
Upper Marshwood Vale Neighbourhood Plan

2018 to 2033

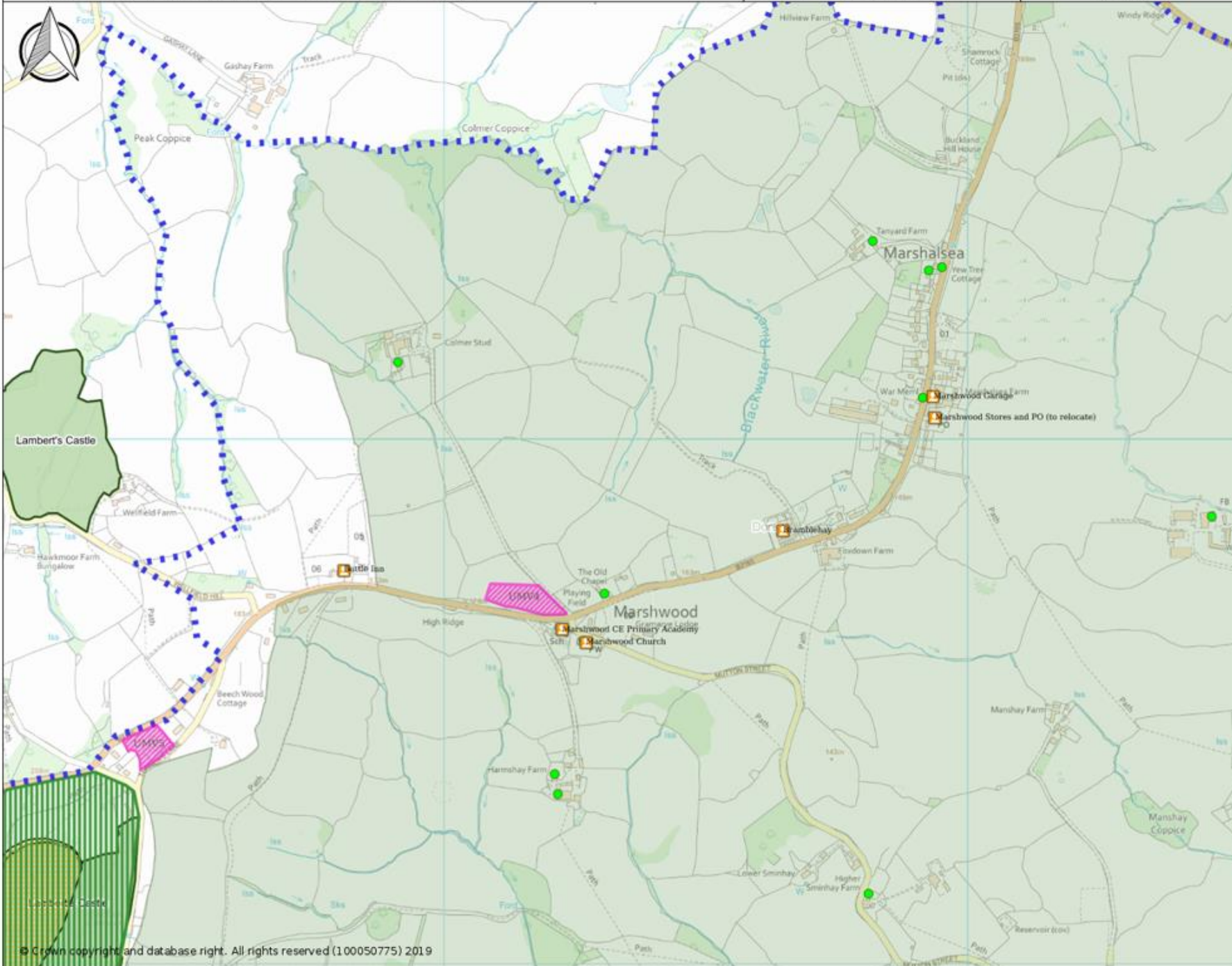
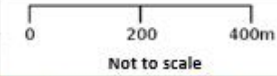
Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

Submission Draft, July 2019

Marshwood area

Author:

Date: 13/07/2019



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)



Site Allocation



Community Facility



Neighbourhood Plan area



Conservation Area



Green Space



Listed Buildings



I



II



II*

Scheduled Monuments



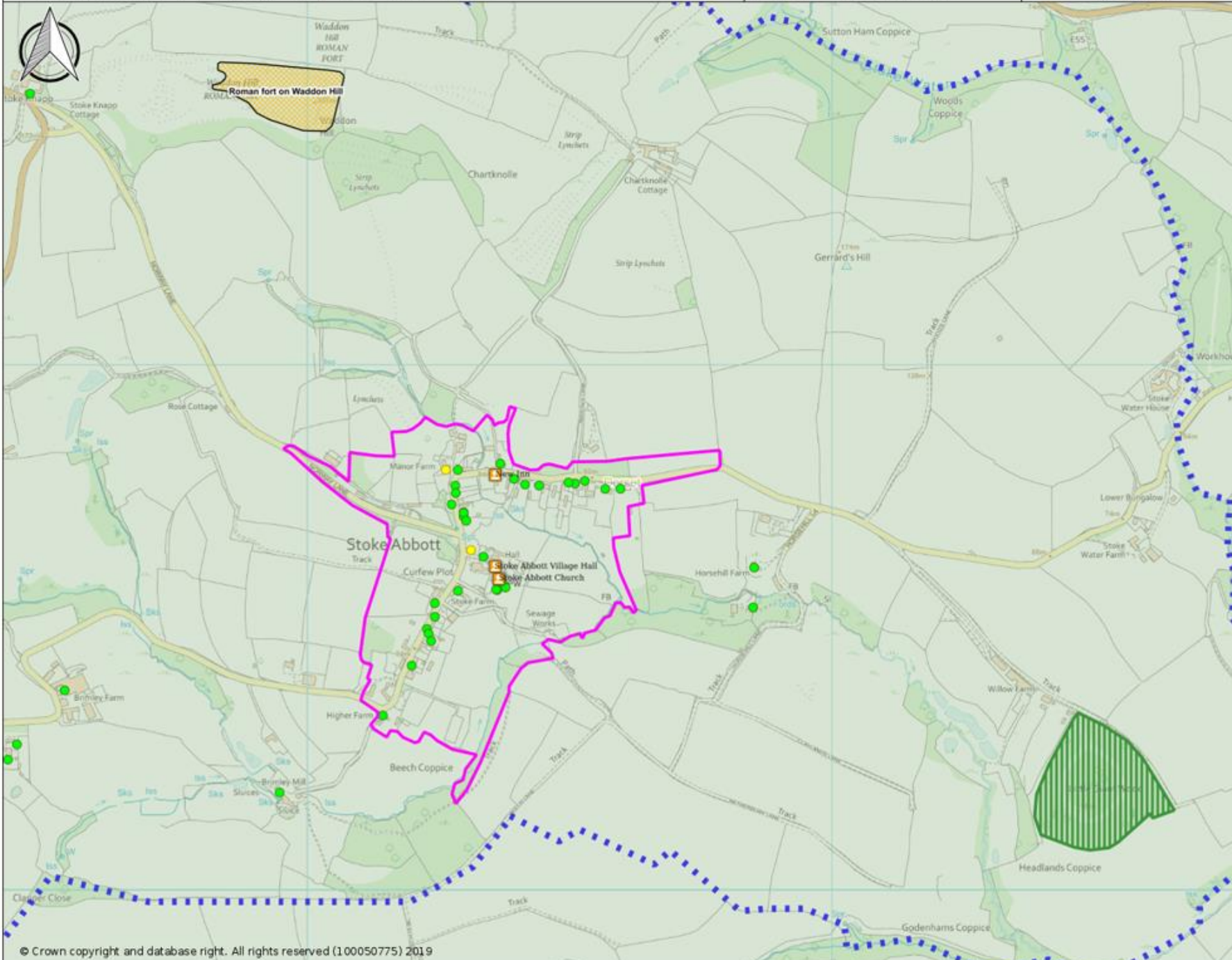
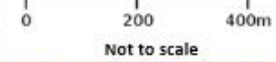
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)



Stoke Abbott area

Author:

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1. Your Neighbourhood Plan - Introduction and Background

About Upper Marshwood Vale

1.1. The Upper Marshwood Vale stretches 9km west to east, from Marshwood close to the Devon county boundary to Stoke Abbott near the small town of Beaminster in Dorset.

1.2. The landscape is incredibly scenic. Most of the area lies within the nationally important Dorset Area of Outstanding National Beauty, and is described as a rolling lowland pastoral vale, enclosed by greensand ridges with associated hillforts.

'a soft and enfolding landscape of rounded hills, hidden hamlets with cider orchards, ancient tiny lanes banked in spring with wild flowers – daffodils, primroses and bluebells, farms patterned with ancient field systems, woods and rows of hedgerow oaks. Buzzards, falcons and ravens dominate the air and badgers, deer and foxes criss-cross the hills below.' – description from the 2010 Parish Plan

1.3. The area is also sparsely populated, with no major employment sites. As a result it is tranquil and enjoys some of the darkest night skies in Dorset.

1.4. Like many rural areas in the South West, the general population is ageing with fewer young adults and families in the parish. This has obvious implications for local services. Many people are self-employed and work from home, helped by the fact that much of the area has benefited from superfast broadband, following a concerted campaign by local businesses and residents (although there are still some areas where infrastructure upgrades are needed).

1.5. In early 2016 the first residents moved into the eight new affordable homes at Bramblehay, Marshwood. These were built as a result of local residents forming a Community Land Trust in 2012 – an example of how local action can make a real difference in our community.

1.6. There are local services and facilities, including Marshwood CE Primary School, various public houses, churches and village halls (the latter in Stoke Abbott and Bettiscombe). These are all valued by the local community. The Marshwood Stores and Post Office closed in 2018, giving a timely reminder of how reliant we are on local people to run such local services.

Upper - implies the heights – and thus the depths – of our countryside, our geography, our geology of soft stone and hard rocks.

Marsh – this too tells us everything; over eons, the same farmers have worked their magic on the land with a welter of watercourses – many still hidden underground – to drain, tidy up and civilise our place and hence community into the all but hidden Upper Marshwood Vale we know and love today.

Wood – it is forest, trees and bushes that define and detail our villages, fields, byways and hamlets, once prolific and impassable now tamed by generations of farmers.

Vale – that is what defines us so well – a series of linked valleys topped by real hills with a rich history just a scratch beneath the surface.

What we are trying to achieve

1.8. The adopted 2015 Local Plan (which covers the whole of West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland) includes many general policies that seek to protect and enhance the area's natural environment, its built heritage, and to achieve high quality and sustainability in design. Its policies focus new development towards the larger towns and villages. The largest settlements in our area - Marshwood and Stoke Abbott - fall under the minimum population threshold to feature in the Local Plan. As such, there is little expectation that this area should have much development, and the Local Plan does not allocate any land for development or define settlement boundaries within which development is encouraged. However it does allow Neighbourhood Plans to allocate sites for future development, or to define their own development boundaries, to help deliver some growth to meet local needs.

So what does this Neighbourhood Plan look to achieve in the period from 2018 to 2033?

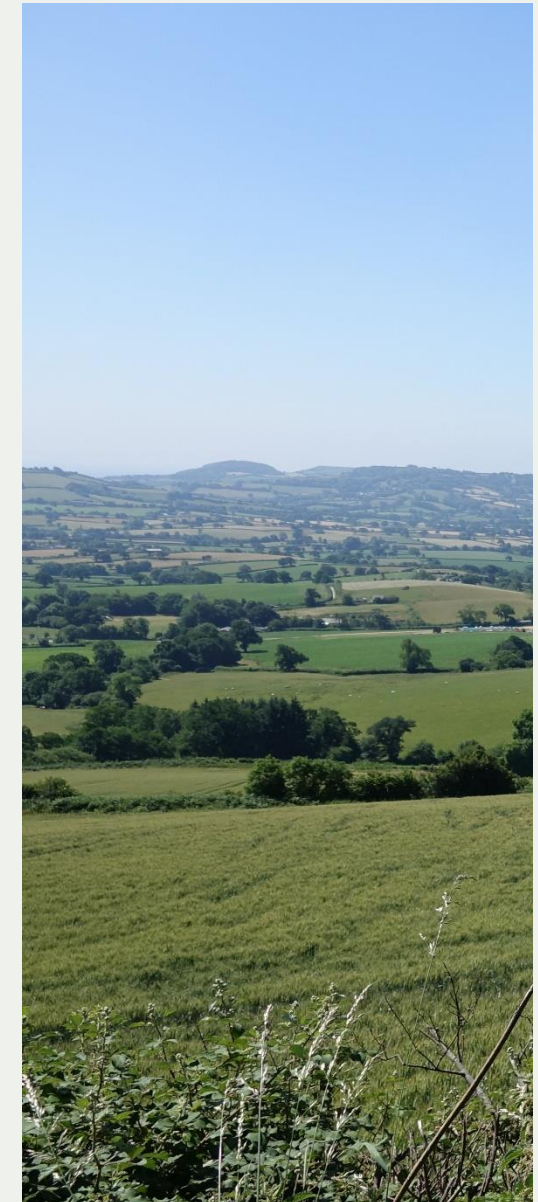
1.9. In terms of **housing** – the vision is to allow some housing growth at a rate that reflects local needs and the rural nature of the area. Where possible, this should provide for younger people with children, as well as older people needing to downsize.

1.10. In terms of the **local economy** – the vision is to support home working, rural workshops and small-scale tourism to strengthen the local economy and provide further job opportunities.

1.11. In terms of **community facilities** – the vision is to support a range of community facilities that can be sustained given the sparsity of the local population. The initial focus for this will be on supporting a new local shop in Marshwood. Practical solutions that could improve the local school and church (in terms of better parking and outdoor play facilities) are also considered.

1.12. In terms of **environment and design** – the vision is to protect the landscape and features which contribute to the area's unique character, the enjoyment of the area in terms of countryside access and views, the general tranquillity of the area and its dark skies. As this is broadly covered by the Local Plan the focus here is on highlighting more local features that perhaps would otherwise be overlooked in planning decisions.

The Upper Marshwood Vale



2. Things we value about our area

Our community facilities and green spaces

2.1. Both national and local planning policies recognise the importance of local community facilities, particularly in rural areas. Not only do they provide access to services and recreation opportunities, but they are also important in providing ways for people to meet and support each other as part of a community. Community facilities typically include local shops, meeting places, public open spaces, sports venues, cultural buildings (such as libraries and museums), healthcare, education, public houses and places of worship.

2.2. Although a number of these facilities may be run by public bodies or charitable trusts, they all depend on being economically viable in the long term. Changes may be necessary to allow the facilities to adapt to meet evolving customer needs demands, and a flexible approach should be taken where this would help retain or improve the service. A further step that can be taken is to register these as an 'Asset of Community Value' which can provide the community with more time to make a bid to buy that asset if it comes up for sale – this process is separate from the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy UMV1. Important community facilities

The following important community facilities should be retained where possible:

- Bettiscombe Village Hall,
- Bottle Inn, Marshwood
- Bramblehay, Marshwood
- Marshwood CE Primary Academy
- Marshwood Garage
- Marshwood Stores and PO (recently closed, hence the plan for new facilities)
- New Inn, Stoke Abbott
- Shave Cross Inn
- St Mary's Church, Marshwood
- St Mary's Church, Pilsdon Community
- St Stephen's Church, Bettiscombe
- St Mary's Church, Stoke Abbott
- Stoke Abbott village hall

The local community should be consulted on proposals to remove, diminish or replace an important community facility.

Proposals that allow existing facilities to modernise and adapt for future needs, or to diversify in a manner that would support a new or improved community facility to become viable, will be supported, unless this would result in significant adverse environmental impacts.

Did you know?

The **Church of St Mary, Pilsdon** and the **Parish Church Of St Mary, Stoke Abbott** are both **Grade I Listed** – which means that these are amongst the most important Listed Buildings nationally.

The **Bottle Inn** hosts the annual World Nettle Eating Championships. The contest began in the late 1980s when two farmers argued over who had the longest stinging nettles in their field and evolved into the World Nettle Eating Championships when one of the farmers promised to eat any nettle which was longer than his.



Above: The Bottle Inn, Marshwood

2.3. There is also a special 'Local Green Space' designation that can be given to land that is particularly valued by a local community, provided it is local in character, reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, and demonstrably special to that community. This designation provides a high degree of protection from development, as these spaces are considered to be particularly important now and in the future. However the type of publicly accessible green spaces in our area (which are the National Trust and Woodland Trust sites) do not readily fit these criteria due to their size and distance from the main settlements – so although these can be protected through policy as important area of public open space, they are not classed as Local Green Spaces. Improving public access to these sites will need to be balanced with the need to manage their historic and wildlife interests.

2.4. The Dorset AONB Management Plan makes particular reference the contrasts and diversity of the landscape, which can be appreciated from many viewpoints in the Neighbourhood Plan area, particularly from higher ground. The public rights of way network also provides a really valuable source of recreation and a means of enjoying our most beautiful countryside. The extensive network of public rights of way criss-crossing the area include the Monarch's Way (a 615 mile walk following the escape of Charles II after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester), the Orange Way (following the route of Prince William of Orange and his army from Devon to London), the Wessex Ridgeway, the Jubilee and Char Valley Trails, which also helps attract tourists to explore this wonderful area. Where opportunities arise, improvements to the public rights of way network in keeping with the rural character of the area are encouraged. This might be in terms of creating new (or reopening blocked) links to provide a better connected network of routes or simply provide access to otherwise unseen parts of the Vale, and replacing stiles with gates to make the network more accessible for those with more limited mobility.

Policy UMV2. Recreational access to the countryside

Development should ensure the retention of existing public rights of way. Proposals to improve public rights of way and improve access to enjoy the countryside will be supported.

Development should not significantly detract from the enjoyment of the following important public open spaces (as shown in the Policies Map):

- Little Giant Wood (Woodland Trust land), Stoke Abbott
- Lamberts Castle (National Trust land), Marshwood
- Pilsdon Pen (National Trust land), Pilsdon

Did you know?

Lambert's Castle is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest designated for its grassland habitats, and is in an unfavourable but recovering condition. It is noted for its nationally scarce butterfly species as well as its diverse habitats.

Lambert's Castle and Pilsdon Pen also contain Iron Age hillforts which are designated as scheduled monuments. Historic England has highlighted that their condition is poor – mainly due to the due to scrub / tree growth.

Coneys Castle and Lewesdon hillforts lie just outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area and are also scheduled monuments.

Below: Little Giant Wood



Local Wildlife Areas

2.5. Back in 2010 the Parish Plan highlighted local resident's concerns about declines in numbers of birds, animals and insects, as well as native plant species. Whilst Lamberts Castle is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, there is a much more extensive network of locally important nature conservation sites, particularly concentrated in the areas east of Lamberts Castle and also to the northern part of Stoke Abbott parish.

2.6. Ecology appraisals should be undertaken where protected species or important wildlife habitats are known or suspected to be present. Important habitats across the Neighbourhood Plan area include deciduous woodlands, lowland meadows, purple moor grass and rush pastures, lowland calcareous grasslands, lowland dry acid grassland and good quality semi-improved grasslands. Protected species that may be present include bats, barn owls, nesting birds, badgers, hedgehogs, dormice, reptiles and amphibians. So it is likely that ecology appraisals will be needed where development would impact on hedgerows, grasslands that have not been intensively farmed, natural watercourses or ponds, copses / woodland and mature tree specimens, rural barns and other roof voids (where bats may be present).

Policy UMV3. Local Wildlife Areas

All new development should have due regard for the local ecological network (existing and potential) (see Appendix 2), the potential presence of protected species; and take into account national policy requirement to provide net gains in biodiversity where possible.

To achieve this, the potential adverse or beneficial impact of the development on these ecological networks should be fully evaluated, and presence of protected species checked. A Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan must be submitted with any planning application for greenfield or brownfield development sites over 0.1ha in size where not currently used as existing residential or business premises, or with any planning application which is likely to give rise to an adverse impact on biodiversity.

Important Local Features

2.7. It goes without stating that the protected status of the Dorset AONB, and the impact development would have on its natural beauty, will need to be considered in planning decisions. The latest (2018) landscape assessment considered the Neighbourhood Plan area to be of 'moderate' condition and raises the concerns that the easternmost part is declining, and as a result the AONB Partnership is developing a new landscape scale, multi-objective conservation project for this area and the Brit Valley (subject to securing external funding). The small part of Marshwood parish, around Lamberts Castle and including the fields to the north up to the far side of the Bottle Inn, although not in the AONB, does form part of its setting (particularly those parts which can be seen in views from the AONB), and should be treated with similar respect.

2.8. In preparing this Plan, thought has been given to the local landscape features that contribute to the character of the area, as identified through the landscape character appraisals and local consultation. The impact of development on these features, and their contribution to local landscape character, should be carefully considered in deciding whether development is appropriate. Whilst accepting that there may be a need for larger agricultural barns to cater for modern farming practices, and that investment in infrastructure (such as mobile phone masts) is important for

today's way of life, opportunities should also be taken to consider whether any detrimental features could be removed or better screened (for example, by planting new small-scale broadleaved woodlands).

Policy UMV4. Local landscape character

Development should respect and enhance local landscape character, including the following key characteristics:

- Strong sense of rural tranquillity and character
- Dark night skies as a consequence of the general lack of light pollution (and lighting schemes should meet the highest standards suggested by the Institute of Lighting Professionals)
- Dramatic ancient hill forts (including public views of these important local landmarks)
- Beech tree canopies and avenues along open ridge tops
- Small oak, ash and hazel coppice woodlands
- Winding network of watercourses and streamside vegetation, including wet meadows and linear wet woodlands
- Springs, troughs associated with the historic use of the watercourses
- Sunken, winding rural lanes
- Deep hedge banks
- Hedgerow oaks
- Species rich verges
- Small pastoral fields – particularly where these follow historic field boundaries
- Scattered farmsteads that nestle within the landscape
- Historic features associated with the dairy farming heritage – most notably milk stands
- Traditional fingerposts
- Variety of vernacular building materials such as thatch and brick, Upper Greensand chert, oolitic limestone (Inferior Oolite), Blue Lias and Upper Greensand stone

Development proposals that remove features that are detrimental to local landscape character, such as intrusive large pylons and large-scale modern agricultural buildings, as well as enhancing any of the above key features, will be supported.

The design and layout of development should minimise adverse impacts on views from public rights of way over open countryside and preserve and enhance such views where possible

Stone troughs



Rural track and lanes



Traditional fingerposts



3. What development where?

3.1. In response to the first consultation events, the feedback from local residents was that there would be some support for some housing growth, tourism and home working, and a clear desire to support a range of community facilities that can be sustained.

3.2. In terms of housing, the available evidence at the time of drafting this Plan suggested a very modest need for housing, primarily for more affordable house types (particularly 1-bedroom rental properties, starter homes and self-build plots) and live-work homes suited to people running a business from home. The adopted Local Plan (2015) does not specify how many homes may be needed in Upper Marshwood Vale, but gives an overall housing target for the whole West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland plan area, most of which is expected to be built in and around the main towns. The emerging Local Plan Review suggests a minimum target based on 2% growth over a 20 year plan period, which for our area would be about 7 houses. Eight affordable houses were recently built at Marshwood (Bramblehay), of which two 1-bed, four 2-bed and two 3-bed, and there also a small number of such houses in Stoke Abbott: all are occupied. Whilst there are no current plans to build another scheme of affordable homes like Bramblehay, the affordable housing needs will be looked at again when this Plan is reviewed.

3.3. It is even more difficult to pinpoint the likely need for new employment workspace. This very much depends on new enterprises by local residents, and the diversification or expansion of existing businesses. Whilst there is general support for enhancing community facilities, it is also important that these are viable, which often requires volunteer effort.

3.4. Similarly it is difficult to quantify any specific need for tourism. However the Local Plan is broadly supportive of low-key tourism appropriate to rural areas, provided that these do not damage the environment and those features that are so important to visitors. Such development should, where possible and practicable, be located within or close to established settlements, or make use of existing or replacement buildings. Farm diversification projects are also supported.

The following sustainability objectives helped guide the site-selection process:

Ecology - Protect and where possible enhance habitats and biodiversity

Landscape - Respect and reinforce the area's rural landscapes and character

Heritage - Protect and where possible enhance the area's heritage assets

Pollution - Avoid sites that may be affected by air / soil / water contamination

Flood Risk - Avoid development in flood risk areas

Soils and Minerals - Avoid using the highest quality agricultural land

Local Needs - Prioritise development that would meet local needs for affordable homes, jobs and community facilities

Safe Access - Ensure the sites are safe and accessible, and ideally on foot

3.5. As no sites had been identified as suitable for development within the Upper Marshwood Vale through the Local Plan (2015) process, the Neighbourhood Plan Group undertook their own 'call for sites' in January 2018. This gave landowners the opportunity to put forward their land for consideration. Four sites were submitted and a further 3 late submissions accepted. Six of these were in the west of the area around Marshwood. This included the site known as the Dungeon (to the north side of Marshwood), two sites close to Marshwood Primary School, two sites close to the Bottle Inn, and land at Three Counties Nurseries site further to the south. Another site on the edge of Shave Cross to the south of the Neighbourhood Plan area was also put forward. There were no sites suggested in Stoke Abbott or the other smaller settlements.

3.6. The sites were checked against sustainable development objectives, and the community was consulted for their views on what development they would like to see where. With the recent closure of the Marshwood Shop, the potential for an alternative site for the village shop was a key consideration for local residents. With the two sites close to the school, the provision of an area for parking and improved play facilities was another concept that was supported by the local community.

3.7. However there was very little local support for housing on any of the sites, and only moderate support for holiday accommodation (which could potentially be pursued under the existing Local Plan policies). The landowners were contacted to discuss options that might better fit the community's needs and aspirations. As a result, the following options were identified:

- ⇒ **Colmer Stud site - potential for village shop / community hub, parking area (also for use by the church and school), with some limited housing:**

the landowners of two sites close to the church and school offered land for a car-park (or other community facilities). A few houses could be built in order to provide sufficient financial return as well as meeting some of the identified local housing need. From the sustainability checks the Colmer Farm Stud site opposite the school is likely to be the better site for this development, including a new site for the village shop, although this does not rule out considering the land adjoining Gramarye Lodge in the future (perhaps for a children's play area);

- ⇒ **Three Counties Nurseries – potential for live-work units:**

the former nursery has ceased trading as a horticultural business, and the site is falling into disrepair. The landowner has agreed that the site could be developed for live/work units.

Colmer Stud site potentially for village shop and parking (also for school / church) and some housing



Three Counties Nurseries site for live-work units



3.8. The following pages deal with each of these sites in turn, including a brief description of the issues and a planning policy allocating each site for development and setting out the main planning matters to be considered. It will be down to the landowners to submit planning applications for each sites in due course, which will provide more detail. In all cases the deliverability and viability of the site allocations have been checked with the respective landowners who have confirmed that they would be able to deliver the policy requirements.

3.9. Other issues raised through this plan's preparation included the potential benefits of relaxing the current requirements on re-use of existing buildings, in order to allow conversion to housing. Local enterprise would also benefit by making it easier for home working and small-scale business units to be permitted provided these remain small-scale and in locations unlikely to cause significant environmental harm. General policies have been included on these issues.

Marshwood

3.10. Marshwood stretches along the B3165 which is the busiest road in the Upper Marshwood Vale, connecting Crewkerne to Lyme Regis. The main built-up area lies just to the south of the Birdsmoorgate junction, with a short gap to a second smaller cluster of buildings around the parish church and school, and then sporadic development going south as far as the foot of Lambert's Castle Hill. The slightly scattered nature of development does not help with the identity of the village, and thought has been given as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process whether development could help strengthen the village's identity by linking some of the separate parts. However such an aim is long-term and limited by the small number of sites put forward by landowners through the call for sites.

A new site for the Marshwood Shop, parking for the church and school, and some limited housing at Colmer Stud Farm, opposite Marshwood School

3.11. Land at the entrance of Colmer Stud Farm is identified for a village shop and community hub (with facilities so that local people can meet here) with adjacent green space, a new car park to also serve the primary school and church (which

Did you know?

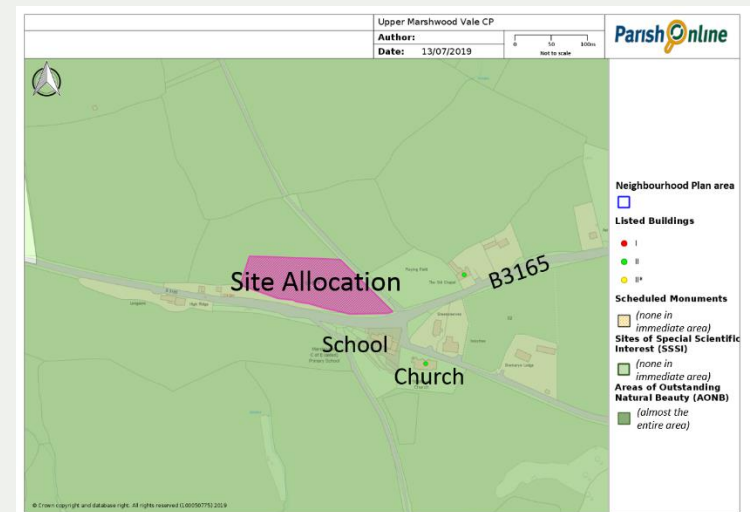
The **Marshwood Community Land Trust (CLT)** was created out of a project to build affordable housing (8 units) at Bramblehay in Marshwood. The CLT is a not for profit organisation owned and controlled by its local shareholders.

It could be a vehicle for other projects in years to come.



*Right:
Bramblehay*

Below: Map showing the Colmer Stud Farm site



have no parking at present), and up to four dwellings. The site assessment process flagged up the following key points:

- > The site lies on the main road (B3165) and a new existing vehicular access would be required and should be designed to facilitate the pedestrian crossing of the road to reach the school.
- > The land is elevated and widely visible and therefore care will be needed in terms of design and landscaping of any development, taking into account likely viewpoints from which the development could be seen
- > Although unlikely to cause substantial harm to the setting of the Grade II Listed church, any proposed buildings would need to be subservient in scale and materials
- > In terms of housing design, the same approach that was adopted at Old Chapel Yard (to the east) and Bramblehay (the affordable housing site further east) would be appropriate – i.e. that any development should respect the existing pattern of development i.e. as a row of properties aligned with the road, use locally distinctive materials and also pay close attention to boundary treatments.
- > The western extent of the roadside hedgerow is older and is on a significant bank with a range of native tree and hedgerow species, and may qualify as an important hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations Act (1997).

3.12. Given the main reason for allocating the site is to provide the community benefits of a new shop and community hub plus off-road parking to also benefit the church and school, it will be necessary to ensure that the parking area, associated landscaping and the site for the shop / community hub is delivered as part of the scheme through suitable conditions or a legal agreement. The village shop / community hub will be separately funded, and should be proportionate to local need and not impact on the trading of nearby towns. The latest (2018) retail study for West Dorset shops under 300m² gross floorspace will not require a retail impact assessment. It is presently envisaged that the combined shop and community hub would occupy a gross floor space of between 150m² and 200m².

3.13. The housing, which is needed in order to incentivise the landowner to provide these community benefits, should be designed to meet local needs – primarily through ensuring these are not excessive in size and are used as a primary residence (not a second home or holiday let).

Policy UMV5. The Colmer Stud Farm site, Marshwood

The Colmer Stud Farm site, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for a village shop and community hub with adjacent green space, community parking (for use in association with the shop, community hub, school and church), and up to four dwellings, subject to all of the following criteria:

- a) At least 30 car parking spaces and land made ready for a village shop and community hub with adjacent green space should be provided for community use (including in association with the local church and school) and completed prior to the occupation of the first dwelling.
- b) A new vehicular entrance should be provided to the satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority and designed to facilitate the safe pedestrian crossing of the B3165
- c) The housing and shop should have a positive frontage with the road and be of a high quality design appropriate to its semi-rural location and intervisibility with the nearby Listed buildings. A similar approach to that adopted at Old Chapel Yard and Bramblehay regarding the orientation of plots, layout and choice of locally distinctive materials including potential for enhanced boundary treatment and ecology would be appropriate.

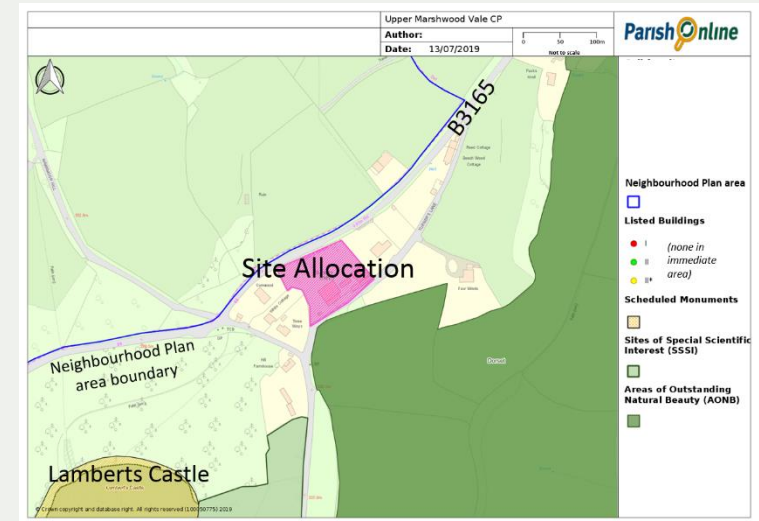
- d) The homes should not exceed 3 bedrooms in size, and one should have no more than 2 bedrooms, and they should all be restricted so as to be used as a primary residence.
- e) A robust landscaping scheme to address the impact of the development (including the buildings and carpark, access, signage etc) in wider views from the AONB should be planted as soon as practical when the development commences, and measures included to ensure its long-term maintenance. The loss of hedgerow of ecological importance should be avoided as far as practical, with replacement hedgerow planted to mitigate any loss. A biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan will be required.
- f) Any lighting schemes associated with the proposed use should be the minimum necessary for safety and security reasons and designed to minimise any adverse impact on the night sky.

Live-work units at Three Counties Nurseries

3.14. Land at Three Counties Nurseries is identified for up to five live-work units. The site assessment process flagged up the following key points:

- > The existing access from Turners Lane does not have good visibility splay and exits onto narrow road (although has previously been actively used as a business). However it should be possible to create an additional access onto the main road.
- > The site is outside the AONB but close to the wooded hillside of Lamberts Castle, however views from the monument are largely screened by vegetation and provided that the design of development is in keeping with the semi-rural character of this area any harm will be minimal
- > There may also be potential contaminated land associated with the use of the site as a nursery.
- > The hedgerows and hedge banks are typical of west Dorset and support a varied flora, parts of which may qualify as important hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations Act (1997).

Below: Map showing Three Counties Nurseries site



What are live-work units?

Live-work units are basically dwellings with workspace as an integral part (or otherwise clearly linked) to the properties.

For example they could be built as homes with workspace either on the ground floor (with accommodation above) or with a large workspace on the side, with the working area being more substantial in size than just a small home office.

Planning conditions can be used to make sure that the business floorspace of the live/work unit is finished ready for occupation before the residential floorspace is occupied, and that the dwelling cannot be occupied by a person unrelated to those employed, or last employed in the business occupying the business floorspace of that unit.

Policy UMV6. The Three Counties Nurseries, Marshwood

The Three Counties Nurseries Site, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for up to five live-work units, subject to all of the following criteria:

- a) A substantial element of the total floor area should be designed for business use so as to qualify as a live-work unit (as opposed to ordinary dwelling). The business element will be restricted to B1 (or similar and compatible) use and must remain available for future occupants' own business use.
- b) The development is of a high quality design and the scale and density appropriate to its rural location. Its height should not exceed two storeys and its design should draw upon and be sensitive to the prevailing character of Marshwood buildings, for example utilising render or stone, and pitched roofs of masonry construction.
- c) A new vehicular entrance should be provided onto the B3165 to the satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority.
- d) An arboricultural survey is undertaken to identify those trees on the site boundary worthy of retention, and the development is designed to avoid their root protection zone and retain the hedgerows / hedge banks as far as practical. A biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan will be required.
- e) The potential contamination risks associated with its historic use are investigated and any remediation works included to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Stoke Abbott

3.15. The whole of Stoke Abbott village is designated as a Conservation Area. It is linear in form, very much tucked away in a narrow, winding valley and the abundant natural vegetation. There are a mix of cottages, farms, a pub, church and several gentry houses, and most buildings are positioned at the street edge or sit in larger plots.

3.16. There are no pavements in the village. Although the roads into and out of the village would not cope with a significant increase in traffic, some limited development may be possible if suitable sites were to come forward during the plan period. However in the absence of any sites being put forward for consideration in this Neighbourhood Plan, there are no site specific allocations.

Stoke Abbott



Bettiscombe Village Hall



Pilsdon Community



Bettiscombe, Pilsdon, Shave Cross and the wider rural area

3.17. The remaining area comprises scattered small settlements (hamlets) and winding country lanes within a farmed landscape. Further development in these smaller settlements is not likely to be sustainable due to the poor access and valued landscape. National planning policy is clear that development of isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided other than in exceptional circumstances, apart from the re-use of existing buildings and where there is a clear need for a farm-worker (or other rural-based occupation) to live on the site. However the Local Plan policies support agriculture, forestry and related enterprises including farm diversification, having particular regard to the need for the protection of the countryside and environmental constraints.

Further housing opportunities through the conversion and removal of restrictions on the use of existing buildings

3.18. The re-use of existing buildings for housing, whether in Stoke Abbott, Marshwood or the wider rural area, can provide a useful source for local housing needs in an area where there are limited opportunities for new-building housing. Whilst nationally the Government made provision for the conversion of former agricultural buildings into housing through the use of permitted development rights, this did not extend to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or to buildings that may have had an intervening use (such as holiday lets or workshops). Similarly whilst the adopted Local Plan relaxed its approach to the re-use of rural buildings for housing in 2015, it still required these to be in settlement of 200+ population or 'tied' through a legal agreement to a larger holding. As such the policy framework needs changing if we are to make the most of this as an option in the Upper Marshwood Vale. Given the emphasis on local needs and also the existing comparatively high levels of homes with no usual occupants (related to the prevalence of second homes and holidays) and therefore a restriction should be imposed to ensure these are used as a primary residence

3.19. The following policy uses some of the basic requirements for the conversion of existing buildings currently applied to buildings in or close to settlements of 200+ population, together with the general approach adopted nationally for agricultural conversions. As the local need for housing is for smaller and more affordable dwellings types, a size restriction is imposed (using the definition for smaller dwellings used in permitted development rights), to encourage buildings to be subdivided into more than one dwelling where they would otherwise significantly exceed this size threshold. Parking requirements were raised as part of the consultation on this Plan and the



parking standards used by Dorset Council would be applied. These require at least 1 parking space plus an additional visitor space for 1 and 2 bedroom conversions, and at least 2 parking spaces plus an additional visitor space for larger homes.

3.20. Given the landscape sensitivity to the area and the focus on affordable it is expected that the Local Planning Authority would be justified to consider imposing conditions that would limit further extensions and alternations through permitted development rights, however whether these rights are removed will depend on the merits of each case.

Policy UMV7. The residential conversion of existing buildings

The re-use of an existing lawful building to create one or more new dwellings will be permitted subject to all of the following criteria:

- a) the building is not in an isolated location (i.e. distant from other built development), and can be safely accessed from the highway
- b) the conversion would not give rise to a future need for another building (or buildings) within the local area to accommodate the displaced use or activity
- c) the existing building is permanent, of substantial construction, would make a positive contribution to local character, and would not need to be substantially extended or re-built
- d) there are no pre-existing contamination, noise or flood risks that cannot be mitigated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority
- e) the existing building would readily lend itself to residential conversion to provide one or more modest-sized homes (the floor space of any one dwellinghouse not generally exceeding 100m²), in terms of its size, scale, height, depth and the number and location of existing openings, and should be restricted so as to be used as a primary residence
- f) if changes are proposed to a roof / attic space, or the work comprises the renovation or conversion of an agricultural or derelict building, a bat survey must be undertaken. If evidence of bats is discovered, a biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan will be required.

Small-scale employment enterprises

3.21. Without jobs for all sections of the community, we face a sterile existence with nothing for the go-getters amongst us to keep our lives fulfilled and valuable. We risk our area becoming a dormitory for many who have to travel to get and sustain jobs. Far better to develop local work for those that need employment or indeed employees for a sustainable future. Although this Neighbourhood Plan cannot conjure up new businesses, it can provide a supportive base from which opportunities could emerge with the right people, businesses and investment.

3.22. The Local Plan allows general employment uses (such as offices and workshops) within or on the edge of a settlement; through the intensification or extension of existing premises or the re-use or replacement of an existing building; or as part of a farm diversification scheme. It doesn't specifically address opportunities for home working, which is a major part of this area's employment base. The focus of the following policy has been included to provide a suitably flexible approach that supports home working and also new, small-scale workshop / office units (to allow home-based businesses and encourage local enterprise) in locations where significant adverse impacts should be avoided, bearing in mind the very rural nature of the area. A limit of 100m² per unit is suggested for the floor area – which reflects permitted development rights for new industrial buildings and warehouses on existing employment sites in sensitive areas. Larger-scale enterprises would be considered under the relevant Local Plan policies.

Policy UMV8. Supporting small-scale employment enterprises

The use of existing lawful dwellings and associated outbuildings to facilitate home working will be supported provided the use would not give rise to an unacceptable level of disturbance to neighbours or have a significant adverse environmental impact.

The provision of new, small-scale workshop / office units (which could include some ancillary retail) to enable employment enterprises to set up or expand will be encouraged where:

- a) the site has good access to the B3165 and is well-related to existing buildings
- b) the buildings are designed in keeping with the rural character of the area, would not adversely impact on the setting of any nearby heritage assets, and should not exceed 2 storey (equivalent) in height or have a gross floor area in excess of 100m² or require lighting that would notably impact on the dark night skies
- c) the proposed use would be B1 or a similar employment use which would not generate pollution, or noise / disturbance to neighbouring properties
- d) the proposed use would not generate traffic levels that create highway safety concerns or detract from the rural character of the area.

Where new buildings for employment use are proposed, these should be subject to a condition or legal agreement ensuring it would remain available for business use.

Employment opportunities

in the Upper Marshwood Vale

A – Agricultural changes:

Traditional farms can remain productive through diversification such as leisure, tourism and re-using redundant buildings.

B - Working from home:

Home-based businesses can provide occasional and full-time work. Superfast broadband access is often essential. Although starting up a business can be daunting, local mentoring and support can be a real help.

C – Small workshops / offices:

Small workshops or offices available on short leases at low cost rents can provide an important step to expand a home-based business or include an element of manufacturing or increased customer access.

D - Tourism, pubs, bed and breakfast, campsites and holiday lets:

From well-established operations to ad hoc and occasional lettings, tourism can produce a small but important boost to income.

E – Local retail

Although the local customer base is limited, with community support a local shop in Marshwood should be self-sustaining. Retail could also work as an element of other businesses (such as local crafts) although it is likely that most businesses will be more dependent on internet based sales.

Appendix 1 – key statistics about this area

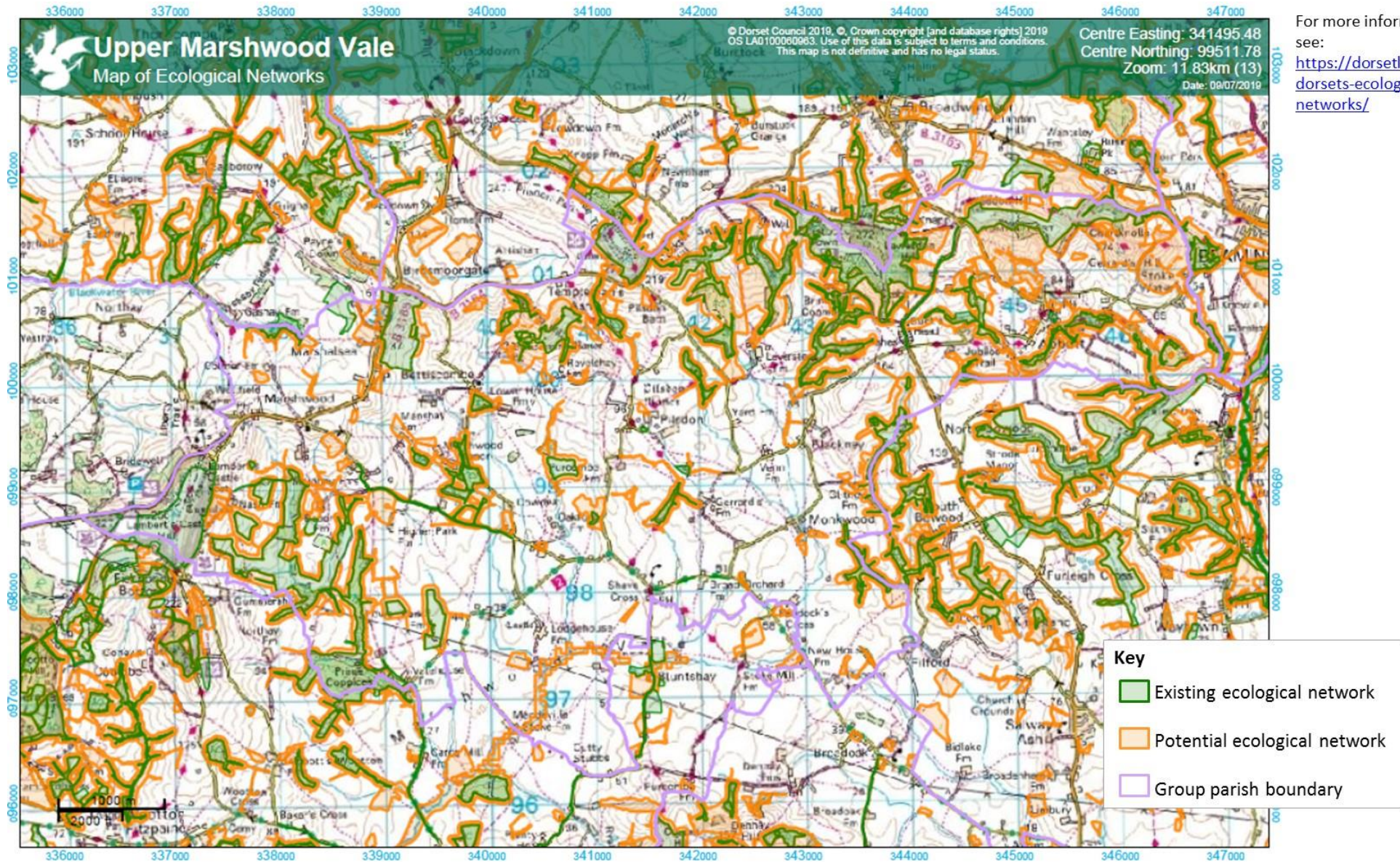
Population demographics (2011 Census):

- > **584 usual residents**, living in **262 households**. The average household size is 2.1 persons, and the average house size is 3 bedrooms (both fairly typical)
- > **Sparse population** (an average population density of 0.2 persons per hectare, compared to 0.9 persons per hectare in West Dorset and 3.7 persons per hectare across England and Wales)
- > **Ageing population** (average age 56 years compared to West Dorset average of 49 years, and 30% aged 65 + years compared to West Dorset average of 26%) – but this does not notably skew health conditions (20% of the population are affected by health conditions that limit their day to day activities (which is fairly typical)).
- > **A comparatively high level of vacant homes** (total dwelling number was 340, giving a vacancy rate of 23% - particularly high in Stoke Abbott and Pilsdon parishes, compared to 10% for West Dorset)
- > **More limited access to rented accommodation** (79% homes are owner occupied compared to West Dorset average: 70%)
- > **High degree of car dependency** - most households have one if not two cars (55% of households have 2 or more cars compared to West Dorset average of 39%)
- > **Good level of economic activity**, particularly **self-employed** (45% economically active are self-employed compared to West Dorset average of 22%, only 1.7% unemployed compared to 3.4% in West Dorset)

Environmental Constraints:

- > Almost the entire Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the **Dorset AONB** (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) – a **nationally designated landscape**, varying from the clay vale of the Marshwood Vale to the south, wooded hills of the Axe Valley Hills to the north and west, and undulating river valley of the Brit Valley to the east.
- > **Lambert's Castle SSSI** is a **nationally important wildlife site** in the west of the Neighbourhood Plan area. The site features a prominent landmark consisting of a flat-topped hill with an Iron Age hill fort from which it takes its name. Together with its flanks and adjacent lower slopes, which extend into Devon, this site comprises a range of grasslands and open heath, which are now both rare and threatened nationwide, with some scrub and secondary woodland.
- > Four **scheduled monuments** – at Lambert's Castle, Pilsdon Pen, Marshwood Castle and Waddon Hill (the latter two are on private land). Also visible is Lewesdon Hill fort (in the adjoining Broadwindsor parish).
- > Some 88 **Listed Buildings** and structures, including the Church of St Mary (Pilsdon), and the Parish Church of St Mary (Stoke Abbott), both Grade I Listed.
- > **Stoke Abbott** has been designated as a **Conservation Area**, for which a Conservation Area Appraisal was prepared in 2007.

Appendix 2 – Existing and Potential Ecological Networks



For more information see:
<https://dorsetlnp.org.uk/dorsets-ecological-networks/>

Policies Map – Entire Neighbourhood Plan Area

See start of document for Marshwood and Stoke Abbott maps

