



# **Bourton Neighbourhood Plan: Strategic environmental assessment**



**Environmental Report  
Pre-submission (Regulation 14)**

**Project Reference 60472167**

**May 2016**

*Prepared by AECOM for Bourton Neighbourhood Planning Group*

<i>Project Role</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Actions Summary</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
Researcher(s)	Graham McGrath	Assistant Environmental Consultant	Undertook appraisals		16/05/16
Project Manager	Nick Chisholm-Batten	Principal Consultant	Prepared / reviewed draft and final text		31/03/16 16/05/16
Director/QA	Alex White	Associate Director	QA of draft for comment		18/05/16
Qualifying Body	Mike Withers	Group contact, Bourton Neighbourhood Planning Group	Co-ordinated Neighbourhood Group inputs and comments	Confirmed via e-mail	16/05/16
Project Coordinator	Ffion Batcup	Coordinator	Reviewed final report		19/05/16

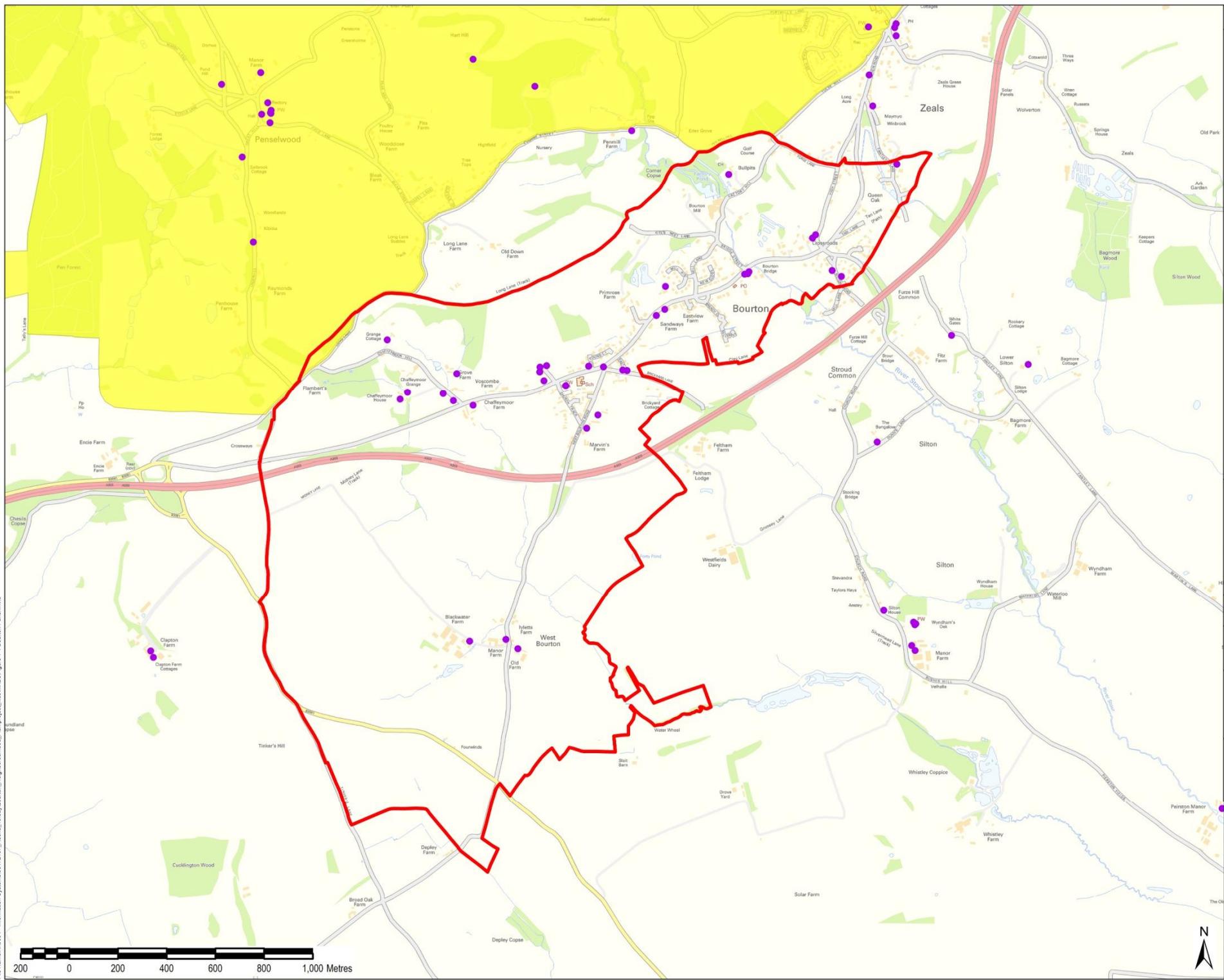
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**LEGEND**

- Bourton parish boundary
- Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB
- Listed building



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Purpose of issue **DRAFT**

Client  
**BOURTON PARISH COUNCIL**

Project Title  
**BOURTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT**

Drawing Title  
**BOURTON NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA**

Drawn SJ	Checked BB	Approved NCB	Date 09/03/2016
AECOM Internal Project No. 60472167		Scale @ A4 1:20,000	

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AECOM  
Scott House  
Ampex Way, Basingstoke  
Hampshire, RG21 7PP  
Telephone (01256) 310200  
Fax (01256) 310201  
www.aecom.com



Drawing Number  
**FIGURE 1.1**

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# Non-Technical Summary

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## NTS1: What is strategic environmental assessment?

Neighbourhood Planning Groups use strategic environmental assessment (SEA) to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives which have been developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects and identify opportunities to improve the quality of the environment and the quality of life of residents through the Neighbourhood Plan.

## NTS2: What is the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan?

The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is a plan for Bourton Parish for the period to 2031. Prepared to conform with the North Dorset Local Plan, the Bourton NP sets out a vision, objectives and a range of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA). These relate to a range of topics, including, but not limited to, community facilities, local character and distinctiveness, housing and open space.

The overarching vision for the Bourton NP is:

*“To further develop a vibrant, friendly, safe and inclusive community, while preserving the distinctive rural atmosphere of Bourton and promoting the health and well-being of all residents, in the context of a shared and sustainable future.*

*Bourton will be a great place to live and work and will be known for its rich rural character, attractive green spaces and thriving natural environment. It will be safe and enjoyable to move around on foot, horseback and bicycle.”*

It is currently anticipated that the Bourton NP will be submitted for a referendum in mid-2016.

## NTS3: Purpose of this Environmental Report

This Environmental Report, which accompanies the current consultation version of the Bourton NP, is the second document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (February 2015), produced by North Dorset District Council (NDDC), which includes information about Bourton's environment and community.

The purpose of the Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Bourton NP and the alternatives considered; and
- Provide an opportunity for consultation bodies, interested parties and the public to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.
- The Environmental Report contains:
  - An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Bourton NP and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes;
  - Relevant aspects of the current and future state of the environment and key sustainability issues;
  - The SEA Framework of Objectives against which the Bourton NP has been assessed;
  - The assessment of alternative approaches for the Bourton NP;
  - The likely significant effects of the Bourton NP in environmental and socio-economic terms;
  - The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse effects from the Bourton NP; and
  - The next steps for the Bourton NP and accompanying SEA process.

## NTS4: Assessment of alternative sites for the proposed village hall

As a result of a requirement identified in the Bourton Village Plan and following a survey by the Village Hall Management Committee and Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG) consultation events, it became clear that there was strong support in the community for a new village hall. This requirement is based on the poor quality construction and limited lifespan of the current village hall, and issues relating to the lack of parking, difficulty of access (particularly for the disabled) and inadequate toilet and kitchen facilities.

Consultation undertaken prior to and during the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) process raised the possibility of negotiating a site for the village hall and associated amenity land from a local landowner in return for also allowing on site a small number of small family homes. A NPG survey carried out in 2014, as part of community engagement, revealed a vote in favour of this principle of over 80%.

During this period, NDDC had determined that the site selection process should be undertaken by the NPG and that an SEA would be required because of the nature of the proposed development. As a result, the NPG proceeded to review potential sites that could be allocated within the NP and 14 sites were brought forward through this process. Following a thorough site assessment exercise, discussions with landowners and the production of a Site Appraisal and Selection Report by LB Planning, on behalf of the NPG, three sites were shortlisted, as follows:

- Land adjoining Sandways Farm
- Land at Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field)
- Land at Voscombe Farm

An appraisal was made of the key constraints present at each of these sites and the potential effects of a proposed allocation. The appraisal, which was undertaken as part of the SEA process, is presented in Chapter 3 of this report.

Subsequent to the site assessments it became apparent that additional amenity land would be required for the Voscombe Farm site to meet the criteria for the village hall. Following discussions with the owners of the land on this issue, the site was effectively withdrawn for the purposes of the NP. Therefore, two sites remained for consideration: the land adjoining Sandways Farm and the land at Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field).

During a public presentation and open forum discussion at a Parish Council meeting in late 2015, it was shown that there was a clear local preference for both sites to be taken forward as options for the village hall. It was, therefore, decided to proceed with the NP on the basis of putting forward two options for the site of the new village hall, either of which would be suitable subject to complying with the specified requirements.

## NTS5: Appraisal of the current version of the Bourton NP

The next step of the SEA process was an assessment of the eleven policies put forward in the current consultation version of the Bourton NP, against the SEA Framework.

The Environmental Report has presented the findings of the assessment under the following environmental themes:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| • Intergenerational imbalance | • Flood risk                                    |
| • Accessibility               | • Climate change mitigation                     |
| • Housing                     | • Soil  |
| • Employment and training     | • Biodiversity                                  |
| • Heritage                    | • Water resources, air quality, light and noise |
| • Landscape                   |   |

The assessment has concluded that the current version of the the draft Bourton NP is likely to lead to positive effects in terms of the SEA objectives focusing on improving the quality of life of residents.

A central and overriding element of the Neighbourhood Plan is the protection and enhancement of landscape character and the character of the village, including the application of the recommendations of the Village Design Statement. This will have **significant positive effects** on the setting of the historic environment and on the rural character of the village.

The draft plan will also help to initiate a range of beneficial approaches in relation to the 'climate change mitigation', 'flood risk', 'housing', 'soil' and 'water resources, air quality, light and noise' objectives.

However, due to the small scale of likely positive effects, they are not considered to be significant in the context of the SEA process.

Further **significant positive effects** will be facilitated through the draft plan's delivery of two options for the site of a new village hall, its impact on supporting the quality of the community life and its focus on protecting and enhancing green spaces.

In terms of potential negative effects, there are likely to be some minor effects on landscape and the rural character of the NPA from the development of either of the sites selected for the new village hall and small scale housing development.

In relation to potential effects on biodiversity, negative effects from the allocations are likely to be limited by the small scale of the proposals and the relatively low biodiversity sensitivity of the two sites proposed. The policies put forward through the draft plan also provides a considerable degree of protection for biodiversity habitats and species in the NPA and provides scope for enhancements to ecological networks.

## **NTS6: Next steps**

Subsequent to the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, the Bourton NP may be updated, as necessary, to reflect comments received. The Environmental Report will be updated to reflect the changes made to the plan.

The Bourton NP and the updated Environmental Report will then be submitted to NDDC for its consideration. In particular, NDDC will consider whether the Bourton NP meets the legal requirements and is compatible with the NDDC Local Plan and is ready to go to the Independent Examiner.

If the subsequent Independent Examination is favourable, the Bourton NP will be subject to a referendum, organised by NDDC. If more than 50% of those who vote support the plan, it will be passed to North Dorset District with a request that it is adopted. Once adopted, the Bourton NP will become part of the Development Plan for the NPA.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of Bourton's emerging Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2012. The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA), which covers Bourton Parish in Dorset (Figure 1.1), is being prepared in the context of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (NDLP1). It is currently anticipated that the Bourton NP will be submitted to North Dorset District Council (NDDC) in late 2016.

Key information relating to the Bourton NP is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Key facts relating to the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan

Name of Responsible Authority	Bourton Parish Council
Title of Plan	Bourton Neighbourhood Plan
Subject	Neighbourhood Plan
Purpose	The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The plan will conform with the North Dorset Local Plan.
Timescale	To 2031
Area covered by the plan	Bourton Parish. (Figure 1.1)
Summary of content	The Bourton Neighbourhood Plan will set out a vision, strategy and range of policies for the NPA. Box 2.1 below presents the vision and aims of the Neighbourhood Plan.
Plan contact point	Mike Withers, Chairman, Bourton Neighbourhood Planning Group. Email address: <a href="mailto:mwithers.sandways@btinternet.com">mwithers.sandways@btinternet.com</a> Tel 01747 840346

## 1.2 SEA explained

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the Bourton NP seeks to maximise the emerging Neighbourhood Plan's contribution to sustainable development.

The SEA has been prepared in line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations') which transpose into national law the EU Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment' (the 'SEA Directive')<sup>1</sup>. The Bourton NP has been determined by NDDC as requiring an SEA.

The SEA Regulations require that a report is published for consultation alongside the draft plan that '*identifies, describes and evaluates*' the likely significant effects of implementing '*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*'. The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.

In line with the SEA Regulations this Environmental Report must essentially answer four questions:

1. What is the scope of the SEA?
2. What has Plan-making/SEA involved up to this point?

'Reasonable alternatives' must have been assessed for the plan.

3. What are the appraisal findings at this stage?

i.e. in relation to the draft plan.

4. What happens next?

These questions are derived from Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, which present 'the information to be provided within the report'. Table 1.2 presents the linkages between the regulatory requirements and the four SEA questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC

### 1.3 Structure of this Environmental Report

This document is the Environmental Report for the Bourton NP and hence needs to answer all four of the questions listed in Section 1.2 with a view to providing the information required by the SEA Regulations.

Each of the four questions is answered in turn within this report, as follows:

Table 1.2: Questions that must be answered by the Environmental Report in order to meet regulatory<sup>2</sup> requirements

Environmental Report question	In line with regulations, the report must include...
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes</li> </ul>
What is the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level</li> <li>– Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
What is the scope of the SEA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan</li> <li>– The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected</li> <li>– Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan</li> <li>– The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected</li> <li>– Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
What are the key issues & objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment</li> </ul>
What has plan-making/SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach)</li> <li>– The likely significant effects associated with alternatives</li> <li>– Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.</li> </ul>
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan</li> <li>– The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan</li> </ul>
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The next steps for plan making/SEA process.</li> </ul>

*N.B. The right-hand column of Table 1.2 does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation. This interpretation is explained in Appendix I of this report.*

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

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## 2 The Scope of the SEA

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### 2.1 The aim of the Neighbourhood Plan

#### Context provided for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Area by the North Dorset Local Plan

The Bourton NP is being prepared in the context of the North Dorset Local Plan. The Local Plan sets out the strategic planning policies for North Dorset District and provides guidance on how proposals for development will be considered and is the main basis for making decisions on planning applications. It forms part of 'the development plan' for the district and all planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless 'material considerations' indicate otherwise.

In January 2016 NDDC adopted the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (NDLP1). This document sets out the strategic planning policies for North Dorset District. This includes a series of strategic Development Management Policies, which provide more detail on a range of issues and types of development, including development in the countryside.

NDLP1 will subsequently be accompanied by a Local Plan Part 2 which, when adopted, will allocate specific sites for housing and employment in the main towns in the District, Stalbridge and the larger villages and will include a review of other land allocations and settlement boundaries.

The four main towns in the District (Blandford Forum and St. Mary, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton) are identified in NDLP1 for the main focus of growth in the District. Outside of the four main towns, Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages have been identified as a focus for growth to meet local needs in this District. Bourton has been designated as one of these 'larger villages'.

NDLP1 makes provision for in the region of 825 new houses in Stalbridge and the larger villages. NDDC has indicated that on a pro-rata basis this would require the provision of 35 houses in the Bourton NPA over the period of the Local Plan. There is, however, currently planning consent for 43 houses in the area and therefore NDDC has indicated that it is unlikely to allocate further development sites for housing. Another key element for the NPA is that NDLP1 retains the existing Settlement Boundary for the village.

#### Vision and objectives for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan

The vision and objectives for the Bourton NP were developed following the review of extensive consultation exercises carried out by the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Planning Group. The vision and objectives for the Bourton NP are presented below.

## Box 2.1 Vision and objectives for the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan

### Vision

*“To further develop a vibrant, friendly, safe and inclusive community, while preserving the distinctive rural atmosphere of Bourton and promoting the health and well-being of all residents, in the context of a shared and sustainable future.*

*Bourton will be a great place to live and work and will be known for its rich rural character, attractive green spaces and thriving natural environment. It will be safe and enjoyable to move around on foot, horseback and bicycle.”*

### Objectives

- To bring forward development opportunities to meet the current and future needs of the community, while ensuring that they are consistent with Bourton’s distinctive rural atmosphere and important views.
- To provide designated locations for appropriate, high quality residential development including provision for people who currently find it difficult to secure appropriate accommodation in Bourton e.g. families, older people and first time buyers seeking good quality sustainable housing.
- To ensure that any new development is designed to reflect the character of the village sympathetically, in accordance with the parameters set down in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Village Design Statement.
- To support and improve the sustainable growth of local businesses and essential services, including health, education and transport.
- To sustain and improve the local provision of recreation and community facilities to enable everyone in Bourton to have a healthy lifestyle and enjoy a range of cultural pursuits.
- To maintain and improve the natural environment of Bourton for the benefit of its wide range of native flora and fauna and for the enjoyment of the community.
- To protect and enhance all green spaces and habitats within the area.
- To encourage the development of a stronger community spirit, with more members of the community sharing the load and participating in village life.
- To encourage walking, horse-riding and cycling and to support public transport in order to ensure that the environmental quality of the area is protected.

To support the Neighbourhood Plan’s vision and objectives, the Bourton NP sets out a number of Neighbourhood Plan policies. The latest iteration of these policies has been appraised in Section 3.4 of this Environmental Report.

## 2.2 SEA scoping

### SEA Scoping Report

The SEA Regulations require that: *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, The Environment Agency and Historic England.<sup>3</sup> As such, these authorities were consulted on the scope of the Bourton NP SEA in February and March 2015.

The purpose of scoping was to outline the ‘scope’ of the SEA through setting out:

- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional and local plans and strategies relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan;
- Baseline data against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed;

<sup>3</sup> In-line with Article 6(3).of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because *‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities,[they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme’.*

- The key sustainability issues for the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- A 'Sustainability Appraisal Framework' of objectives against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.

Two key responses were received on consultation on the Scoping Report. These were from Natural England, who recommended 1) the undertaking of an ecological assessment of the three sites to be considered for the village hall (see Section 3.3 below), and 2) the considered in detail of potential landscape and visual impacts associated with these site options.

In response to these comments, a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment<sup>4</sup> and Ecological Impact Assessments<sup>5</sup> for the three sites being considered for the village hall were commissioned by the Neighbourhood Planning Group.

The baseline information (including baseline data and context review) as presented in the SEA Scoping Report, can be accessed at:

<http://www.bourtondorset.org/bourtondorset/wp-content/uploads/20150217-Bourton-NP-SEA-Scoping-7v0.pdf>

The key sustainability issues for the Neighbourhood Plan and the SEA Framework have been presented below.

## 2.3 Key issues and SEA Framework

### Introduction

Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, the SEA Scoping Report was able to identify a range of sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of SEA. These issues are as follows:

#### Issue 1 – Intergenerational imbalance

There is a high proportion of wealthy educated retirees within the NPA. The ageing population and atypical population profile is a specific issue for Bourton NPA and may require specific policies, e.g. the building of certain types of dwellings or a Village Hall being designed in a certain way to cater for the older population.

#### Issue 2 – Accessibility to services and high car ownership

Within the NPA there is a high proportion of households with two or more cars/vans. This reflects the rural nature of the Area. There are reasonable facilities within the NPA, however, bus services are inadequate. Car use is inevitable within a rural area and hence there is a need to provide parking spaces appropriate to any development being proposed.

#### Issue 3 – Affordability of housing

There is a high proportion of retirees and a high proportion of home owners within the NPA. Similarly, there is a large proportion of detached dwellings and a very low proportion of flats. In Bourton, the household size is relatively low, however, the number of bedrooms per household is relatively high indicating an under occupancy of dwellings. There may be a need for more affordable dwellings within the area and for more dwellings that meet the needs of particular groups, e.g. the elderly or infirm or those on a lower income.

#### Issue 4 – Lack of employment opportunities

Within Bourton NPA the proportion of full time employees is significantly lower than the District and National average and, similarly, the proportion of self-employed is higher than the District and National average. The unemployment rate is also higher than the District and County rate. This could be related to the lack of employment opportunities within the NPA, with the main employers being located in Gillingham to the south east or Wincanton to the west. Provision of space for economic activity would help to improve job prospects within the NPA.

#### Issue 5 – Heritage assets

<sup>4</sup> LB Planning (February 2016) Landscape Visual Impact Assessment for Bourton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base

<sup>5</sup> Ecological Surveys Ltd (October 2015)

Within the Bourton NPA there are 33 Listed Buildings. There is no Conservation Area designation and there are no Ancient Monuments.

The VDS concludes that it is important that due regard is given to the Listed Buildings when developing adjoining sites. Although there is a significant number of Listed Buildings in the village, and many of them are clustered in particular locations, there is no Conservation Area. The character of a number of individual areas may, however, be worthy of protection.

#### Issue 6 – Landscape impact

Bourton NPA falls into two Landscape Character Areas, each of which has its own special characteristics. The northern and western parts of the NPA fall within the Limestone Ridges Character Area and the southern part within the Blackmore Vale Character Area.

A small part of the NPA falls within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Any development has the potential to impact upon the setting of the AONB.

The VDS notes that the Parish enjoys varied and far-reaching views which are particularly treasured by the local community.

#### Issue 7 – Flood risk

One of the main impacts of climate change within the Bourton NPA is the increased risk of flooding, especially flash flooding associated with increased intensity of rainfall that is predicted to occur as a result of climate change.

The areas around the River Stour are at risk from fluvial flooding but also at risk from flooding associated with the upstream reservoirs. In addition, development within an area can cause an increased risk of surface water flooding. It is important, therefore, to avoid areas at risk of flooding and to manage surface water appropriately with the aim of reducing flood risk where possible.

#### Issue 8 – Climate change

Release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is recognised to be having an impact on the climate. This is predicted to result in warmer, wetter winters with increased rainfall events and hotter, drier summers with increased instances of drought. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions through increased energy efficiency and increased use of renewable and low carbon energy will help to minimise Bourton's contribution to climate change.

#### Issue 9 – Agricultural land, brownfield land and contaminated land

Land use classification data shows that the majority of Bourton is covered by Grade 3 agricultural land with the exception of a band of Grade 4 agricultural land that follows the contour of the ridge. Government policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 112, states that, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

The NPPF, paragraph 111, asserts that planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value.

#### Issue 10 – Biodiversity

Intensively farmed agricultural land can often have little ecological value. Rivers, ponds, scrub, hedgerows and trees are important ecological features which play host to a range of species. Retention of such features and inclusion of areas for wildlife within the plan can significantly enhance the biodiversity in an area.

#### Issue 11 – Water resources and air quality, light and noise

It is important to maintain the quality of water courses in the area as they are not only important for biodiversity but also provide an important source of drinking water. In addition, air pollution can have an impact on biodiversity and human health.

The VDS recognises that, in a rural community, dark night skies are important and enhance the character of an area. The main road has retained its street lighting from when it functioned as a major trunk road and many villagers feel that reduction in the period of use of the street lighting, or even its removal, would reduce light pollution and enhance the character of the area. Against this has to be weighed the perceptions of safety that street lighting provides for walkers at night. The

NPPF also requires that good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

The NPPF, paragraph 109, states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing both new and existing development from contributing to noise pollution.

### SEA Framework

These issues were then translated into an 'SEA Framework' of Objectives. This SEA Framework provides a methodological framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects on the baseline. The SEA objectives against which the Bourton NP has been assessed are presented below.

Table 2.2: SEA Framework

Key sustainability issue/theme	Objective
Issue 1 – Intergenerational imbalance	Objective 1: To meet the diverse needs of the population.
Issue 2 – Accessibility to services and high car ownership	Objective 2: To tackle the accessibility issues in the area, reducing reliance on the private car whilst also including appropriate parking.
Issue 3 – Affordability of housing	Objective 3: To deliver appropriate housing.
Issue 4 – Lack of employment and training opportunities	Objective 4: To improve employment and training opportunities/economic activity in the area.
Issue 5 – Heritage assets	Objective 5: To assess the potential to harm a heritage asset or its setting.
Issue 6 – Landscape impact	Objective 6: To assess the possible negative impact on landscape character and on the AONB and its setting or the potential to harm any of the key views identified in the Village Design Statement.
Issue 7 – Flood risk	Objective 7: To avoid areas at risk of flooding and reduce flood risk by managing surface water.
Issue 8 – Climate Change	Objective 8: To include measures to minimise energy consumption and to produce energy from renewable or low carbon sources.
Issue 9 – Agricultural land, brownfield land and contaminated land	Objective 9: To reuse brownfield land, avoid the most productive agricultural land and include measures to remediate contaminated land.
Issue 10 – Biodiversity	Objective 10: To retain important biodiversity features and include new areas for biodiversity enhancement within the area.
Issue 11 – Water resources and air quality, light and noise	Objective 11: To minimise pollution of water and air and minimise light and noise pollution.

## 3 Plan-making / SEA progress to date

### 3.1 Introduction

In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include...

- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with
- The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraisal (and hence, by proxy, a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan).

The 'narrative' of plan-making/SEA up to this point is told within this part of the Environmental Report. Specifically, this section explains how preparation of the current version of the Bourton NP has been informed by an appraisal of a number of alternative approaches to delivering the community needs of the NPA.

### 3.2 Overview of plan-making / SEA since 2012

Plan-making for the Bourton NP has been underway since 2012. Initial work incorporated many informal and formal consultation exercises carried out by the Neighbourhood Planning Group, including the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

A range of consultation events have since been carried out for the Neighbourhood Plan. This has included two questionnaires delivered to all households in the NPA, a number of public meetings and drop in sessions. Volunteer Focus Groups discussed specific aspects of the Plan and meetings were also held with landowners, local businesses, the Church, the surgery, the school and other interest groups. The following sections discuss the evolution of the Bourton NP in association with the SEA process.

### 3.3 Appraisal of reasonable alternatives for the Neighbourhood Plan

#### Reasonable alternatives

A key element of the SEA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Bourton NP. In this context a number of reasonable alternatives have been considered in relation to the location of new community facilities and housing.

#### Housing and community facilities

As highlighted above, the Bourton NP is being prepared in the context of NDLP1, which makes provision for in the region of 825 new houses in Stalbridge and the 'larger villages', including Bourton. NDDC has indicated that on a pro-rata basis this would require the provision of 35 houses in the Bourton NPA over the period of the Local Plan. There is, however, currently planning consent for 43 houses in the NPA and, therefore, NDDC has indicated that it is unlikely to allocate further development sites for housing.

As a result of a requirement defined in the Bourton Village Plan and following a survey by the Village Hall Management Committee and NPG consultation events, it became clear that there was strong support in the community for a new village hall. This requirement is based on the limited lifespan of the current village hall, including prohibitive maintenance costs linked to poor construction and energy efficiency. There are also further issues relating to a lack of parking, difficulty of access, particularly for the disabled, and inadequate toilet and kitchen facilities.

NDDC determined that site selection for the new village hall should be undertaken by the NPG and that an SEA would be required because of the nature of the proposed development. This process

has constituted a significant element in the latter stages of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### Appraisal of reasonable alternatives for a new village hall site

Consultation undertaken prior to and during the NP process raised the possibility of negotiating a site for the village hall and associated amenity land from a local landowner in return for also allowing on site a small number of small family dwellings. The questionnaire returned as part of this community engagement resulted in a vote in favour of this principle of over 80%. On this basis the NPG proceeded to review suitable sites that could be allocated within the NP and 14 sites were brought forward through this process. Following the assessment of these sites against a set of criteria for the village hall, four sites were shortlisted.

Table 3.1 sets out the sites which were considered, the sites shortlisted and the reasons for taking forward the site (or otherwise) for the purposes of the site assessment.

Table 3.1: Site shortlisting and reasons for rejection

Site name	Shortlisted?	Reasoned justification
Bourton Mill	N	This site lies within the Flood Risk 3 area of the River Stour and is too small to accommodate all the proposed development.
Opposite Silton Surgery	N	This site lies outside the NPA and is too small.
Brickyard Lane	N	This site lies outside the NPA and would not have much amenity space.
Rear of Miller's Close	N	This site is too small to accommodate a new hall, car parking and recreation space.
Behind Reserve Cemetery	N	This site has difficult access through the future cemetery land, is a steeply sloping site and is very visible from the nearby AONB.
Opposite Sandways	N	The site is too small for the proposed development, and has the same slope and difficulty of access that affects the existing and neighbouring Village Hall.
Telephone Exchange (Kittymead)	N	Following sewage works carried out by Wessex Water the remaining site is too small to accommodate all the development proposed.
White Lion	Y	The site appears to be large enough and is on NDDC's SHLAA list. Whilst a sloping site, a new hall and housing development could be situated on the higher ground to the east and a recreation area nearer to the White Lion. Its closeness to the PH provides potential complementary uses.
Voscombe Farm	Y	From earlier discussions with landowners the site proposed includes land belonging to a neighbour where the proposed housing could be sited. The exact amount of land needs to be ascertained before inclusion but there is potential.
Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field)	Y	This lies on the opposite side of the road to Voscombe Farm. It is a clear plot of land with sufficient space to include all the elements. The slopes are fairly modest and road access is reasonable.
Maggs Field	N	Access and site presence are poor and the site is too small for all the elements. Also adjacent to the AONB.

Site name	Shortlisted?	Reasoned justification
Land adjoining Sandways Farm	Y	Fairly central and located on modest slopes opposite the existing hall. Provides ample space for all the elements. Housing can be sited in a discrete area.
Rear of Garage	N	Centrally located but there is no possible access to it. The land is also quite boggy and unsuitable for recreation.
Old Pound Court	N	This site is too small.

As highlighted above, four sites were shortlisted for the purposes of the site assessment. These are as follows:

- White Lion
- Voscombe Farm
- Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field)
- Land adjoining Sandways Farm

Following the initial shortlisting of sites, the landowner of the White Lion site withdrew the site for the purposes of delivering a village hall and associated amenity land/small scale residential development.

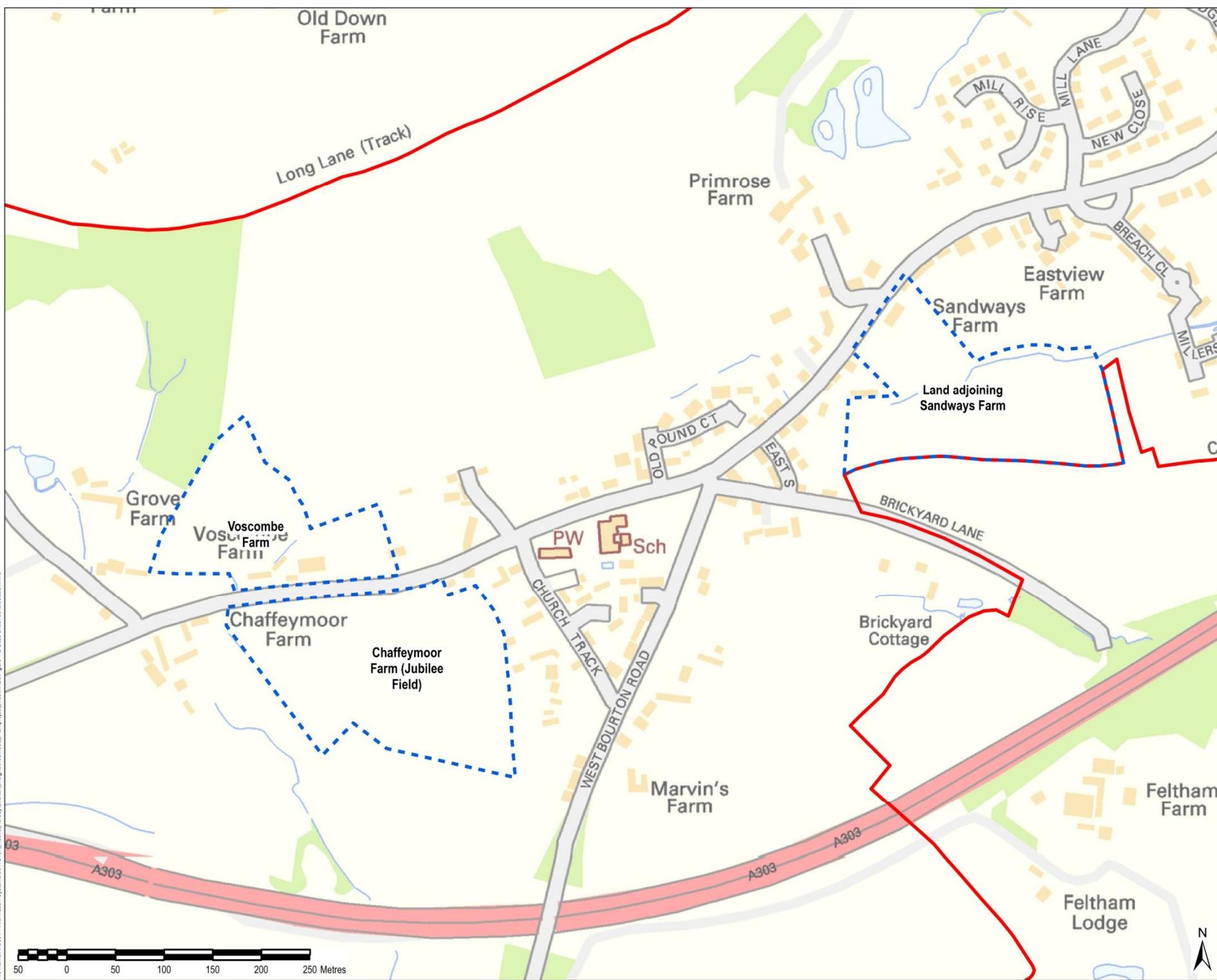
The three remaining sites (Figure 3.1) were then appraised as reasonable alternatives for the SEA process. To support decision making on the sites to be taken forward for the Bourton NP, the SEA process has undertaken an appraisal of the key constraints present at each of these three sites and potential effects that may arise. In this context the sites have been considered in relation to the SEA Framework of Objectives developed during SEA scoping and the baseline information<sup>6</sup>.

The tables below present a summary of this appraisal, and provide an indication of each site's sustainability performance in relation to the eleven SEA issues/themes.

<sup>6</sup> The appraisal of these sites as 'reasonable alternatives' undertaken through the SEA process is in addition to a broader site assessment process undertaken for the Bourton NP.

**LEGEND**

- Bourton parish boundary
- Shortlisted site



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Purpose of Issue  
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Project Title  
BOURTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Drawing Title  
SHORTLISTED SITES FOR COMMUNITY FACILITY

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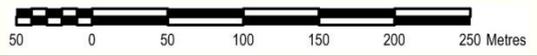
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**Site 1: Voscombe Farm**


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<b>Intergenerational imbalance</b>	The site could deliver a new community facility and amenity land with the potential to be used by all age groups in the village. The site could also deliver a small number of small family dwellings, which would help increase the availability of this type of housing in the village.
<b>Accessibility</b>	The site has good vehicular access. The site does not impact on the Rights of Way network.  An improved village hall and amenity land in the village will promote accessibility to community amenities, leisure and recreational opportunities
<b>Housing</b>	As part of the delivery of the village hall, the site would deliver a small number of small family dwellings. This would help increase the availability of this type of housing in the village.
<b>Employment and training</b>	An improved community facility at this location has the potential to promote formal and informal training and educational opportunities in the village.
<b>Heritage</b>	No features at or in the vicinity of the site are listed on the Dorset Historic Environment Record.  No Listed Buildings are present on or adjacent to the site. The Grade II listed Grove House at Grove Farm is located 50m to the north west of the site.
<b>Landscape</b>	Given the topography and screening, development at the site would be unlikely to affect views from the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB.
<b>Flood risk</b>	A very narrow 1 in 30 year and 1 in 100 year surface water flood zone extends from north east to south west across the centre of the site.  No fluvial flood zones are present on the site.
<b>Climate change mitigation</b>	Development at the site would be unlikely to lead to significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions given that 1) the new village hall is likely to be considerably more energy efficient than the facility it is replacing and 2) there is a requirement to implement existing energy efficiency standards within new housing development.
<b>Soil</b>	Development of the site would lead to the loss of agricultural land. Land at the site has been classified as Grade 4 agricultural land, which is not land classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	No Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats are present within or adjacent to the site. However, the site is bounded by an area of woodland to the north west, which has the potential to have some biodiversity value and also links to an area Deciduous Woodland Biodiversity Action Plan Priority habitat 50m to the north.  The site is not within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone for the type of development proposed.
<b>Water, air quality, light and noise</b>	No significant issues related to water, air quality, light or noise are present at the site.

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**Site 2: Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field)**


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<b>Intergenerational imbalance</b>	The site could deliver a new community facility and amenity land which has the potential to be used by all age groups in the village. The site could also deliver a small number of small family dwellings, which would help increase the availability of this type of housing in the village.
<b>Accessibility</b>	The site has good vehicular access. The site does not impact on the Rights of Way network.  An improved village hall and amenity land in the village will promote accessibility to community amenities, leisure and recreational opportunities
<b>Housing</b>	As part of the delivery of the village hall, the site would deliver a small number of small family dwellings. This will help increase the availability of this type of housing in the village.
<b>Employment and training</b>	An improved community facility at this location has the potential to promote formal and informal training and educational opportunities in the village.
<b>Heritage</b>	No Listed Buildings are present on or adjacent to the site. The Grade II listed Chaffeymoor Farmhouse is located 140m from the proposed development site.  No features at or in the vicinity of the site are listed on the Dorset Historic Environment Record.
<b>Landscape</b>	Development at the site would be unlikely to affect views from the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Development of the site would, however, lead to some visual effects from the surrounding countryside.
<b>Flood risk</b>	No fluvial or surface water flood zones are present on the site.
<b>Climate change mitigation</b>	Development at the site would be unlikely to lead to significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions given that 1) the new village hall is likely to be considerably more energy efficient than the facility it is replacing and 2) there is a requirement to implement existing energy efficiency standards within new housing development.
<b>Soil</b>	Development of the site would lead to the loss of agricultural land. Land at the site has been classified as Grade 4 agricultural land, which is not land classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The site is bounded by mature hedgerows and trees which have likely biodiversity value.  No Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats are present within or adjacent to the site. The site is not within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the type of development proposed.
<b>Water, air quality, light and noise</b>	No significant issues related to water, air quality, light or noise are present at the site.

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**Site 3: Sandways Farm**


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<b>Intergenerational imbalance</b>	The site could deliver a new community facility and amenity land which has the potential to be used by all age groups in the village. The site could also deliver a small number of small family dwellings, which would help increase the availability of this type of housing in the village.
<b>Accessibility</b>	The site is located close to the centre of the village and has good vehicular access. The site does not impact on the Rights of Way network.  An improved village hall and amenity land will promote accessibility to community amenities, leisure and recreational opportunities in the village.
<b>Housing</b>	As part of the delivery of the village hall, the site would deliver a small number of small family dwellings. This would help increase the availability of this type of housing in the village.
<b>Employment and training</b>	An improved community facility at this location has the potential to promote formal and informal training and educational opportunities in the village.
<b>Heritage</b>	The Grade II Listed Sandways Farmhouse is adjacent to the north east of the site.  One feature is listed on the Dorset Historic Environment Record. This is the carved milestone located on the opposite side of the road to the site, which was erected by the Wincanton Turnpike Trust in the 19th century.
<b>Landscape</b>	Development at the site is unlikely to affect views from the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB.
<b>Flood risk</b>	Two narrow 1 in 30 year and 1 in 100 year surface water flood zones extend in a band from west to east across the centre of the site, before amalgamating and forming the north eastern boundary of the site.  No fluvial flood zones are present on the site.
<b>Climate change mitigation</b>	Development at the site is unlikely to lead to significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions given that 1) the new village hall is likely to be considerably more energy efficient than the facility it is replacing and 2) the requirement to implement existing energy efficiency standards within new housing development.
<b>Soil</b>	The land has been classified as Grade 3 agricultural land. However, detailed recent classification has not been carried out in the area. It is, therefore, uncertain whether the land is Grade 3a (and as such is classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land) or Grade 3b land (and as such is not classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land).
<b>Biodiversity</b>	No Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats are present within or adjacent to the site. The site is not within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the type of development proposed.  The site does not comprise features of significant biodiversity value.
<b>Water, air quality, light and noise</b>	No significant issues related to water, air quality, light or noise are present at the site.

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### Selection of site for the new village hall

Consultation undertaken prior to and during the NP process raised the possibility of negotiating a site for the village hall and associated amenity land from a local landowner in return for also allowing on site a small number of small family dwellings.

Subsequent to the site assessments, it became apparent that additional amenity land would be required for the Voscombe Farm site to meet the criteria for the village hall. Following discussions with the owners of the land on this issue, the site was effectively withdrawn for the purposes of the NP. Therefore, two sites remained for consideration: the land adjoining Sandways Farm and the land at Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field).

During informal consultation undertaken in late 2015, it was shown that there was a clear local preference for both sites to be taken forward in the NP as options for location of the new village hall. It was, therefore, decided to proceed with the NP on the basis of putting forward both sites, either of which would be suitable, subject to complying with the specified requirements.

## 3.4 Development of Neighbourhood Plan policies

### Assessment of an initial draft of the Bourton NP

In late 2015/early 2016, an initial draft of the proposed policies for the Bourton NP was assessed as part of the SEA process. Resulting from this process, two recommendations were made for improving the sustainability performance of the draft Bourton NP.

These can be summarised as follows:

- Whilst the initial version of the Bourton NP had a close focus on protecting and enhancing open space provision in the NPA, there was further potential to develop a coordinated approach to green infrastructure planning in the future.
- Given that proposed Policy 8 'Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change' concerned both climate change mitigation and adaptation, it was recommended that the name of the policy is reworded to reflect both elements.

These recommendations were then considered by the Neighbourhood Planning Group and the NP subsequently updated.

No reasonable alternatives were considered for the policy elements

### Assessment of the current version of the Bourton NP

To support the implementation of the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan discussed in Section 2.1, the current version of the Bourton NP puts forward twelve policies to guide development in the NPA. These are accompanied by a series of actions designed to support the policies through setting out other aspirations for the village (see Appendix 1 to the NP).

The policies, which were developed following extensive community consultation and evidence gathering, are as follows:

- Policy 1: Landscape Setting
- Policy 2: Settlement Pattern and Character
- Policy 3: Building Design and Form
- Policy 4: Traffic and Parking
- Policy 5: New Village Hall
- Policy 6: Biodiversity.
- Policy 7: Protection of Habitats
- Policy 8: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- Policy 9: Local Green Spaces
- Policy 10: Green Fingers
- Policy 11: Footpaths and Bridleways
- Policy 12: Support for Local Business

The action list includes elements relating to:

- **New Village Hall**
- **The Wildlife and Habitats Group**
- **Footways**
- **Footpaths and Bridleways**
- **Noise from the A303**
- **Allotments**
- **Traffic speed**
- **Communication**
- **Street Lighting**

The next chapter considers these policies through appraising the current 'Regulation 14' version of the Bourton NP.

## 4 Appraisal findings relating to the current version of the Neighbourhood Plan

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### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 14 'draft plan' of the Bourton NP. This chapter is structured as follows:

- Sections 4.2 to 4.12 present an appraisal of the current version of the Bourton NP under the eleven environmental theme headings; and
- Section 4.13 discusses overall conclusions at this stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

### 4.2 Approach to the assessment

The assessment is structured under the eleven SEA issues. For each issue 'significant effects' of the draft plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations.<sup>7</sup> So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

### 4.3 Intergenerational imbalance

The designation and protection of local green space through Policy 9 (Local Green Spaces) and enhancements will support recreational opportunities for all in the village. Otherwise Policy 12 (Support for Local Businesses) seeks to promote small scale enterprise in Bourton which meets the need of the community. This will enhance local employment opportunities and promote the economic vitality of the village.

A new village hall in Bourton and associated amenity land will expand educational, leisure, recreational and cultural opportunities for all, with the potential to be used by all age groups in the village. The development of the village hall would also facilitate the delivery of a small number of small family dwellings, which would help increase the availability of this type of housing in the village which is accessible for a wider range of age groups.

### 4.4 Accessibility

Policy 4 of the draft plan (Traffic and Parking) has a focus on limiting the impact of traffic in Bourton and ensuring that off-road parking continues to be a requirement for all new development. This will be supported by the 'Traffic Speed' Action reported in the NP. In relation to Public Rights of Way in the village, Policy 11 seeks to ensure that the existing footpath and cycle network is protected from new development, and where possible enhanced. This will be supported by Policy 9 (Local Green Spaces) which, through offering protection to four important areas of open space, will protect key connections for pedestrians in the village, as well as promoting accessibility to recreational opportunities. This will be further supported by the Action List accompanying the NP policies, including enhancements to the condition of footways for

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<sup>7</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

pedestrians and other users, and the ongoing review of footpaths and bridleways in the NPA to ensure their accessibility.

Although the Plan proposes support for the improvement of Public Transport, it is recognised that specific proposals would be outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Whilst both proposed site options for the new village hall are accessible to the rest of the village, the site at the land adjoining Sandways Farm is located closer to the existing village hall. The policy approach for the village hall also seeks to ensure that both sites would deliver appropriate car parking (Policy 5).

## 4.5 Housing

Baseline information and consultation suggests that there is a need for more small family housing in the NPA and for more dwellings that meet the needs of particular groups, e.g. the elderly or infirm or those on a lower income. In this respect one of the aims of the Bourton NP is to support the delivery of housing for *'families, older people and first time buyers seeking good quality sustainable housing'*.

In terms of the delivery of housing, the indicative Local Plan requirement of 35 dwellings has already been met in the parish. However, the Bourton NP seeks to further exceed this requirement through facilitating new small scale housing to support the development of the new village hall. This is likely to enable the provision of a small number of small family dwellings.

The quality of housing in the NPA will be supported by Policy 8 (Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change) which seeks to ensure that all new development achieves high standards of sustainability.

In terms of the proposed projects referred to in the Action List of the Bourton NP to support the Neighbourhood Plan policies, the 'Noise from the A303' and 'Street Lighting' Actions will support the quality of the residential environment.

## 4.6 Employment and training

Policy 12 (Support for Local Business) seeks to promote small scale enterprise in Bourton which meets the need of the community, including tourism and social enterprises. It also seeks to promote opportunities for working from home, through the provision of live-work units. This will enhance local employment opportunities and promote the economic vitality of the NPA.

Policy 8 (Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change) sets out a range of elements which seeks to promote sustainable construction techniques, promote the efficient use of natural resources, the re-use and recycling of resources, and the production and consumption of renewable energy and the adoption and facilitation of the flexible development of low and zero carbon energy through a range of technologies. This has the potential to support local economic activities within the 'green economy' and support local employment opportunities within this sector.

An improved community facility, through the provision of a new village hall, has the potential to promote formal and informal training and educational opportunities in the village.

## 4.7 Heritage and landscape

Bourton NPA has a rich historic environment and distinctive character. Due to the significant overlaps between these two elements, heritage and landscape has been discussed together for the purposes of this summary of the appraisal of the draft plan.

The policies proposed in the Bourton NP provide a central focus on protecting and enhancing landscape and rural character quality in the NPA, and supporting the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

In relation to the setting of Bourton village, Policy 1 sets out a range of provisions for the protection and enhancement of landscape and rural character. This includes ensuring that new development creates a sensitive transition between village and countryside, and safeguarding the 'Important Views' set out within the Village Design Statement (VDS). The policy also promotes the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping to integrate new development within the

village. Helping to protect the setting of Bourton within its wider rural context, this will be further supported by Policy 9 (Local Green Spaces) which designates four key village open spaces as Local Green Space, and Policy 10, which seeks to protect key 'Green Fingers' in the village, and

Central to Policy 2 (Settlement Pattern and Character) is that new development in Bourton should follow the guidance presented in the VDS. More specifically it seeks to: protect trees, hedges and open spaces; ensure new development considers the spatial characteristics of the locality; and boundary fences, walls and hedges are protected. In this context the proposed use of the VDS as the central element for considering development is an appropriate basis for the protection and enhancement of landscape/village character in Bourton and the setting of the historic environment. This includes setting out the features which local people regard as important and suggesting ways in which these can be maintained and enhanced through a series of development guidelines.

Policy 3 (Building Design and Form) sets out a range of provisions for ensuring that new development and alterations to existing buildings are of appropriate scale, mass, density and form to support the local landscape/village character of the NPA and are of a design which reflects local distinctiveness. This will help protect and enhance the setting of the historic environment and promote local settings.

Local distinctiveness will be further supported by a number of the other policies presented by the draft plan. This includes Policy 4 (Traffic and Parking), which seeks to limit the effects of traffic and parking provision from new development on village character, Policy 7 (Protection of Habitats), which seeks to protect key landscape features such as woodland, wetland, open spaces, hedgerows and sunken lanes, and Policy 12 (Support for Local Business), which seeks to limit potential effects of new employment provision on local character. The effect on landscape character and tranquility from light pollution is also acknowledged by the draft plan, including Policy 3 and the Street Lighting Action promoted by the NP.

Overall, the plan will have significant positive effects on the setting of the historic environment and on local distinctiveness in the village.

In relation to effects on the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB, the two proposed sites for the village hall are outside the AONB. Given the topography and screening of the sites, and the policy approaches proposed by the draft plan which seek to protect landscape and village character, allocations at these locations are unlikely to have negative impacts on views from the AONB.

## 4.8 Flood risk

The management of flood risk in the NPA will also be supported by Policy 1, 9 and 10, which seek to ensure that key open spaces are protected. This will support climate change adaption through helping to limit the effects of extreme weather events and regulating surface water run-off. This is reflected by the Natural Environment White Paper, which recognises that green infrastructure is *"one of the most effective tools available"* to manage *"environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves."* In this context the Bourton NP's focus on the protection and enhancement of open spaces in the NPA will support these elements.

In terms of fluvial flooding, flood risk in the NPA largely relates to the presence of the River Stour, which runs through the eastern part of the village. Neither of the two potential sites for development are in this location, or within fluvial Flood Zones 2 or 3.

In terms of surface water flooding, no surface water flood zones are present at the Chaffey Moor Farm (Jubilee Field) site. At the Sandways Farm site two narrow 1 in 30 year and 1 in 100 year surface water flood zones extend in a band from west to east across the centre of the site, before amalgamating and forming the site's north east boundary. Surface flood risk is, however, acknowledged by Policy 8 (Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change), which seeks to *'adopt best practice in sustainable urban drainage'*.

## 4.9 Climate change mitigation

The key policy which supports a limitation of greenhouse gas emissions is Policy 8. This sets out provisions relating to climate change mitigation. This includes seeking to ensure that new

development achieves high standards of sustainability, reduces the use of fossil fuels and facilitates the production and use of renewable energy and low and zero carbon energy.

## 4.10 Soil

A number of the policies facilitate the protection and enhancement of key landscape and biodiversity features, such as trees, woodland, hedgerows and open space, including Policy 1 (Landscape Setting), Policy 2 (Settlement Pattern and Character) and Policy 7 (Protection of Habitats). These all support soil quality and availability.

Development at either of the potential new village hall sites will lead to the loss of agricultural land.

The land at Sandways Farm has been classified as Grade 3 agricultural land. However, detailed recent classification has not been carried out in the area. It is uncertain, therefore, whether the land is Grade 3a (and is classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land) or Grade 3b land (and is not classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land).

In relation to the Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field) site, land at this location has been classified as Grade 4 agricultural land, which is not land classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.

## 4.11 Biodiversity

The Bourton NP sets out two key policies relating to biodiversity. Policy 6 (Biodiversity) seeks to avoid direct or indirect impacts on biodiversity from development, and where effects are unavoidable, ensure appropriate mitigation is provided by developers which achieves a net enhancement to biodiversity. A central presumption of the policy is to ensure that *'if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, permission shall be refused'*.

Policy 7 (Protection of Habitats) reinforces this policy through seeking to protect and enhance key habitats in the NPA. This includes woodland, wetland, open spaces, hedgerows and sunken lanes. It also recognises the importance of ecological connections, through seeking to protect biodiversity corridors between key habitats. Ecological networks in the NPA are also supported by the policy's aim to facilitate habitat creation.

The policy also provides a focus on the River Stour, recognising its importance for ecological networks through providing a habitat for wetland flora and fauna, and highlights the local importance for biodiversity of the two locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest present in the NPA.

The two key biodiversity policies are also supported by Policy 1 (Landscape Setting) and Policy 2 (Settlement Pattern and Character), which will facilitate the protection and enhancement of key biodiversity features, such as trees, woodland, hedgerows and open space, and Policy 8 (Local Green Spaces) and Policy 9 (Green Fingers) which will support the protection of key open spaces of biodiversity value in the NPA.

Further supporting habitats and species in the NPA, the Action List for the NP promotes the ongoing activities of the Wildlife and Habitats Group and the establishment of an 'Area for Nature' on the amenity land associated with the new village hall.

The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 states that the District Council intends to produce a Green Infrastructure Strategy to inform the production of the Local Plan Part 2. This will enable the coordinated provision of an integrated green infrastructure network across the whole District where individual elements contribute to achieving the wider objectives of the Local Plan. The policies put in place in the Bourton NP will provide the local Green Infrastructure to enable its integration into, and coordination with, this strategy when it is prepared.

## 4.12 Water resources and air quality, light and noise

Policy 7 provides a focus on protecting and enhancing the River Stour, and seeks to ensure that key biodiversity habitats in the river corridor are provided with an appropriate degree of protection. By supporting healthy ecosystems in the river corridor, the policy will help facilitate enhancements to water quality through supporting natural processes. For similar reasons, Policy

1 (Landscape Setting) and Policy 2 (Settlement Pattern and Character), will facilitate the protection and enhancement of key biodiversity features, such as trees, woodland, hedgerows and open space in the NPA, and Policy 8 (Local Green Spaces) and Policy 9 (Green Fingers), will support the protection of key open spaces and also support water quality in the NPA.

Although outside the terms of the NP, noise pollution from the A303, which is located approximately 300m south east of the village, is a key concern for residents. The Action List supports existing efforts to facilitate the resurfacing of the road to enable noise abatement to take place. The issue of light pollution is also acknowledged through the draft plan, including through Policy 3 (Building Design and Form) and the Street Lighting action promoted by the plan.

## 4.13 Conclusions at this current stage

### Potential significant effects

The assessment has concluded that the current version of the Bourton NP is likely to lead to positive effects in terms of the SEA objectives focusing on improving the quality of life of residents in Bourton. Given that Bourton's likely commitment to future development during the period covered by the plan, is already known, the main focus of the NP is on the protection of the rural character of the NPA, the preservation of its open spaces and the maintenance and improvement of biodiversity through the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats and their connecting corridors.

The draft plan will help initiate a range of beneficial approaches in relation to the 'climate change mitigation', 'flood risk', 'housing', 'soil', 'water, resources, air quality, light and noise' SEA objectives. However, due to the scale of likely positive effects, they are not considered to be significant in the context of the SEA process.

**Significant positive effects** will be facilitated through the draft plan's delivery of a new village hall, with its impact on promoting enhancements to community life.

In terms of potential negative effects, there are likely to be some minor effects on landscape and village character from the development of either of the sites promoted for the new village hall and small scale housing development. However, a central and overriding element of the NP is the protection and enhancement of landscape character and the character of the village, including through the application of the VDS. This will have **significant positive effects** on the setting of the historic environment and on local distinctiveness in the village.

In relation to potential effects on biodiversity, negative effects from the allocation are likely to be limited by the small scale of the proposals and the relatively low biodiversity sensitivity of the two sites proposed. The policy approaches put forward through the draft plan also provides a considerable degree of protection for biodiversity habitats and species in the NPA and provides scope for enhancements to ecological networks.

### Recommendations at this current stage

The two recommendations proposed following the assessment of the initial version of the Neighbourhood Plan policies (Section 3.4) have been responded to through the updated policies presented in the current Regulation 14 consultation version of the Bourton NP. Therefore, no further recommendations are made at this stage.

## 5 Next steps

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### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of the plan-making/SEA process.

### 5.2 Plan finalisation

Subsequent to the ongoing consultation on the draft plan, the Bourton NP may be updated to reflect comments received. This Environmental Report will be updated to reflect the changes made to the NP.

The Bourton NP, the updated Environmental Report and the other required information will then be submitted to the Local Planning Authority, North Dorset District Council, in line with Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 15. It is then the responsibility of NDDC to as "*soon as possible after receiving a plan proposal which includes each of the documents referred to in Regulation 15*", publish the Bourton NP in line with Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 16.

The Bourton NP will then be subject to Independent Examination. The Examiner will consider whether the plan meets the requirements of the Basic Conditions<sup>8</sup> and whether it conforms in general with the Local Plan.

The Examiner has three options:

- a) Allow the plan to proceed to referendum, as submitted;
- b) Require that the plan is modified by the Local Planning Authority to meet Basic Conditions and then allow the modified version to proceed to referendum; or
- c) Decide that the plan cannot proceed to referendum.

After the Independent Examination has taken place and after the Examiner's report has been received the Local Planning Authority will decide on whether to take the plan forward to referendum.<sup>9</sup> The plan will then be put forward to referendum and made.

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<sup>8</sup> See: <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/the-basic-conditions-that-a-draft-neighbourhood-plan-or-order-must-meet-if-it-is-to-proceed-to-referendum/>

<sup>9</sup> Where the report recommends modifications to the plan, NDDC will invite the Bourton Neighbourhood Planning Group to make modifications to the plan, which will be reflected in an updated Environmental Report

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