



## **Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan**

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Determination Statement**

16 July 2019

This determination 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 the responsible authority has determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects. This determination statement sets out the reasons why Dorset Council (the responsible authority) considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required with respect to the Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening and Scoping Report for the Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to North Dorset District Council in early January 2019. The Report takes into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. On 17 January 2019 the Screening and Scoping Report was made available to the statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency), as required by Regulation 9(2)(b).

The District Council received responses from two of the statutory consultation bodies by 22nd February 2019 (see Appendix). Having considered these responses, and taken into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to the regulations, as required by Regulation 9(2)(a), Dorset Council considers that an SEA of the Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan is required for the following reasons:

- The Plan is likely to allocate land for 20 new dwellings.
- The Plan area sits almost entirely within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- The plan area includes a significant heritage resource including a variety of designated and undesignated heritage assets.

**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.

## 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).

North Dorset District Council consulted Natural England as to the requirement for a habitats regulation assessment.

Natural England's response stated:

### **Internationally and Nationally Designated Sites**

There are no designated sites within the plan area and Natural England can confirm that the plan is unlikely to harm any SSSI, SAC, SPA or Ramsar site and is not likely to significantly affect the interest features for which they are notified. 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.**

## **APPENDIX**

### **SEA Statutory Consultation Bodies Responses**

1. Natural England – received 18/02/2019
2. Historic England – received 19/02/2019
3. Environment Agency – no response received

Date: 18 February 2019  
Our ref: 270703  
Your ref: Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan SEA & HRA Screening



Edward Gerry  
Planning Policy Team Leader  
Dorset Councils Partnership

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

cc Jo Witherden and Chris Edwards



Dear Ed

**Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening and Scoping Opinion Consultation**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 17 January 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**

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 designated sites within the plan area and Natural England can confirm that the plan is unlikely to harm any SSSI, SAC, SPA or Ramsar site and is not likely to significantly affect the interest features for which they are notified. 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 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.

We note that the Neighbourhood Plan aligns with the policy framework of the North Dorset Local Plan adopted 2016, and that the Local Plan is likely to come under early review. Milton Abbas has currently retained its settlement boundary and is anticipated to potentially support a low level of growth to support local needs. It has no allocated sites.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view

the proposals contained within the 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.

### **Scoping comment**

Natural England recommends 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 any National and Internationally designated sites.

Natural England has not reviewed the plans listed in detail. However, we advise that the following types of plans relating to the natural environment should be considered and appear to be applicable to your area;

- Green infrastructure strategies
- Biodiversity plans
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans
- River basin management plans
- AONB and National Park management plans.
- Relevant landscape plans and strategies.

Natural England concurs with the SEA report summary of the overarching objectives of relevant plans to the Milton Abbas area, and including the Dorset Biodiversity Protocol.

### **BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) Priority Habitat**

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 the ecological value of these areas, including through planning gain, to contribute to preserving and protecting their integrity.

### **Designated Landscape advice**

Milton Abbas is within a nationally designated landscape namely Dorset 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 also advise that you consult the relevant AONB Partnership or Conservation Board. We welcome the NP's reference to a local Landscape Character Assessment which can also be a helpful guide to the landscape's sensitivity.

### **Soil Water Air and Climatic Factors**

Natural England supports inclusion in the plan of water quality issues and the Bere Stream which downstream (10km) is designated as SSSI. Consideration should be given to avoiding any increase in nutrients entering the Bere which discharges into Poole Harbour SSSI and international sites. Discharge from any sewage treatment works and nutrients from agricultural sources are known to increase nutrient levels in the stream which have an adverse effect further down the catchment. The effective policy position is that new developments need to be Nitrogen neutral.

## **Green Infrastructure**

Multi-functional green infrastructure can perform a range of functions including improved flood risk management, provision of accessible green space, human physical and mental health benefits, climate change adaptation and biodiversity enhancement including ecological connectivity. The Local Plan encourages neighbourhood plans to assist in the delivery of key green infrastructure benefits and the designation of local green space.

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 send your correspondences to [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

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

## Philip Reese

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**From:** Stuart, David [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 19 February 2019 16:30  
**To:** Ed Gerry  
**Subject:** Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening and Scoping Opinion Consultation

Dear Ed

Thank you for your consultation on the SEA Screening Opinion and Scoping Report for the emerging Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan.

We have had no involvement in the preparation of this Plan apart from some liaison with the community on discrete matters of process in July 2015. This therefore our first opportunity to gauge the intended scope of the Plan and identify relevant issues.

We note from p12 of the Report that a call for sites has been undertaken and that consultants (AECOM) have been commissioned to carry out a suitability assessment. This suggests an intention to allocate sites for development and, as the Report finds in section 5 (p14) there may be some potential for the Plan to have significant environmental effects.

On this basis the Report concludes that an SEA is required and we would support this conclusion.

We would also take this opportunity to draw attention to guidance we have produced of relevance to the exercises involved in defining and substantiating the Plan and the evidence base necessary for the SEA process. This includes guidance on Setting of heritage assets, Site Allocations, SEAs, Managing Significance, and Neighbourhood Planning, which can be found via the following links:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/>  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa2-managing-significance-in-decision-taking/>  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>

We would be grateful if you could share this information with the community and its consultants.

Kind regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places Adviser South West  
[REDACTED]

Historic England | [REDACTED]