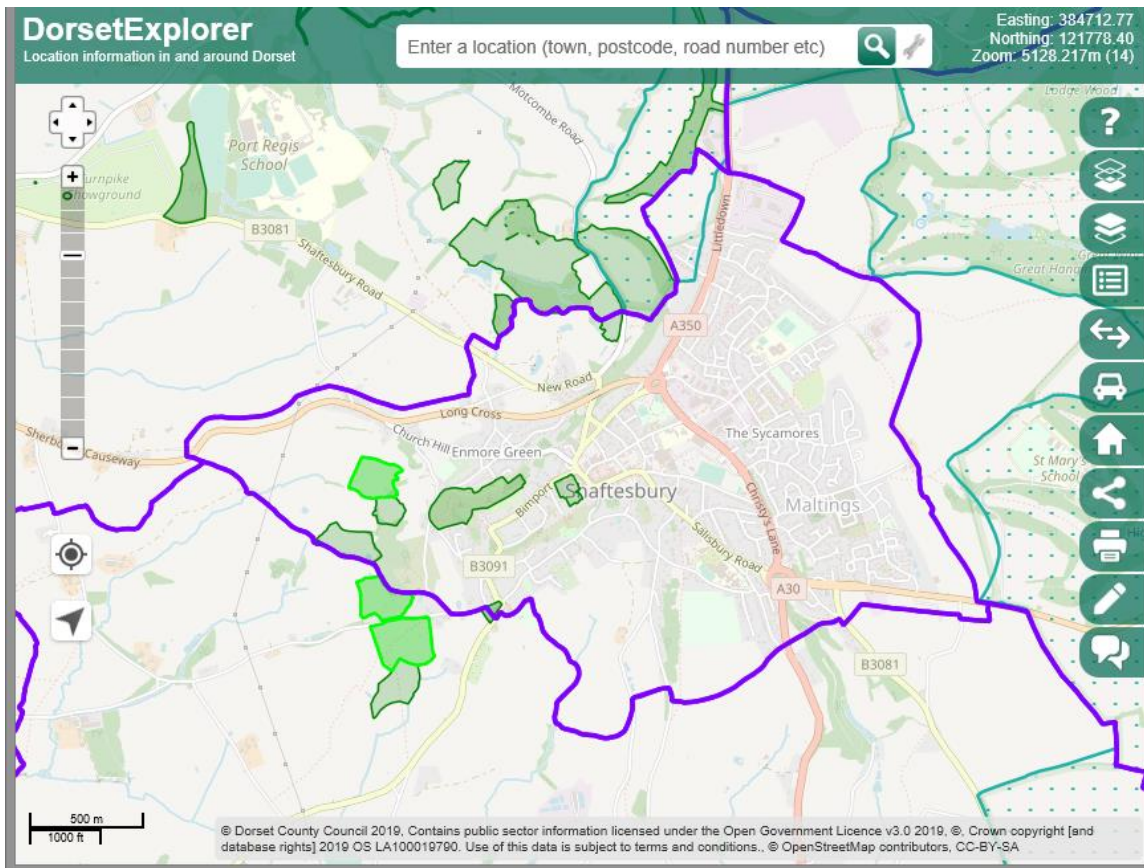


Figure 2.1: Map extract courtesy of Dorset County Council (2019) showing AONB and wildlife sites in relation to the parish.

BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY ASSETS

An area of the Breach Fields SSSI lies to the west of the town, south of Long Cross, of particular interest as an area of lowland neutral grassland. Further south, within adjoining Cann parish, are two further areas of Breach Fields SSSI close together. Most of the SSSI is in a favourable condition, with the exception of the southernmost area which is in an unfavourable but recovering condition.

There are a number of areas within Melbury Abbas and Compton Abbas parishes, all to the east of the A350, which form part of the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SSSI, which is also a Special Area of Conservation (of European importance). The citation for this site explains that it is part of the edge of the chalk escarpment and holds unimproved chalk grassland and scrub communities which have high botanical interest (including some rare orchids that do not occur

locally elsewhere) and high entomological interest (the diversity of grassland and scrub provides excellent habitat for many insects, including rare butterflies).

In addition to these nationally and internationally important sites, a number of sites of local nature conservation importance have also been designated. These include Pensbury Plantation to the north of the town. To the west of the town Castle Hill is an SNCI, and two further areas of land at Breach Fields, between the different parts of the SSSI.

HERITAGE ASSETS

There are 275 Listed buildings or structures within the neighbourhood plan area. The most significant of these are:

- Park Wall, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury: Grade 1
- The remains of Shaftesbury Abbey, Shaftesbury: Grade 1
- Church of St Peter, High Street, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*
- Ox House, 13, Bimport, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*
- Pensbury House, Motcombe Road, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*
- The Grosvenor Arms Hotel, 5 And 7, High Street, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*

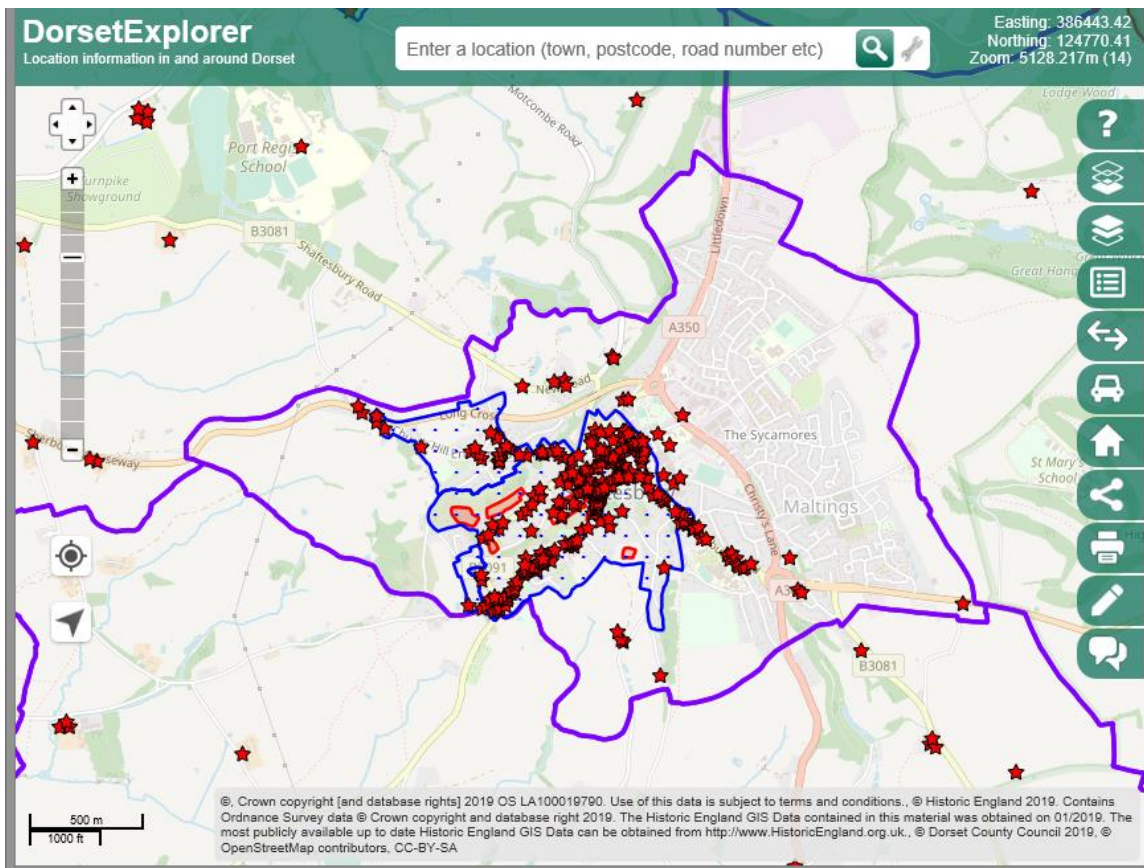


Figure 2.2: Map extract courtesy of Dorset County Council (2019) showing scheduled monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas in relation to the parish

Much of the built-up part of the town, south of the A30, is designated as a Conservation Area. There is no conservation area appraisal, but a major study of the historic town was carried out as part of the Dorset Historic Towns Study in 2011

<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/396399/Shaftesbury---historic-towns-survey>.

There are also 6 scheduled monuments in the plan area:

- Abbey precinct wall on Gold Hill
- Fishponds S of Layton Lane
- Late Saxon urban area E of Castle Hill
- Medieval fortified house at Castle Hill
- Shaftesbury Abbey
- Site of St John's Church

The Scheduled Monument of the Medieval fortified house at Castle Hill is on the Historic England At Risk Register, due to its declining condition and vulnerability to scrub / tree growth. There are a significant number of non-scheduled monuments in the parish.

There are no registered historic parks or gardens in or close to the area, but Park Walk in Shaftesbury (to the south of the Shaftesbury Abbey ruins) is a locally listed park. This was originally open pasture for the Abbey. Robert Dyneley, Lord of the Manor, created Park Walk and gave it to the town in 1753. It is particularly notable for both the terrace and mature beech tree avenue with exceptional views over the Blackmore Vale countryside and the hillside park with winding path linking upper and lower town (the zig zag path was restored in 1937 to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V). There is also a bandstand built in 1896 and in the 20th century a war memorial was added.

FLOOD RISK AND WATER QUALITY

There are no areas at risk from fluvial flooding within the parish. There are various areas at risk from surface water flooding throughout the area. The area around Enmore Green, is also potentially more susceptible to groundwater flood risk.

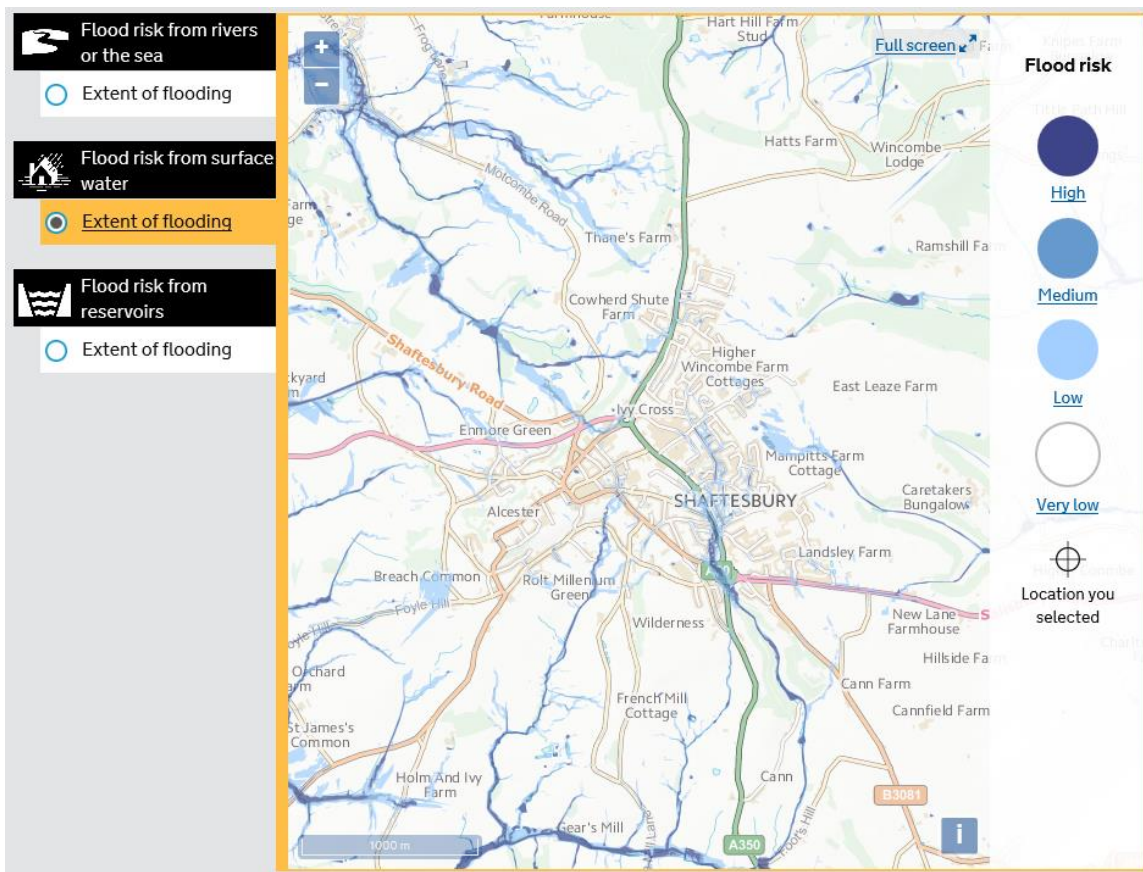


Figure 2.3: Map extract showing extent of surface water flood risk (2019)

AGRICULTURAL LAND VALUE

The farmland east and south-east of the town is primarily Grade 2 (very good), with Grade 3 (moderate) to Grade 4 (poor) quality across much of the remaining area. The best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a.

POLLUTION RISKS

Much of the town and area to the south and east forms part of the South Wessex Groundwater Nitrate Vulnerable Zone, and also lies within the groundwater source protection zone (with inner zones defined on land south of Ivy Cross roundabout and the Royal Chase roundabout). A more extensive area including much of the town and land to the south is part of the surface water safeguard zone for the lower part of the River Stour in relation to pesticides (metaldehyde levels).

There is a historic landfill site at Great Lane in Shaftesbury (no data available) and a disused quarry at Manor Farm, Quarry Lane, Melbury Abbas used for household, industrial and commercial waste in the early 1980s. There is a waste recycling company that operates from Wincombe Business Park, as well as the Household Recycling Centre

There is a sewage treatment works about 1km to the south of the town in Cann parish.

There are no Air Quality Management Areas in the area.

MINERALS AND WASTE PROPOSALS

There are mineral safeguarding areas within the neighbourhood plan area.

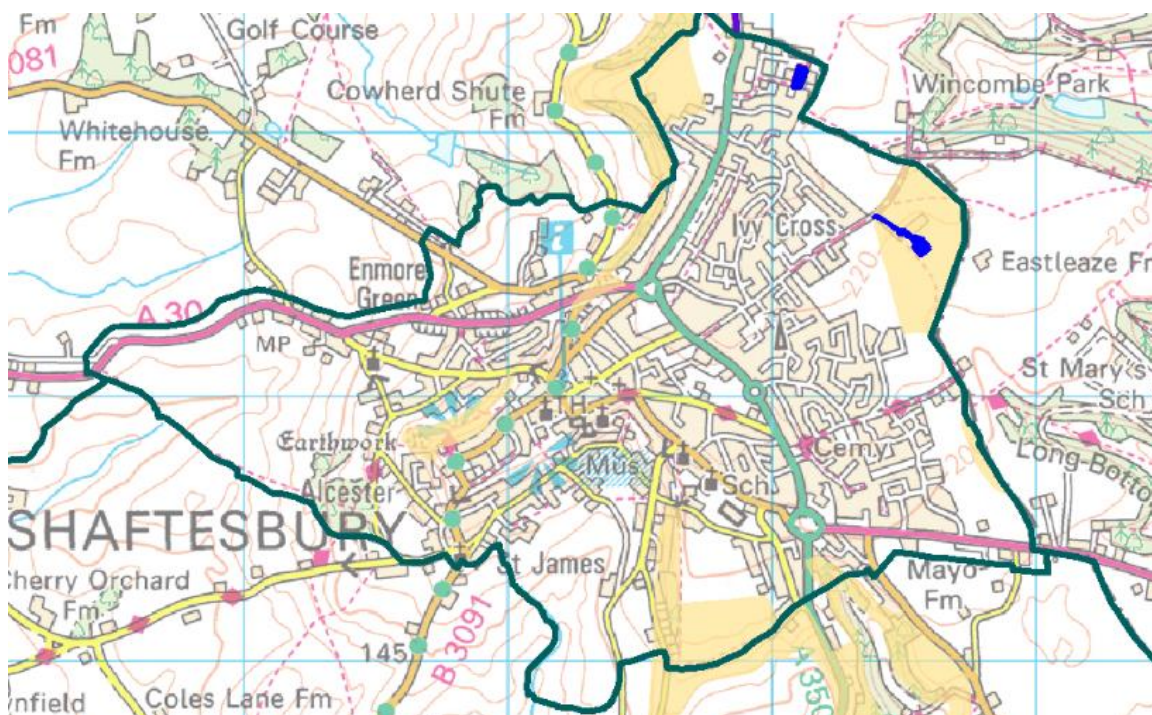


Figure 2.4: Map extract courtesy of Dorset County Council (2017) showing mineral safeguarding areas

3 THE SCREENING PROCESS

PROCESS

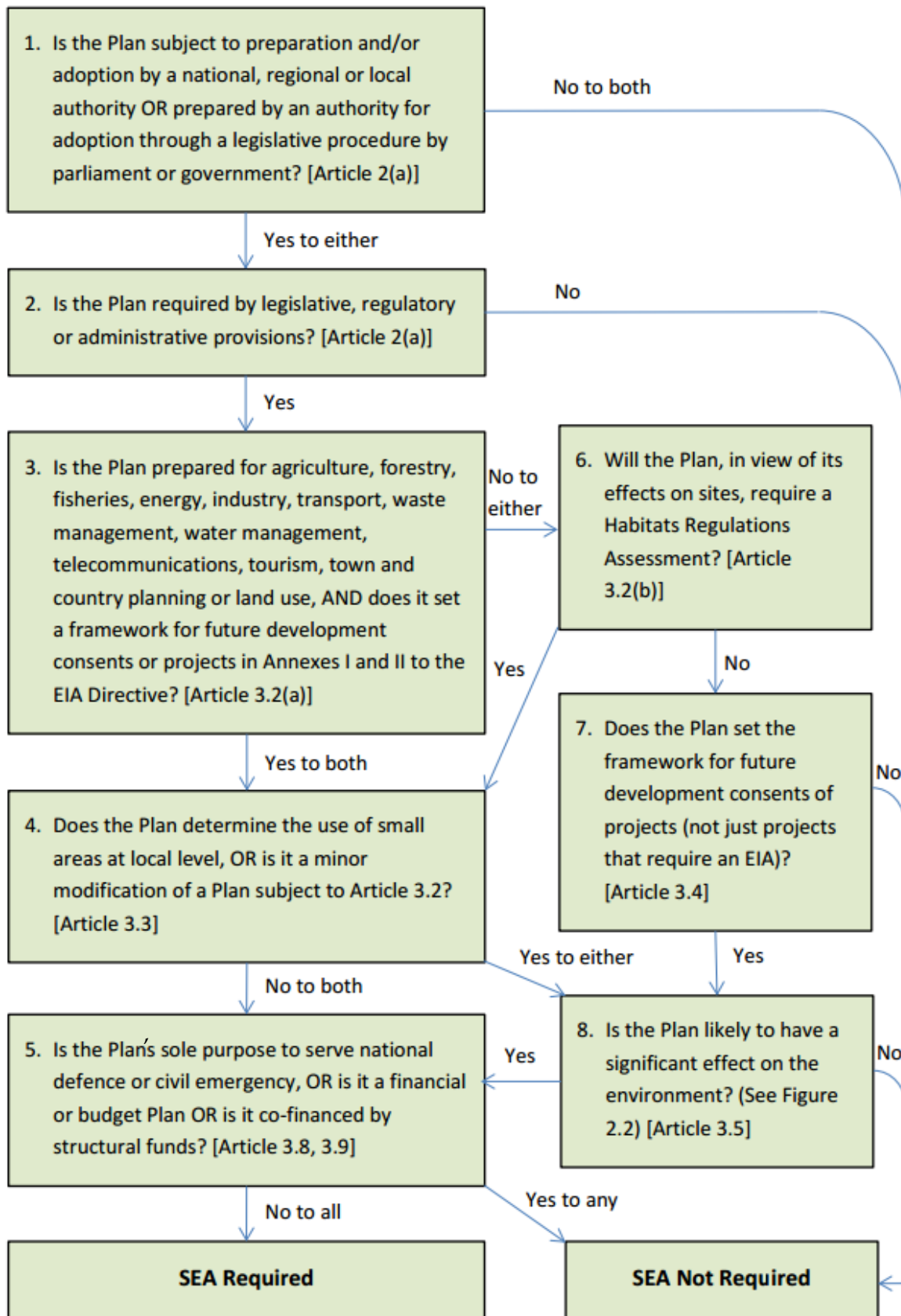


Figure 3.1: Diagram Summarising The SEA Screening Process

Question in SEA screening flow chart	Response
<p>1. Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by parliament or government? [Article 2(a)]</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan would be prepared by Shaftesbury Town Council and adopted by North Dorset District Council through a legislative procedure.</p>
<p>2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? [Article 2(a)]</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan would be a Statutory document, prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.</p>
<p>3. Is the plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consents or projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? [Article 3.2(a)]</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes, and will provide guidance that may influence decisions for future development which fall under Annex II of the EIA Directive as an urban development project.</p>
<p>4. Does the plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Article 3.2? [Article 3.3]</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan, when made, will form part of the development plan for the area which is used to determine the use of small areas at a local level. It has the potential to allocate land for development, or make amendments to existing land use allocations.</p>
<p>8. Is the Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment? [Article 3.5]</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>Justification for this decision is provided below.</p>

Figure 3.2 – a summary of the SEA screening process for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan, following the procedure outlined in Figure 3.1.

ASSESSMENT BASIS

The criteria for assessing the likely significance of effects are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive, Schedule 1 of the Regulations and set out below.

Schedule 1 of the Regulations	Assessment
1. The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:	
– the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan will be part of the development plan for the local area, but it does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development or amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan.
– the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The Neighbourhood Plan will need to be taken into account in future development plans for the area, but does not limit future policy direction
– the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	Neighbourhood Plans are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised.
– environmental problems relevant to the plan;	<p>The landscape quality of the AONB is in generally good condition, although this has in parts been impacted by intensive arable production and the influence of nearby settlement and transport corridors.</p> <p>There is one heritage asset on the national at risk register, however its decline is linked primarily to its vulnerability to scrub / tree growth.</p> <p>There is an area of a nationally designated wildlife site in an unfavourable condition, but which is now recovering.</p>
– the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	Neighbourhood Plans are land use plans and cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of development that is a county matter (mineral extraction and waste development). They are required to take into account European directives, such as the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	

– the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,	Based on the current plan’s scope the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant on the local environment, and any impact (positive or negative) is likely to be local in its impact. The majority of the policy intentions relate to respecting the town’s character and environmental features. The only additional development outside of the settlement boundary that may be enabled through the draft plan would small scale affordable housing sites adjoining the settlement boundary.
– the cumulative nature of the effects,	
– the transboundary nature of the effects,	
– the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	
– the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	Neighbourhood Plans cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of development that falls within Annex 1 to Council Directive 85/337/EEC.
<p>– the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, > exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, > intensive land-use, > the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status. 	<p>The special natural characteristics of the area relate primarily to its landscape quality (particularly in regard to the AONB), nature conservation interest (in particular designated sites to the west and north of the town), the many heritage assets, and the safeguarding of higher grade agricultural land and minerals resources.</p> <p>Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development or amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan, no significant impacts are considered likely. If a policy is included allowing for small scale affordable housing sites adjoining the settlement boundary it may be appropriate for the selection criteria to include consideration of the environmental characteristics of the area.</p>

CONCLUSIONS

The consideration of likely significant environmental effects has shown that there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan.

In light of this, at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan’s progress, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that the SEA Directive does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan.

The closest European sites are Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, which lies within the south-eastern part of the Neighbourhood Plan area. There are no other sites within a 10km search area. The citation for this site explains that it is part of the edge of the chalk escarpment and holds unimproved chalk grassland and scrub communities which have high botanical interest

(including some rare orchids that do not occur locally elsewhere) and high entomological interest (the diversity of grassland and scrub provides excellent habitat for many insects, including rare butterflies).

In light of this, at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan's progress, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that a full Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan will not be required.

These findings may be re-considered at future stages if the scope of the plan alters significantly.

Appendix B

Date: 01 April 2019
Our ref: 274893
Your ref: Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan SEA & HRA Screening



Philip Reese
Senior Planning Officer (North Dorset)
Dorset Councils Partnership



BY EMAIL ONLY
preese@dorset.gov.uk

Dear Philip

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Consultation; Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 25 February 2019, which was received by Natural England on the same day.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment and HRA

Natural England concurs with the conclusions of the Neighbourhood Plan SEA and HRA screening report. It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils), that there are **unlikely to be significant environmental effects** from the proposed plan.

Internationally and Nationally Designated Sites

There are no internationally designated sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area and Natural England can confirm that the plan is unlikely to harm any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site, or SSSI, and is not likely to significantly affect the interest features for which they are notified. Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC (qualifying chalk grasslands) lies close to the south and east of Shaftesbury. Breach Fields SSSI (diverse neutral grassland) lies to the west of the town, with two further areas adjacent to the southern boundary of the plan area. Based on the information provided, Natural England is satisfied that impacts on internationally and nationally designated wildlife sites **can be screened out from any requirement for further assessment**.

Neighbourhood Plan Guidance

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to concur with the Local Plan and Natural England notes that the

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan aligns with the policy framework of the North Dorset Local Plan, adopted 2016. Shaftesbury is one of the 4 main towns in North Dorset Local Plan policy considered for increased growth potential. We note that the Local Plan is currently under review. The Neighbourhood Plan is not currently proposing further allocations for development, notwithstanding a need to meet local affordable needs through exception, and has currently retained its settlement boundary.

We have checked our records and, as above, based on the information provided can confirm that in our view the proposals contained in the Neighbourhood Plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

Natural England are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Natural England recommend that Neighbourhood Plans are seen as an opportunity to address local environmental issues, such as flooding, biodiversity, amenity, but should also aspire to provide positive impacts on strategic issues in the wider landscape and have positive impacts on the National and Internationally designated sites.

Nationally Designated Landscapes advice

Shaftesbury is immediately adjacent to a nationally designated landscape, namely Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework gives the highest status of protection for the 'landscape and scenic beauty' of AONBs and National Parks. Natural England advises that national and local policies, together with local landscape expertise and information, is considered when forming neighbourhood plan proposals. We strongly recommend that you consult the relevant AONB Partnership or Conservation Board. Their knowledge of the location and wider landscape setting of the plan area, should help ensure that policies in the Neighbourhood Plan avoid any significant impacts on the purposes of the AONB designation.

We welcome reference in the Neighbourhood Plan to the local Landscape Character Assessment, which can also be a helpful guide to landscape sensitivity. Shaftesbury, itself a hilltop town, lies at the juncture of the elevated nationally designated downs to the south and east, the Blackmore Vale, and undulating Vale of Wardour.

Biodiversity, geology, flora and fauna

Natural England welcome the references to biodiversity protection and potential within the Neighbourhood Plan policies. NPPF guidance requires a biodiversity net gain approach for any new development to enhance biodiversity, both on site, and where appropriate, through ecological networks to the wider countryside or other off- site green space. We note that there is BAP Priority Habitat both within and around the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan. These areas should be considered when locating any new development, and opportunities taken to enhance their ecological value, including through planning gain.

Overarching objectives of relevant plans to the Neighbourhood Plan area, include the adopted Dorset Biodiversity Protocol for developments with biodiversity interest.

Green Infrastructure

The Local Plan encourages neighbourhood plans to assist in the delivery of key green infrastructure benefits and the designation of local green space. Multi-functional green infrastructure well situated

and designed, can perform a range of benefits contributing to sustainable development (such as public amenity and physical and mental health benefits, biodiversity gains, climate change adaptation, flood risk, run-off issues from agriculture). We support policies to designate local green space and to include valued existing green space and corridors in proposals, improving ecological links as well as walking/ cycling routes and recreational potential.

Further relevant plans, programmes and objectives to consider are the Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2021 and the Open Space Audit & Assessment of Local Need.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage and initial scoping, should the responsible authority seek our views on further environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Sarah Skinner on [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation, please contact [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

Sarah Skinner
Planning and Conservation Adviser
Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Area Team
[REDACTED]

Appendix C

Philip Reese

From: Stuart, David [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 March 2019 17:49
To: Philip Reese
Subject: SEA/HRA screening request - Shaftesbury NP

Dear Philip

Thank you for your SEA Screening consultation on the emerging Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan.

As well as providing us with the information to assist in our assessment of the Screening Opinion the scoping report of the Plan's proposed policy coverage also allows us to identify other issues which it might be useful to put markers against.

The focus of our attention in such exercises tends to be whether a Plan intends to allocate sites for development, especially as it is these upon which the determination of likely significant environmental effects, and therefore the need for SEA, will be based. We note that the Shaftesbury Plan has no such intentions and taking account of this fact and the rest of the proposed policy schedule I can confirm that we have no objection to any view that an SEA is not required.

Should the Plan in its evolution go through significant change, particularly if site allocation ambitions subsequently emerge, then obviously there may be a need for a review of this initial SEA Screening outcome.

Otherwise, we would wish only to applaud the community in its appreciation of the distinctive historic character of the Plan area and the suite of well-evidenced and detailed policies proposed for its protection and enhancement.

Kind regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places Adviser South West
[REDACTED]

Historic England | [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



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Appendix D

Philip Reese

From: Holm, Michael [REDACTED]
Sent: 03 April 2019 12:54
To: Philip Reese
Subject: RE: SEA/HRA screening request - Shaftesbury NP

Dear Phillip
Apologies for the delay in responding to this consultation.
We are satisfied with your Authority's conclusion for the SEA / HRA screening, and that that they are not required for this neighbourhood plan.
Yours sincerely



MICHAEL HOLM
Planning Advisor - Sustainable Places

Planning Advisor for Wessex



The Environment Agency has an email file transfer limit of 8MB. If you wish to send large files to my team please reply to our swx.sp@environment-agency.gov.uk in –box and request a Sharefile link to be emailed to you. With this you can upload files of larger sizes to us.



From: Philip Reese [mailto:PReese@dorset.gov.uk]
Sent: 27 March 2019 09:31
To: 'Greaves, Emily (NE)' [REDACTED] 'Stuart, David'
[REDACTED] Holm, Michael [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: FW: SEA/HRA screening request - Shaftesbury NP

Hi,

Just a reminder that we would appreciate response to the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA screening request by 1st April. If you require an extension, please let me know.

Regards,

Philip Reese