

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report to accompany the submission version of the
Neighbourhood Plan

Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

January 2024

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
E.B	R.P.	A.P.	N.C.B
Graduate Environmental Planner	Senior Environmental Planner	Associate Director	Technical Director

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V1.0	12.06.23	Initial version for Neighbourhood Group comment	N.C.B.	Technical Director
V2.0	19.06.23	Regulation 14 consultation version	R.D.	Neighbourhood Group representative
V3.0	10.01.24	Submission version	R.D.	Neighbourhood Group representative

Prepared for:

Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
3rd Floor, Portwall Place
Portwall Lane
Bristol BS1 6NA
United Kingdom

T: [REDACTED]
aecom.com

© 2024 AECOM Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Limited (“AECOM”) for sole use of Locality (the “Client”) in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. No third party may rely upon this document without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

Table of Contents

SEA Summary Note.....	i
Non-Technical Summary (NTS).....	iii
1. Introduction	1
Background.....	1
SEA Screening for the SMNP.....	2
SEA explained.....	2
Structure of this Environmental Report.....	3
2. Local Plan context and vision for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.....	4
3. What is the scope of the SEA?	7
Summary of SEA Scoping.....	7
Key sustainability issues	11
SEA framework	14
4. Consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan	17
Introduction	17
Defining reasonable alternatives	17
Housing numbers to deliver within the neighbourhood area.....	17
Options to inform policy approaches within the Neighbourhood Plan	18
Approach to the options appraisal process	19
5. Appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan	22
Introduction	22
SMNP policies.....	22
Approach to this appraisal.....	23
Biodiversity and geodiversity.....	23
Climate change	24
Historic environment.....	25
Health and wellbeing.....	26
Land, soil, and water resources	27
Landscape.....	27
Population and community.....	28
Transportation	29
Conclusions at this current stage	29
Appendix A SEA Scoping – Context review and baseline.....	31

SEA Summary Note

Purpose of this document

This document is the SEA Environmental Report which accompanies the submission version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan (SMNP). The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects of the SMNP and alternatives.
- Provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.

Documents produced as part of the SEA process to date includes the SEA Scoping Report (October 2021), which contained information about the neighbourhood area's environment and community, and the SEA Environmental Report which accompanied [Regulation 14 Consultation](#) (June 2023).

No material changes have been made to the SMNP following Regulation 14 consultation. For this reason, the SEA Environmental Report which was prepared for (and accompanied) Regulation 14 consultation has been submitted with the SMNP.

The information presented in the Regulation 14 Environmental Report is presented in this document below.

Monitoring

The SEA regulations require '*measures envisaged concerning monitoring*' to be outlined. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the SMNP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

The submission version of the SMNP does not allocate sites. The Steering Group are instead committed to undertaking an early review of the SMNP at a time when the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan is further advanced. This is further discussed within Chapter 4 in the main body of this Environmental Report.

In light of the above, and as highlighted in this Environmental Report, no significant environmental effects are considered likely in the implementation of the SMNP that would warrant additional monitoring over and above that already undertaken by Dorset Council.

Next Steps

This is the version of the SEA Environmental Report which accompanies the SMNP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council, for subsequent Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the SMNP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with local planning policy.

If the Independent Examination is favourable, the SMNP will be subject to a referendum, organised by Dorset Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the SMNP, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the SMNP will become part of the Development Plan for the parish.

This page is intentionally blank

Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan. This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan groups use SEA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to help avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects through the Neighbourhood Plan and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.

What is the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan?

The Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Purpose of this Environmental Report

This Environmental Report, which accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (October 2021), which included information about the neighbourhood area's environment and community.

The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives.
- Provide an opportunity for consultees 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 Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan 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 for the area.
- The SEA Framework of objectives against which the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed.
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.
- The likely significant effects of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

- The next steps for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying SEA process.

Consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan

Housing numbers to deliver within the neighbourhood area

As discussed within Chapter 2 of this Environmental Report, Sturminster Marshall is identified as a 'larger village' within the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP). Reflecting the proposals within the issues and options consultation document for the emerging DCLP (January 2021), Sturminster Marshall's indicative target is 472 dwellings for the period up to 2038, including 425 homes on land to be released from the South East Dorset Green Belt. The remaining housing target is expected to come forward through extant consents and windfall development (such as infilling within the village and the conversion / replacement of rural buildings).

However, in light of recent policy drivers at the national level regarding housing numbers and delivery (e.g., with respect to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Prospectus¹ and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill²) and the proposed delays to the timetable for the emerging DCLP³, housing numbers for the neighbourhood area will likely be revisited. A key factor includes the potential release of Green Belt land to accommodate new housing, with most of the available site options within the neighbourhood area located within the boundaries of the South East Dorset Green Belt. Specifically, Paragraph 142 within the NPPF Prospectus states:

"Green Belt boundaries are not required to be reviewed and altered if this would be the only means of meeting the objectively assessed housing need for housing over the plan period".

As the emerging DCLP proposals for Sturminster Marshall includes 425 homes on land to be released from the South East Dorset Green Belt, it is anticipated that further discussions between Sturminster Marshall Parish Council and Dorset Council regarding housing numbers will continue over the coming months. In this respect, the current version of the SMNP does not allocate sites for housing or employment land. The Steering Group are instead committed to undertaking an early review of the SMNP at a time when the housing methodology is firmed up, and the position with respect to Green Belt release has been confirmed.

Options to inform policy approaches within the Neighbourhood Plan

Whilst the SMNP does not allocate land for development within the neighbourhood area, the Parish Council has explored a range of planning issues and considerations for the Neighbourhood Plan relating to its vision and aspirations (as presented in Chapter 2 within the main body of the Environmental Report).

In light of this, the SEA process has undertaken appraisals of high-level approaches and alternatives (hereafter referred to as "options") which are currently being evaluated as part of plan development. This is for the benefit of plan-makers tasked with selecting preferred policy approaches for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan and to highlight to consultees the relative sustainability merits

¹ GOV.UK (2021) 'National Planning Policy Framework' can be accessed [here](#).

² UK Parliament (2023) 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill' can be accessed [here](#).

³ Dorset Council (2022): 'Local Development Scheme' can be accessed [here](#)

of the different approaches that can be taken relating to the key elements of the Neighbourhood Plan

A description of the options (i.e., the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with), are as follows:

Options for managing the impacts of development

The Steering Group recognises that speculative applications for development may come forward during the plan period, which have potential to deliver benefits that should be secured through the design, layout, and use of each site. In this respect, the SMNP's planning policies seeks to shape development more broadly in the neighbourhood area without allocating specific sites.

The local 'call for sites' process undertaken during the earlier stages of plan making identified many landowners interested in development sites for housing, and in light of the uncertainties surrounding housing numbers, speculative applications (if approved) may significantly impact upon the local community and the natural and built environment.

Whilst the policy requirements within the adopted Local Plan (and consultation document on the emerging DCLP) include a range of criteria relating to the delivery of high-quality and sustainable design within the design of new development areas, the relative sustainability merits of preparing additional 'key design principles' within the SMNP have been explored. These key design principles would accompany and seek to compliment local and national policy requirements.

The following options have been considered through the SEA:

- Option A: Encourage developers to consider specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area.
- Option B: Do not encourage developers to consider specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area, relying solely on existing local and national policy requirements.

Appraisal findings and preferred approach for the Neighbourhood Plan

The options have been considered against the SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed at SEA scoping. **Table NTS1** below shows the sustainability performance of each option with respect to each SEA theme to highlight their relative sustainability merits, with the most favourable option represented by the number '1', and the least favourable option represented by the number '2'. Where it is difficult to distinguish between the option (e.g., effects are uncertain), this is represented by a '?' in the table.

Table NTS1: Rankings of sustainability performance against each SEA theme

SEA theme	Rank of preference	
	Option A	Option B
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	?	?
Climate Change	?	?
Historic Environment	?	?
Health and Wellbeing	1	2
Land, Soil, and Water Resources	?	?
Landscape	?	?
Population and Community	1	2
Transportation	?	?

Whilst the key design principles perform positively for several SEA themes, there is an element of uncertainty as to whether the implementation of the principles would have significant impacts in relation to these themes. This is given that the principles might not necessarily go above and beyond local and national policy provisions (which, in their current form, have a strong focus on delivering high-quality and sustainable design through new development areas).

However, it is recognised that the inclusion of key design principles within the SMNP (as proposed through Option A) will provide an extra level of detail and certainty, helping to ensure local knowledge and aspirations are taken into consideration during development design. This is likely to have significant positive effects in relation to the ‘Population and Community’ and ‘Health and Wellbeing’ SEA themes.

In conclusion, the preferred approach for the SMNP is to proceed with Option A and prepare specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area. This will ensure community preferences are taken into consideration, with development more likely to be supported when local aspirations and knowledge has been applied.

Appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan

The Regulation 14 version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan presents 23 planning policies for guiding development in the Plan area. These were developed following extensive community consultation and evidence gathering.

Chapter 5 within the main body of the Environmental Report presents the findings of the appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan. Utilising the SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SEA, the SEA process has assessed the policies put forward through the Regulation 14 version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan. The Environmental Report has presented the findings of the assessment under the following SEA Themes:

- Biodiversity and Geodiversity.
- Climate Change.
- Historic Environment.

- Health and Wellbeing.
- Land, Soil, and Water Resources.
- Landscape.
- Population and Community; and
- Transportation.

In the context of the above, the assessment has concluded that the Regulation 14 version of the SMNP is likely to have significant positive effects in relation to the 'Population and Community' and 'Health and Wellbeing' SEA Themes. This principally links to the SMNP's support for high-quality proposals which would deliver suitable and appropriate housing for the local community (via a range of types and tenures), improve availability and accessibility to services, facilities, and amenities, and support enhancements to key opportunity areas within the neighbourhood area (such as the Bailie Gate Industrial Estate) which will encourage employment opportunities. These policy provisions will support social inclusion, and community and economic vitality. The SMNP is also likely to facilitate improvements to the public realm (including through green infrastructure enhancements) and encourage healthier and active lifestyles. These policy provisions will support the quality of life of residents.

The SMNP will also bring positive effects in relation to the 'Landscape' and 'Historic Environment' SEA Themes. These benefits largely relate to the SMNP's emphasis on protecting and enhancing the relationship between the natural and built environment (i.e., between the village and the open countryside), encouraging high-quality design which respects and enhances local distinctiveness and sense of place, protects important landscape and villagescape features, facilitates improvements to quality of the public realm, and increases awareness, understanding and appreciation of the historic environment. Given the SMNP also set out a comprehensive range of provisions relating to the natural and built environment, including through the application of 'key design principles', this will help provide an appropriate basis for any development proposals which may come forward during the plan period.

Additionally, the SMNP will bring positive effects in relation to the 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' SEA Theme by encouraging proposals to protect existing and establish new habitats and wildlife corridors, enhance ecological networks (including through green infrastructure enhancements), and embrace opportunities for nature conservation. The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) also concludes that no adverse impacts to the integrity of internationally designated sites are expected as a result of the policies and proposals within the SMNP.

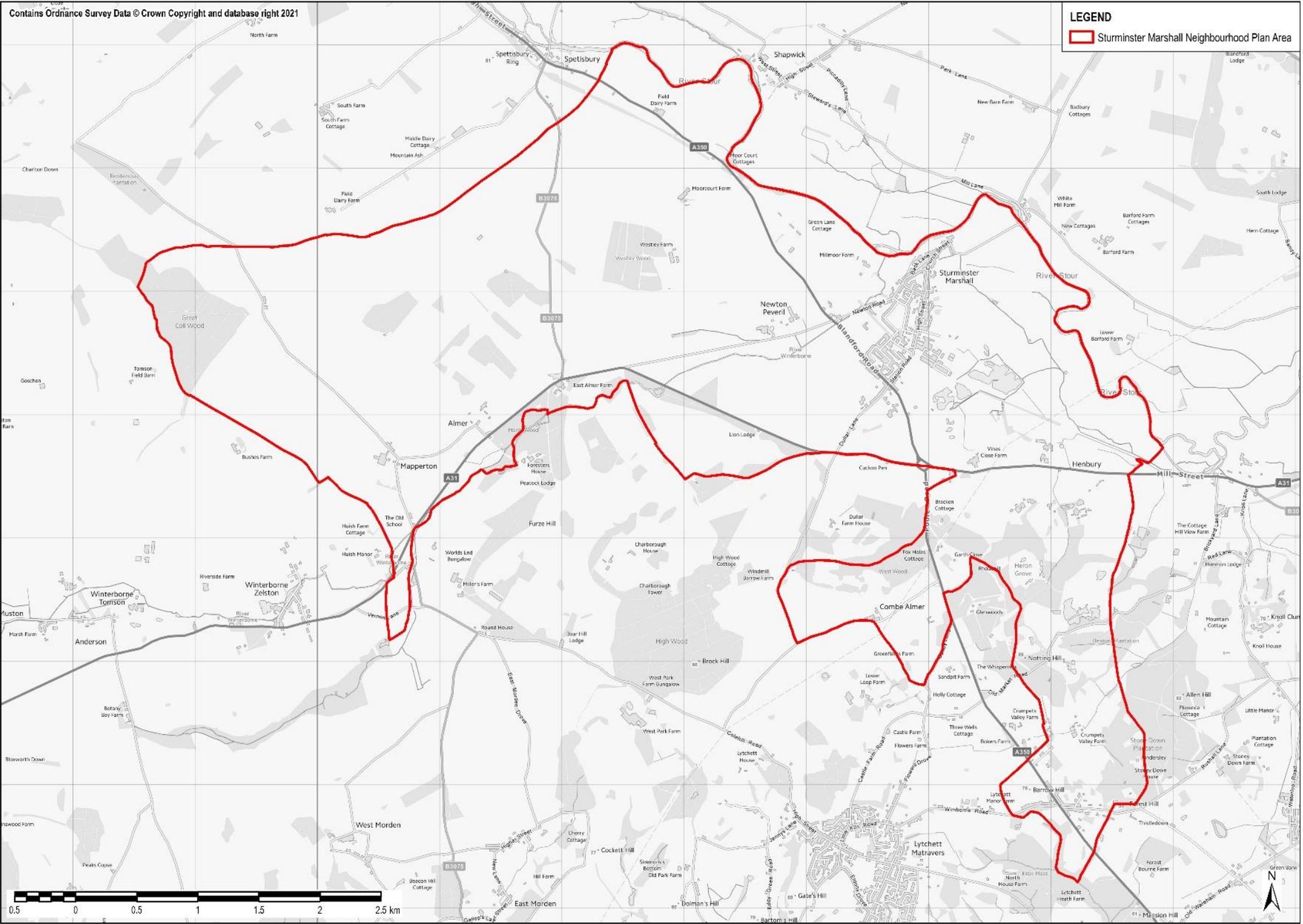
Regarding the 'Climate Change' SEA Theme, the SMNP will potentially lead to positive effects through supporting proposals which deliver energy efficient designs and layouts, proactively respond to the potential impacts of climate change (e.g., flood risk concerns from increased storms / rainfall events), and by encouraging opportunities to engage in active travel within the neighbourhood area. However, this is dependent on the extent to which proposals incorporate mitigation and adaptation measures through design.

The SMNP will also initiate several beneficial approaches regarding the 'Transportation' SEA Theme, given its focus on enhancing the active travel network (including public rights of way and cycle routes), supporting the principles of low-

traffic neighbourhoods and highway safety, and encouraging public transport improvements.

More broadly in relation to the 'Land, Soil, and Water Resources' SEA Theme, the SMNP outlines several provisions which will help support the capacity of the landscape to regulate soil and water quality. As the SMNP does not contain any site allocations for development, it is also not likely that the SMNP (in its current form) would result in the loss of productive agricultural land.

LEGEND
[Red outline box] Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Area



1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as the “SMNP”).
- 1.2 The SMNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011⁴ and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012⁵, and in the context of the adopted Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (2014), the saved policies of the 2002 East Dorset Local Plan (saved policies), the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Waste Plan (2019), and the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Mineral Sites Plan (2019). Due regard is also given to the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP), which is expected to be adopted in 2026.
- 1.3 The key information relating to the SMNP is presented in **Table 1.1** below and the neighbourhood area is depicted in the figure above.

Table 1.1: Key information relating to the SMNP

Name of Responsible Authority	Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Title of Plan	Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan (SMNP)
Subject	Neighbourhood planning
Purpose	<p>The SMNP is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The plan will be in general conformity with the adopted Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (2014), the saved policies of the 2002 East Dorset Local Plan (saved policies), the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Waste Plan (2019), and the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Mineral Sites Plan (2019). Due regard is also given to the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP), expected to be adopted in 2026.</p> <p>The SMNP will be used to guide and shape development in the neighbourhood area.</p>
Timescale	2023 - 2033
Area covered by the plan	The Sturminster Marshall neighbourhood area covers the civil parish of Sturminster Marshall.
Summary of content	The SMNP will set out a vision, strategy, and range of policies for the neighbourhood area.
Plan contact point	<p>Alison Clothier, Parish Clerk Email: sturminstermarshall@dorset-aptc.gov.uk</p>

⁴ UK Government (2011) ‘Localism Act 2011’ can be accessed [here](#).

⁵ UK Government (2012) ‘The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012’ can be accessed [here](#).

SEA Screening for the SMNP

- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA where it is likely to have significant environmental effects. In this respect, Neighbourhood Plans are more likely to be screened in as requiring an SEA if both the following apply:
- 1) the Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared within a neighbourhood area with significant environmental constraints, such as, for example, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, or large concentrations of heritage assets; and
 - 2) the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to allocate sites for development⁶.
- 1.5 The neighbourhood area has been screened in due to its historic environment, landscape, and ecological sensitivities. In light of this outcome, an SEA process is being undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations)⁷.
- 1.6 Since SEA screening and scoping was undertaken, the SMNP has been updated and no longer allocates land for housing or employment development. Whilst there is a case for the SMNP to be rescreened (given one of the two key screening considerations highlighted in Section 1.4 above now longer applies), the SEA process has been continued to support the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan.

SEA explained

- 1.7 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential 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 and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the SMNP to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.8 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
- i. When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 - ii. A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan (i.e., the draft SMNP) that presents outcomes from the environmental assessment (i.e., discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.
- 1.9 This 'Environmental Report' is concerned with item 'ii' above.

⁶ DLUHC (February 2022): Chief Planner's Newsletter, February 2022 "Strategic Environmental Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans: Timely and effective screening" accessible [here](#)

⁷ UK Government (2004) 'The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004' can be accessed [here](#).

Structure of this Environmental Report

1.10 This document is the SEA Environmental Report for the SMNP and hence needs to answer all four of the questions listed below 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 demonstrated in **Table 1.2** below.

Table 1.2: Questions that must be answered by the SEA Environmental Report to meet the regulatory⁸ requirements

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ⁹
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
What is the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What's the scope of the SEA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What are the key issues and objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making/SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the Regulation 14 version of the plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Regulation 14 version of the plan.
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The next steps for the plan making / SEA process.

⁸ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

⁹ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

2. Local Plan context and vision for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan

Local Plan context for the SMNP

- 2.1 The neighbourhood area lies within the area administered by the Local Planning Authority of Dorset Council and is being prepared in the context of the adopted Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (2014)¹⁰, the saved policies of the 2002 East Dorset Local Plan (saved policies)¹¹, the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Waste Plan (2019)¹², and the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, and Dorset Mineral Sites Plan (2019)¹³.
- 2.2 It is also being prepared in the context of the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)¹⁴, which is expected to be adopted in 2026. Issues and options consultation for the emerging DCLP was undertaken in January 2021¹⁵.
- 2.3 Sturminster Marshall is described as a ‘larger village’ in the emerging DCLP, which falls within the South Eastern Dorset Functional Area. As shown within Figure 7.3 in the emerging DCLP, the strategic proposals for Sturminster Marshall are detailed in policies STMR1, STMR2, STMR3 and STRM4, which highlight four key opportunities for development in the area:
- STMR1: Bailie Gate Industrial Estate and its extension (3.3 ha of employment land).
 - STMR2: Land at Station Road (225 new homes).
 - STMR3: Springfield Farm (60 new homes); and
 - STMR4: Sturminster Marshall Golf Course (140 new homes).
- 2.4 Collectively, these proposals would deliver in the region of 425 homes and 3.3ha of employment land provision within Sturminster Marshall up to 2038. Additionally, the supporting text for these policies indicates the following vision for the village:
- *“act as a focal point for smaller settlements nearby and develop its role to provide facilities for everyday needs, including new employment opportunities.*
 - *have development, including housing, that will support its enhanced role; and*
 - *retain a clearly defined edge inset within the Green Belt.”¹⁶*
- 2.5 In light of recent policy drivers at the national level regarding housing numbers and delivery (e.g., with respect to the National Planning Policy Framework

¹⁰ Dorset Council (2014) ‘East Dorset and Christchurch adopted local plan’ can be accessed [here](#).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dorset Council (2019) ‘2019 Waste Plan’ can be accessed [here](#).

¹³ Dorset Council (2019) ‘Mineral Sites Plan’ can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁴ Dorset Council (2023) ‘The Dorset Council Local Plan’ can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁵ Dorset Council (2021) ‘Dorset Council Local Plan January 2021 consultation’ can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁶ Ibid.

(NPPF) Prospectus¹⁷ and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill¹⁸) and the proposed delays to the timetable for the emerging DCLP¹⁹, housing numbers for the neighbourhood area are likely to be revisited. It is anticipated that further discussions between Sturminster Marshall Parish Council and Dorset Council will continue over the coming months.

SMNP vision and objectives

2.6 The vision of the SMNP is as follows:

- “To help support a strong, vibrant and healthy community for all who live or work in the parish.
- To maintain the essential character of the parish and its different component settlements through sensitive development of a well-designed and safe built environment, and its associated infrastructure.
- To address our long-standing issues of flooding, traffic and affordable housing.
- To contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land and helping to use natural resources prudently; and
- To help maintain or improve biodiversity by minimising waste and pollution, and by adapting to climate change and mitigating its effects.”

2.7 The vision of the SMNP allows for the identification of the following objectives under six main themes:

- **Climate change and flood risk:**
 - Achieve the highest energy efficiency standards in all new development.
 - Minimise the production of waste in construction.
 - Embed efficient water management in all developments.
 - Encourage the use of renewable energy technologies where these would be appropriate.
 - Include climate change mitigating measures against foreseeable effects; and
 - Ensure that any new development does not increase flooding or pollutions risks within the parish or further downstream in the Stour Valley.
- **Natural environment – landscape, habitats, and wildlife:**
 - Ensure that development is sensitive to the rural setting of the parish and does not adversely impact its character, environment, or landscape.

¹⁷ GOV.UK (2021) 'National Planning Policy Framework' can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁸ UK Parliament (2023) 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill' can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁹ Dorset Council (2022): 'Local Development Scheme' can be accessed [here](#)

- Protect green spaces and recreational trails valued by local resident and create new ones wherever possible; and
- Promote the protection of semi-natural habitats within the parish and, where possible, encourage enhancement of biodiversity.
- **Built environment – heritage and design:**
 - Achieve a better understanding of the historically important buildings and other heritage assets and how they contribute to local character. Identify the characteristic buildings and features in the distinct areas of the parish that should be retained in future developments; and
 - Ensure that the character of the area (including the outlying settlements) and the setting of these assets is not compromised by the presence of new developments, through the careful consideration of location, layout, scale, design, and materials used.
- **Homes and businesses:**
 - Provide opportunities for local people to continue to live in the area by encouraging an appropriate mix of housing types within any new development. This should include sufficient numbers of affordable homes for first-time buyers and young families, and housing suitable for older, retired people; and
 - Encourage employers to provide employment opportunities within the parish for local people.
- **Community facilities:**
 - Protect and enhance the range of community facilities in the parish including retail, sport, play, education, and social infrastructure.
- **Traffic and transport, walking and cycling:**
 - Reduce problems associated with street parking, especially close to the school and retail outlets.
 - Explore ways in which traffic movements may be modified to avoid congestion, in particular, along Station Road and sections of High Street; and
 - Identify where opportunities may arise to create safe routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Summary of SEA Scoping

- 3.1 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”.
- 3.2 In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England²⁰. These authorities were consulted on the scope of the SEA between October 2021 and November 2021.
- 3.3 The purpose of scoping was to outline the ‘scope’ of the SEA through setting out the following information:
 - A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the SMNP.
 - Baseline data against which the SMNP can be assessed.
 - The key sustainability issues for the SMNP; and
 - An ‘SEA Framework’ of objectives against which the SMNP.
- 3.4 The comments provided by the consultees on the SEA Scoping Report, and how they have been addressed, can be read in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1: Consultation responses received on the SEA Scoping Report

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>Historic England</p> <p><i>Historic Places Adviser for Historic England South West (email response received on 27th October 2021)</i></p>	
<p>We are pleased to note the inclusion in the Historic Environment section of the Report of our guidance on, respectively, Conservation Areas, Setting, and SEAs. In addition to these we would recommend the inclusion and use of our guidance on Site Assessments</p> <p>Although referenced to Local Plans this guidance has equal application to the process for allocating sites in Neighbourhood Plans. Our liaison with the community earlier in the year on its SEA Screening revealed the uncertainty at that time over the extent to which its Plan would ultimately choose to allocate sites (see attached). We have not had any further liaison on the Plan since that time so we remain unclear whether a decision has been taken to allocate sites or not.</p>	<p>Comment noted – the site assessment guidance has been a useful source of reference during the SEA process.</p>

²⁰ These consultation bodies were selected “by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effect of implementing plans and programmes” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>We note that para 1.4 of the Scoping Report identifies that the emerging Local Plan envisages allocating 4 sites for development in the area but otherwise para 1.9 only states that the basis for requiring full SEA is predicated on “locations” having sensitivity relative to identified receptors without making clear whether this implies that the Neighbourhood Plan will be allocating its own sites or not.</p> <p>Establishing a position on this point seems somewhat crucial as it will influence the need and extent of a site options assessment as part of the SEA process, especially as far as consideration of relevant heritage assets is concerned.</p>	<p>Further discussion on the consideration of options for the Neighbourhood Plan is presented in Chapter 4 of this Environmental Report – through the consideration of reasonable alternatives.</p>
<p>Environment Agency <i>Planning Advisor – Wessex Sustainable Places (email response received on 1st November 2021)</i></p>	
<p>Based on our review of the draft scoping report, we think the following environmental issues should be included to ensure the neighbourhood plan adequately assesses any environmental impact.</p> <p>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</p> <p>We are pleased to see biodiversity and geodiversity are to be scoped into the SEA. The North Winterborne (GB108043015990) and Stour (Middle d/s Pimperne Brook) (GB108043016052) rivers run through the neighbourhood area. These watercourses are currently failing to reach good ecological status under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). They are currently classified as having bad and poor ecological status respectively.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Potential impacts to the watercourses associated with the SMNP policies and proposals is discussed within Chapter 5 of this Environmental Report.</p>
<p>Developments within or adjacent to this watercourse should not cause further deterioration and should seek to improve the ecological status based on the recommendations of the South West River Basin Management Plan. An assessment of the potential impacts of the neighbourhood plan on this watercourse under WFD should be included within the SEA appraisal. Further information on the current status of this watercourse can be found on Catchment Data Explorer.</p> <p>We therefore recommend the SEA scope is expanded to include an assessment of the plans impact on these watercourses and make reference to blue infrastructure alongside green.</p>	<p>The South West River Basin Management Plan has been referred to in the subsequent stages of the SEA process, and the SEA Objective and supporting assessment questions for the Biodiversity and Geodiversity theme has been updated to include blue infrastructure in addition to green infrastructure.</p>

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>Flood risk</p> <p>We are pleased to see flood risk has been scoped into the SEA and agree with the SEA Framework proposed.</p> <p>The Local Authority’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Plans forms the evidence base to determine the level of flood risk in this area.</p> <p>We expect the SEA to include flood risk in the baseline information, as a key sustainability issue and as an objective.</p> <p>The plan may also want to consider potential options for natural flood management (NFM) to reduce and manage future flood risk. This could have particular benefits around the main settlement of Sturminster Marshal, where the main Winterborne and Stour river converge. More information can be found on the gov.uk page: Working with natural processes to reduce flood risk.</p>	<p>Comment noted. The Local Authority’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Plans has been included. The provided link has been useful in exploring natural flood management techniques. Flood risk has been considered in the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan and features in policy SMNP2: Control of Flooding.</p> <p>Flood risk impacts associated with policies and proposals in the SMNP is discussed within Chapter 5 of this Environmental Report.</p>
<p>Land, Soil, and Water Resources</p> <p><u>Source protection zones/aquifers</u></p> <p>Your plan includes areas which are located on sensitive aquifers and Source Protection Zones 1, 2 and 3. These should be considered within your plan if growth or development is proposed here.</p> <p>The relevance of the designation and the potential implication upon development proposals should be considered with reference to our Groundwater Protection guidance: Groundwater protection.</p>	<p>Comment noted. The Source Protection Zones have been included within the SEA Environment Report, and the link provided has been useful for adding this detail in.</p> <p>Impacts to the water environment as associated with SMNP policies and proposals is further discussed within Chapter 5 of this Environmental Report.</p>
<p>For further information:</p> <p>Together with Natural England, English Heritage, and Forestry Commission we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans.</p> <p>This is available at: How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans</p>	<p>The recommended guidance has been a useful source of evidence to support the SEA process.</p>

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>Natural England <i>Lead Advisor, Sustainable Development (email response received 11th November 2021)</i></p>	
<p>Dorset Heaths</p> <p>Proposed residential development within the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan (SMNP) is within 5 km of Corfe Mullen Pastures which is notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) for the special interest of its heathland habitats and associated plant and animal species. Corfe Mullen Pastures SSSI is also part of the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area (SPA) and Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar.</p> <p>Natural England advises the neighbourhood plan group that, when considering the locations where development may be allocated, they should also engage with local landowners to facilitate the provision of additional land in locations appropriate to local residents. Such land, to be secured in perpetuity, may also provide multiple greenspace benefits for local people including natural greenspace etc. Natural England can provide advice on other acceptable uses if requested.</p>	<p>Comment noted. The proximity of the neighbourhood area to the named SSSI and its linked SPA and SAC designations has been raised and discussed in the SEA Environmental Report.</p> <p>A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process has been undertaken for the SMNP and accompanies the SMNP at Regulation 14 consultation. The HRA has considered the potential impact pathways to internationally protected sites for biodiversity associated with SMNP policies and proposals. A summary of the HRA findings is presented in Chapter 5 of this SEA Environmental Report.</p>
<p>Biodiversity Net Gain</p> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will become mandatory for most developments in England. Under the Environment Bill, both Town and Country Planning Act and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project developments will need to deliver a minimum 10 per cent BNG. This is a significant opportunity to ensure that developments provide lasting benefits for wildlife and to people's ability to experience nature where they live and work.</p> <p>Natural England advises the neighbourhood plan group that because BNG must be considered from the outset of a project your group should consider the most appropriate locations and desirable habitats which could be prioritised locally. It may be useful to refer to the features in Walnut Tree LNR as an example of what outcomes might be secured. It would be helpful to ensure that the plan directs applicants, such that when planning application for development is submitted, a biodiversity net gain plan is and that the applicant should consider the BNG requirements as early in the development process as possible.</p>	<p>Comment noted. Biodiversity net gain has been included in the neighbourhood plan under policy SMNP7, and outlines examples of what BNG could look like under new development.</p> <p>Further ecological impacts associated with SMNP policies and proposals are discussed within Chapter 5 of this Environmental Report.</p>

Key sustainability issues

Air quality

- The main pollutant of concern in the neighbourhood area is nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and this largely relates to the effects of emissions from vehicles, particularly within areas prone to congestion. The effects of the SMNP in relation to traffic and congestion will be explored under the ‘transportation’ SEA theme.
- The internationally designated sites for biodiversity within proximity to the neighbourhood area are also sensitive to air pollution issues. The effects of the SMNP in relation to these concerns will be explored under the ‘biodiversity and geodiversity’ SEA theme.
- The SMNP presents opportunities to improve accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections. These opportunities will be explored under the ‘transportation’ and ‘population and communities’ SEA themes.

In the absence of any specific air quality issues (i.e., air quality management areas (AQMA) or areas known to exceed national objectives for air quality), **the air quality theme has been scoped out for the purposes of the SEA process.**

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- There are some parts of the neighbourhood area which overlap with Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones (IRZs), and it will therefore be important for planning to avoid impact to these areas wherever possible.
- Several sites within Sturminster Marshall are noted for their locally significant biodiversity offer through the presence of key habitats and species. These areas should be retained and enhanced in development.
- There are a few priority habitats within the neighbourhood area which should be preserved wherever possible during the development process.
- New development provides opportunities to enhance ecological connections in the neighbourhood area and deliver demonstrable biodiversity net gains.

Climate change

- Although the Sturminster Marshall settlement area generally experiences low fluvial flood risk, the area is partially affected by areas of medium surface water and groundwater flood risk in some residential parts of the settlement. The SMNP provides the opportunity to direct growth away from areas of current or potentially future flood risk. Furthermore, it will be important for any development in the vicinity of the floodplain to ensure that suitable drainage is provided which ensures that development will not lead to adverse effects on water quality.
- The transport sector continues to be a key challenge in terms of reducing emissions. The SMNP provides opportunities to guide development

towards the most accessible locations in the neighbourhood area and require local infrastructure (including walking and cycling infrastructure) improvements where appropriate.

- The SMNP should seek to maximise opportunities for local renewable energy and electric vehicle infrastructure development, as well as new green infrastructure and improved ecological links, to complement the existing district climate change strategies.

Historic environment

- Sturminster Marshall contains a wealth of designated heritage assets, including two scheduled monuments and 28 listed buildings. It will be important to ensure that future development avoids / minimises impacts upon the historic environment and maximises opportunities to improve the public realm and green infrastructure, to the indirect benefit of heritage settings.
- The Sturminster Marshall Conservation Area Appraisals highlight historic sensitivities in the neighbourhood area with regards to building style, structure, and form.
- As well as this, the Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER) highlights several assets, including archaeological finds which provide local historic value to Dorset. These sensitivities should be considered in future growth strategies.

Health and wellbeing

- Health indicators through the 2011 Census suggest that general health in the neighbourhood area is very good, and that disabled residents are mostly not limited in terms of their activities.
- The SMNP could also seek improvements to the public realm which maximise social inclusion and address any existing infrastructure / mobility issues for more vulnerable residents.

Land, soil, and water resources

- The neighbourhood area has the potential to be underlain by best and most versatile (BMV) land, though a full classification of the quality of this land has not been undertaken surrounding Sturminster Marshall village.
- In terms of water resources, the 2019 Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) indicates that the Wessex Water 'Water Resource Zone' (WRZ) is susceptible to some key risks including a moderate impact on the water system from more severe droughts and the effects of forthcoming potential sustainability reductions and capping of license limits. Though the WRMP has recommended strategies which will moderate these risks, plan making will still need to consider how local decisions affect water supply, such as water accessibility.
- In addition, the neighbourhood area intersects waterbodies and falls within a Drinking Water (Surface Water) Safeguard Zone and a nitrate vulnerability zone (NVZ). In this regard, it will be important to ensure that development

avoids impacts in relation to water quality, and where possible, contributes to ecological and chemical quality improvements.

Landscape

- The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is designated 80m from the east border of the neighbourhood area. Additionally, the eastern section of the neighbourhood area falls within the South East Dorset Green Belt. These designations protect unique landscape features and the impact of development should seek to prevent harm to these features in the short to long term.
- The neighbourhood area is within the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase National Character Area (NCA). The East Dorset and Purbeck Landscape Sensitivity Assessment also highlights key sensitivities in the area. The Neighbourhood Plan could seek to protect and enhance Sturminster Marshall within these unique settings and their important features.
- Important viewpoints and local landscape and villagescape features have been identified in Sturminster Marshall, which reflect the special qualities of the neighbourhood area and are highly valued by residents. Development should seek to conserve and enhance these assets.

Population and community

- Population growth has implications for housing needs, accessibility, local service and facility needs, and economic vitality. Development should consider both existing and future residents' needs, including any necessary supporting infrastructure, when planning for growth.
- There are key employment opportunities within and surrounding the neighbourhood area, which considered alongside a relatively comprehensive service and facility provision in the village and existing educational capacity provides good opportunities to support growth with good access. Future growth also provides opportunities to improve access through new provisions or new / improved links to existing employment areas.
- As the population of Sturminster Marshall continues to grow, it is important that development continues to support low levels of deprivation throughout the village. The Neighbourhood Plan also provides the opportunity to address certain aspects of deprivation in development, in particular the domains of 'Education, Skills and Training', 'Crime', 'Barriers to Housing and Services' and 'Living Environment Deprivation'.

Transportation

- Some parts of the neighbourhood area, including the High Street and Station Road, are recognised locally for causing traffic and safety issues. Considering trends which favour cars / vans as the primary mode of transport and low levels of public transport use, planning should seek to maximise opportunities to reduce the need to travel, enable home working, and access a choice of sustainable transport modes where possible.

- Opportunities to improve and / or extend active travel connections, alongside public realm improvements and urban greening within the neighbourhood area should also be sought.

SEA framework

3.5 The SEA Framework overleaf provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard ‘tests’. Each proposal within the current version of the SMNP will be assessed consistently using the framework.

Table 3.2: SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...i.e.,)
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the integrity of the internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity sites located within proximity to the neighbourhood area? • Protect and enhance priority habitats and species? • Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green and blue infrastructure networks? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of journeys made? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport? • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? • Support proposals for EV charging infrastructure?
	Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Sustainably manage water runoff and drainage? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the neighbourhood area? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...i.e.,)
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Protect the integrity and the historic setting of key finds of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Dorset HER? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?
Health and wellbeing	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health, and community facilities, for all age groups? • Provide and enhance community access to open green spaces? • Promote the use of healthier modes of travel, including active travel networks? • Improve access to neighbouring centres and their healthcare services? • Improve access to the countryside for recreational use? • Avoiding any negative impacts to the quality and extent of existing recreational assets, such as formal or informal footpaths?
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the loss of high-quality agricultural land resources? • Affect the integrity of waste infrastructure within and surrounding the neighbourhood area? • Promote any opportunities for the use of previously developed land, or vacant / underutilised land? • Protect the integrity of mineral resources?
	Protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid impacts on water quality? • Support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside development? • Protect waterbodies from pollution, including NVZs and drinking water safeguard zones? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and / or water recycling?
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape and villagescape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to protect and enhance the integrity of the Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB? • Seek to prevent detriment to the openness of the South East Dorset Green Belt?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...i.e.,)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and / or enhance local landscape and villagescape character, key sensitivities, and quality of place? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity and settlement character? • Protect visual amenity and locally important views in the neighbourhood area? • Seek to retain and protect TPOs? • Retain and enhance landscape and villagescape features that contribute to the rural setting of Sturminster Marshall?
Population and community	Ensure growth in the village is aligned with the needs of all residents and capacity of the settlement and social infrastructure, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, and affordable housing? • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs? • Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including community infrastructure which meets the needs of the local population? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? • Minimise fuel poverty, and encourage developments which maximise energy efficiency?
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the key objectives within the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan to encourage more sustainable transport? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Ensure sufficient road capacity to accommodate new development? • Promote improved local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement? • Facilitate on-going high levels of home and remote working? • Improve road safety? • Reduce the impact on residents from the road network? • Improve parking facilities?

4. Consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan

Introduction

- 4.1 In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include...
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
 - The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.
- 4.2 The 'narrative' of plan-making / SEA up to this point is told within this part of the Environmental Report. Specifically, how the SEA process to date has informed the consideration of different approaches for key elements of the SMNP.

Defining reasonable alternatives

- 4.3 Whilst work on the SMNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 4.4 In the context of the above, this chapter of the Environmental Report presents information on reasonable alternative approaches to addressing key issues that are of central importance to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Housing numbers to deliver within the neighbourhood area

- 4.5 As discussed within Chapter 2 of this Environmental Report, Sturminster Marshall is identified as a 'larger village' within the emerging DCLP. Reflecting the proposals within the issues and options consultation document for the emerging DCLP (January 2021), Sturminster Marshall's indicative target is 472 dwellings for the period up to 2038, including 425 homes on land to be released from the South East Dorset Green Belt. The remaining housing target is expected to come forward through extant consents and windfall development (such as infilling within the village and the conversion / replacement of rural buildings).
- 4.6 However, in light of recent policy drivers at the national level regarding housing numbers and delivery (e.g., with respect to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Prospectus²¹ and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill²²) and the proposed delays to the timetable for the emerging DCLP²³, housing numbers for the neighbourhood area will likely be revisited. A key factor includes the potential release of Green Belt land to accommodate new housing, with most of the available site options within the neighbourhood area located

²¹ GOV.UK (2021) 'National Planning Policy Framework' can be accessed [here](#).

²² UK Parliament (2023) 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill' can be accessed [here](#).

²³ Dorset Council (2022): 'Local Development Scheme' can be accessed [here](#)

within the boundaries of the South East Dorset Green Belt. Specifically, Paragraph 142 within the NPPF Prospectus states:

"Green Belt boundaries are not required to be reviewed and altered if this would be the only means of meeting the objectively assessed housing need for housing over the plan period".

- 4.7 As the emerging DCLP proposals for Sturminster Marshall includes 425 homes on land to be released from the South East Dorset Green Belt, it is anticipated that further discussions between Sturminster Marshall Parish Council and Dorset Council regarding housing numbers will continue over the coming months. In this respect, the current version of the SMNP does not allocate sites for housing or employment land. The Steering Group are instead committed to undertaking an early review of the SMNP at a time when the housing methodology is firmed up, and the position with respect to Green Belt release has been confirmed.

Options to inform policy approaches within the Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.8 Whilst the SMNP does not allocate land for development within the neighbourhood area, the Parish Council has explored a range of planning issues and considerations for the Neighbourhood Plan relating to its vision and aspirations (as presented in Chapter 2, above).
- 4.9 In light of this, the SEA process has undertaken appraisals of high-level approaches and alternatives (hereafter referred to as "options") which are currently being evaluated as part of plan development. This is for the benefit of plan-makers tasked with selecting preferred policy approaches for the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan and to highlight to consultees the relative sustainability merits of the different approaches that can be taken relating to the key elements of the Neighbourhood Plan
- 4.10 A description of the options (i.e., the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with), are as follows:

Options for managing the impacts of development

- 4.11 The Steering Group recognises that speculative applications for development may come forward during the plan period, which have potential to deliver benefits that should be secured through the design, layout, and use of each site. In this respect, the SMNP's planning policies seeks to shape development more broadly in the neighbourhood area without allocating specific sites.
- 4.12 The local 'call for sites' process undertaken during the earlier stages of plan making identified many landowners interested in development sites for housing, and in light of the uncertainties surrounding housing numbers, speculative applications (if approved) may significantly impact upon the local community and the natural and built environment.
- 4.13 Whilst the policy requirements within the adopted Local Plan (and consultation document on the emerging DCLP) include a range of criteria relating to the delivery of high-quality and sustainable design within the design of new development areas, the relative sustainability merits of preparing additional 'key design principles' within the SMNP have been explored. These key design principles would accompany and seek to compliment local and national policy requirements.

4.14 The following options have been considered through the SEA:

- Option A: Encourage developers to consider specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area.
- Option B: Do not encourage developers to consider specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area, relying solely on existing local and national policy requirements.

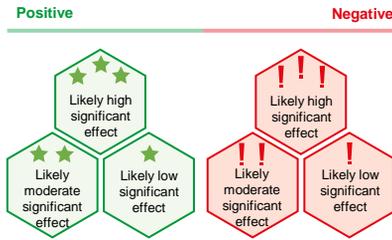
Approach to the options appraisal process

4.15 The options have been considered against the SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed at SEA scoping. The following information is presented:

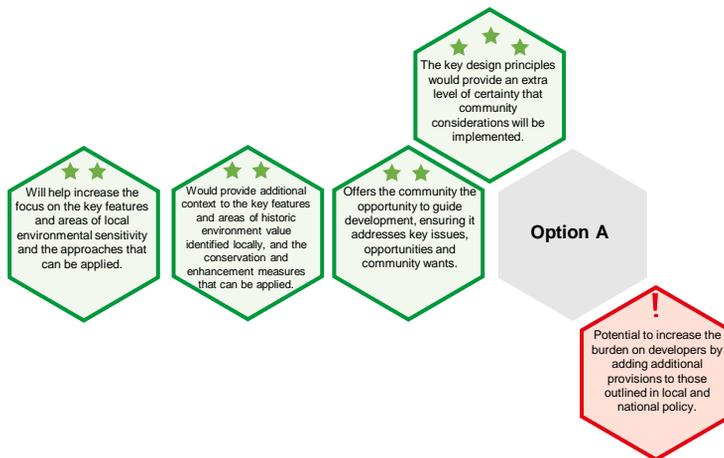
- A description of the options appraised (as presented above).
- An overview of the likely significant effects (both positive, and negative) of each option. The positive impacts are presented in the 'green' shaded areas on the likely significant effects diagram, and the negative impacts are presented in the 'red' shaded areas on the likely significant effects diagram. The number of positive 'stars' and negative 'exclamation marks' within each shaded area represents the potential impact of the likely significant effects (i.e., minor, moderate, or major).
- A rankings table showing the sustainability performance of each option with respect to each SEA theme to highlight their relative sustainability merits, with the most favourable option represented by the number '1' in **Table 4.1**, and the least favourable option represented by the number '2'. Where it is difficult to distinguish between the option (e.g., effects are uncertain), this is represented by a '?' in the table.
- Confirmation of the preferred approach for the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.16 The appraisal findings are presented below.

Likely significant effects:



Option A: Encourage developers to consider specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area



Option B: Do not encourage developers to consider specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area, relying solely on existing local and national policy requirements



Table 4.1: Rankings of sustainability performance against each SEA theme

SEA theme	Rank of preference	
	Option A	Option B
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	?	?
Climate Change	?	?
Historic Environment	?	?
Health and Wellbeing	1	2
Land, Soil, and Water Resources	?	?
Landscape	?	?
Population and Community	1	2
Transportation	?	?

4.17 Whilst the key design principles perform positively for several SEA themes, there is an element of uncertainty as to whether the implementation of the principles would have significant impacts in relation to these themes. This is given that the principles might not necessarily go above and beyond local and national policy provisions (which, in their current form, have a strong focus on delivering high-quality and sustainable design through new development areas).

4.18 However, it is recognised that the inclusion of key design principles within the SMNP (as proposed through Option A) will provide an extra level of detail and certainty, helping to ensure local knowledge and aspirations are taken into consideration during development design. This is likely to have significant positive effects in relation to the ‘Population and Community’ and ‘Health and Wellbeing’ SEA themes.

4.19 In conclusion, the preferred approach for the SMNP is to proceed with Option A and prepare specific key design principles for the neighbourhood area. This will ensure community preferences are taken into consideration, with development more likely to be supported when local aspirations and knowledge has been applied.

5. Appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan

Introduction

5.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 14 version of the SMNP. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version (i.e., the Regulation 14 version) of the SMNP under the eight SEA theme headings.
- Consideration of potential cumulative effects; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage.

SMNP policies

5.2 To support the implementation of the vision statement for the SMNP, the Regulation 14 version of the plan puts forward 23 policies to guide new development within the neighbourhood area.

Policy reference	Policy name
SMNP1	Sustainable Development Standards
SMNP2	Control of Flooding
SMNP3	Sewage Treatment Works
SMNP4	Maintaining Local Character
SMNP5	Valued Views
SMNP6	Local Green Spaces
SMNP7	Protecting and Enhancing Our Local Wildlife and Habitats
SMNP8	Undesignated Heritage Assets and Other Locally Important Buildings
SMNP9	Key Design Principles
SMNP10	Design Principles: Layout
SMNP11	Design Principles: Building Form and Scale
SMNP12	Design Principles: Boundary Treatment and Public Realm
SMNP13	Design Principles: Materials and Architectural Design
SMNP14	Housing Types

Policy reference	Policy name
SMNP15	Rural Exception Sites for Affordable Housing
SMNP16	Supporting Local Employment Opportunities
SMNP17	Supporting and Improving Community Facilities
SMNP18	Sports and Recreation Area – Land at Station Road
SMNP19	Infrastructure Needs of Large Scale Development
SMNP20	Rights of Way, Walking and Cycling
SMNP21	Transport Assessments
SMNP22	Traffic Management and Transport Improvements
SMNP23	Parking Standards

Approach to this appraisal

- 5.3 For each theme, ‘significant’ effects of the Regulation 14 version of the SMNP on the baseline are predicated and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. For example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects as far as possible. These effect ‘characteristics’ will be described within the assessment, as appropriate.
- 5.4 Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the SMNP. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by the understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.
- 5.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect ‘characteristics’ are described within the assessment as appropriate.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 5.6 Given the proximity of the neighbourhood area to internationally and nationally designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) process has been completed for the SMNP. The HRA concludes²⁴:

²⁴ AECOM (2023) – HRA Report’ *The HRA contributes to the evidence base for the SMNP and accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the neighbourhood plan at examination.*

“Although there are potential impact pathways linking housing and employment growth in Sturminster Marshall to SACs and SPAs, no likely significant effects have been identified for the SMNP because no impact pathways actually exist linking plan policies to negative impacts on European sites. The SMNP does not contain any policies seeking to deliver or allocate development but rather seeks to manage development proposals as they come forward. Since no impact pathways exist, there is no mechanism for an effect in combination with other plans or projects.”

- 5.7 In light of this, no adverse impacts on internationally and nationally designated sites are considered likely through adopting and implementing SMNP policies or proposals. Nonetheless, there is a strong focus within the SMNP on protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- 5.8 For example, policy SMNP6 seeks to protect local green spaces from development. policy SMNP7 protects and enhances local wildlife and habitats in the neighbourhood area through the retention and enrichment of existing wildlife areas and corridors, and indicates new development will need to bring forward biodiversity net gain and avoid harm to ecological sites. These policies work to protect habitats and areas that contribute to the biodiversity and geodiversity value of the neighbourhood area, promote greater biodiversity connectivity and ensure biodiversity net gain through development proposals.
- 5.9 Further supporting the natural environment, policy SMNP1 encourages ecological enhancements within the neighbourhood area – indicating new development should make use of materials that have been produced with minimum ecological damage. Policy SMNP2 seeks to ensure sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) are vegetated where appropriate; this will encourage additional green infrastructure within the neighbourhood area. Policy SMNP4 sets out to protect the rural character of the area, and seeks to reinforce the extent and influence of habitats and features that contribute to the local biodiversity and geodiversity value. Policy SMNP10 indicates street and plot layouts and patterns should include street trees and incorporate existing mature trees, and allow for planting areas, to ensure biodiversity quality is maintained and enhanced. This is reiterated in SMNP12, which indicates green spaces and boundary vegetation should also be brought forward through new development, which will improve biodiversity through increased areas for foraging/roosting and enhanced connectivity. Additionally, policy SMNP20 indicates pedestrian and cycle routes should be landscaped to become green corridors – the use of grass, shrubs and other plants will provide a wildlife benefit and support the integrity of local ecological networks by improving connections.
- 5.10 In conclusion, it is expected the SMNP will bring forward **long term positive effects** for biodiversity and geodiversity, through encouraging new development proposals to extend the green infrastructure network, protecting and enhancing features of biodiversity and geodiversity value, and delivering biodiversity net gains.

Climate change

- 5.11 Dorset Council have declared a climate emergency in response to the effects of climate change, which has the potential to impact on human health and the

natural and built environment in the neighbourhood area. In this context, the SMNP contains several policies which seek to mitigate and adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.

- 5.12 A key policy in this regard is policy SMNP1, which indicates new buildings will need to integrate energy efficiency, sustainable materials and climate change adaptation into their proposals. This includes thermal efficiency, low carbon energy infrastructure, and locally and / or recycled materials are ensured for all development to allow for new structures to appropriately adapt to the effects of climate change. Policy SMNP6 focusses on protecting local green spaces; this will protect natural features within the local environment, which support with pollution absorption and climate change regulation (e.g., summer shading or reducing surface-water run-off). This is also a focus of policy SMNP12 and policy SMNP7; protecting existing habitats maintains the level of photosynthesis and intake of carbon dioxide – and the 10% net gain in biodiversity as set out by the government has the potential to increase the level of carbon dioxide absorption and oxygen release.
- 5.13 With further respect to adapting to the potential impacts of climate change, policy SMNP2 indicates flood risk assessments will need to be undertaken for development. This will assist in implementing appropriate mitigation measures to mitigate the risk of flooding and its associated effects on the built and natural environment. Appropriate measures include ponds, swales and other vegetated and wildlife friendly flood mitigation measures as outlined in policy SMNP7.
- 5.14 In conclusion, it is expected the SMNP will bring forward **long term positive effects** for the climate change SEA theme, through encouraging proposals to extend the green infrastructure network, setting out the preference for sustainable material usage, and the encouragement of natural flood mitigation infrastructure.

Historic environment

- 5.15 There are a number of historic environment assets within the neighbourhood area, including 28 listed buildings (two Grade I listed, three Grade II* listed and 23 Grade II listed), two scheduled monuments, and three distinct conservation areas. As the SMNP does not make any allocations for development, there are no anticipated adverse impacts expected to any nationally or locally designated heritage assets and features. Nonetheless, the SMNP has taken a proactive approach to protecting and enhancing the historic environment. This is discussed below.
- 5.16 Undesignated heritage and locally important structures in the neighbourhood plan are provided for under the SMNP. Policy SMNP8 sets out the need for development to conserve and respect the contribution of locally important heritage assets to the historic environment of the neighbourhood area. Additionally, policy SMNP6 is focussed on protecting local green spaces. Whilst not strictly an historic environment policy, this will bring forward benefits for heritage in the neighbourhood area by protecting the setting of some historic features, thus ensuring the interpretation of features is not compromised.
- 5.17 Furthermore, design stipulations under policies SMNP1, SMNP9, SMNP1, SMPN11, SMNP1 and SMNP13 will guide new development proposals that

may come forward during the plan period to respect their surroundings. They will also ensure development proposals work to improve the quality of the built environment through the consideration of materials to use, public realm improvements and appropriate building form. This will benefit the historic environment by ensuring new development does not detract from the historic character of the area and improves the setting of heritage features.

- 5.18 In conclusion, it is expected the SMNP will bring forward **long term positive effects** for the historic environment of the neighbourhood area through the protection of locally designations and the setting of assets, and the enhancement of the setting of historic environment features.

Health and wellbeing

- 5.19 There are a number of green spaces in the neighbourhood area that support residents' quality of life and wellbeing, despite there being a lack of medical infrastructure in the neighbourhood area.
- 5.20 The SMNP makes provision for health and wellbeing through the design stipulations for potential development. Policies SMNP1, SMNP9, SMNP10, SMNP11, SMNP12, SMNP13 contain stipulations around green space provision, development plot design, and safe pedestrian routes which will allow for the enhancement of the public realm. Policies SMNP6 and SMNP7 also bring forward benefits for health and wellbeing by retaining green spaces and extending green infrastructure networks, allowing for the continued use of outdoor green spaces for physical and mental health through the engagement in outdoor activity. Physical activity through sport is also included under policy SMNP18, which safeguards a public open space for sport infrastructure provision to allow for greater engagement with sport and fitness. This also helps to improve the health and wellbeing of the community by encouraging active lifestyles, which benefits physical and mental health.
- 5.21 Accessibility and connectivity to services, facilities, and amenities is a key component of residents' quality of life. In this context community facilities are supported through policy SMNP17 – allowing for their improvement where there will be no detrimental impact on their surroundings. Policy SMNP19 sets out the need for proposals for large scale development to demonstrate how they will contribute to the community infrastructure of the neighbourhood area, including through engaging with education and healthcare services to ensure impacts on these systems are planned for. This will support the vitality of the community.
- 5.22 In conclusion, the SMNP includes policies that set out to maintain and enhance health and wellbeing through setting out design stipulations that bring forward benefits, such as green space provision through development. Additionally, the policies work to protect and extend green infrastructure; this combined with the provision for sports infrastructure will bring forward benefits through increased engagement in physical activity, which is good for physical and mental health. Furthermore, community infrastructure components are protected – the community infrastructure could be enhanced through the SMNP. As such, **long term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to this SEA theme.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 5.23 The SMNP includes policies that work to protect land, soil and water resources. Policy SMNP1 indicates new development through the plan will need to consider the conservation of water resources, including through efficient infrastructure, harvesting of rainwater and the use of greywater in the development. This will help to reduce the amount of water being abstracted, and will aid in the cleaning of water to reduce pollutants entering the local water system. The focus on ensuring water quality is not adversely impacted through development is reiterated in policy SMNP2, which sets out to protect the quality of groundwater supplies and the water in the river system, and implement natural processes and vegetation to slow and clean flood water before it enters the local water network. This will aid in further reducing the level of pollutants entering the local water system. Policy SMNP3 is concerned with upgrading sewage treatment works; again, this will help to reduce adverse impacts on the water system by reducing the amount of waste entering water bodies. Policy SMNP12 makes arrangement for waste storage and collection; this will help reduce litter and pollution entering the natural environment of the neighbourhood area and prevent declines in land, soil and water quality.
- 5.24 In conclusion, the SMNP includes specific policies that will help to protect the integrity of land, soil, and water resources. Additionally, as the SMNP does not contain any site allocations for development, it is also not likely that the SMNP (in its current form) would result in the loss of productive agricultural land. As such, **long term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to this SEA theme.

Landscape

- 5.25 As the SMNP does not allocate sites for development, no impacts to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB or to the integrity of the South East Dorset Green Belt are expected as a result of the SMNP. Whilst policy SMNP15 supports rural exception sites for affordable housing within the Green Belt, proposals will be expected to align to the types of development which are broadly accepted in principle within the Green Belt and be restricted to land adjoining or very close to the village boundary.
- 5.26 Protecting landscape and villagescape character is a key focus for the Neighbourhood Plan, as indicated within its vision and objectives. A key policy in this regard is policy SMNP4, which seeks to protect the rural character of the neighbourhood area through protecting key features that contribute to the landscape quality, dark skies, and the scale of field systems. This will ensure the landscape character is maintained through the implementation of the SMNP. This ties into policy SMNP9, which ensures any development will follow key design principles to be in keeping with the character area it is within. Policy SMNP5 protects key views, which will support the visual amenity of the neighbourhood area, protecting locally important components of landscape quality. Protecting green spaces and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity through policies SMNP6 and SMNP7 will also help to maintain and enhance landscape value by ensuring green infrastructure is retained; thus helping to visually break up development and reduce the impact of the built environment on the landscape. The development design policies SMNP10, SMNP11, SNMP12 and SNMP13 work to reduce the impact of the built environment on the landscape by setting out design stipulations that help blend new potential

development into the existing built environment, including building materials, building height and plot landscaping. Policies SMNP15 and SMNP16 are supportive in principle of proposals for rural exception sites and employment sites within the Green Belt where development would not significantly detract from the character of the village and surrounding landscape and incorporate landscape buffers to reduce the visual impact. This ensures landscape quality is maintained as far as possible. Additionally, rural character should be reflected in the design of public rights of way – to allow for considerate access to the wider landscape.

- 5.27 In conclusion, the SMNP includes policies that set out to maintain and enhance landscape amenity through protecting key features, extending green infrastructure and setting out design features to ensure development has the least impact possible. This is a positive impact of the SMNP as it helps to promote development that is considerate of and in keeping with landscape character, and guides proposals to bring forward enhancements. As such, **long term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to this SEA theme.

Population and community

- 5.28 With respect to housing numbers, the current version of the SMNP does not allocate sites for housing or employment land. The Steering Group are instead committed to undertaking an early review of the SMNP at a time when the housing methodology is firmed up, and the position with respect to Green Belt release has been confirmed. This is further discussed within Chapter 4 of this Environmental Report, specifically Paragraph 4.5 to Paragraph 4.7.
- 5.29 Nonetheless, the SMNP includes policies that seek to shape new development areas which may come forward through the plan period. For example, policy SMNP14 indicates the housing types brought forward by development through the plan will need to meet the housing need priorities for the neighbourhood area. This includes affordable rented homes, affordable homes for first homes and shared ownership options, and a broad mix of market housing of different sizes to accommodate the needs of the community. This will ensure housing brought forward is representative of the local need and helps to keep the community together by offering options that are more attractive to older and younger generations. Affordable and open market provision is also accounted for under policy SMNP15 – again, this will help promote community cohesion.
- 5.30 The SMNP also includes a range of proposals which focus on supporting the local economy. For example, policy SMNP16 indicates existing employment sites within the neighbourhood area will be retained and expanded on a small-scale, and new employment spaces should be designed to be adaptable. This will be beneficial to the neighbourhood area; by protecting and expanding employment areas, this will potentially increase the local employment offer within the neighbourhood area, supporting economic vitality.
- 5.31 In conclusion, the SMNP has a strong focus on encouraging high quality and sustainable design which will come through new potential development proposals. This includes policies that relate to housing types and tenure and employment provision. This is a positive impact of the SMNP, as it helps to create cohesive communities; addressing the housing need allows families to stay together (through affordable housing and the housing mix), and keeping a

greater number of residents within the neighbourhood area for work. As such, **long term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to this SEA theme.

Transportation

- 5.32 A key focus of SMNP with regards to transportation is promoting active transportation options in the neighbourhood area. Policy SMNP20 safeguards the integrity of rights of way in the neighbourhood area – seeking their improvement, where appropriate, to encourage a greater uptake in active transportation methods. This is reiterated in policy SMNP10, which indicates new street and plot layouts should include safe pedestrian routes and dedicated footpaths.
- 5.33 Active transportation is also provided for under policy SMNP16, which also indicates traffic management for the expansion of the Bailie Gate Industrial Estate will be sought out, and a transport assessment will be carried out to make sure there are no negative impacts on the local strategic road network. The need for transport assessments is also included under policy SMNP21. Linked to policy SMNP16, policy SMNP22 also outlines the support for traffic management proposals that will help reduce traffic congestion, reduce on street parking pressures, reduce traffic speeds and bring forward improvements to rights of way. This ensures the local transport network is made safer for all users and becomes more efficient. Furthermore, policy SMNP15 ensures development through rural exception sites provide for car ownership where public transportation is poor – allowing for appropriate connections with the transport network.
- 5.34 Parking standards are demonstrated in policy SMNP23; this will help reduce pressure on existing parking facilities, making roads safer by reducing the number of cars on the road and protecting safe crossing points.
- 5.35 In conclusion, the SMNP includes policies that relate to transportation – through protecting and enhancing the active transport network, and seeking road improvements to allow for safe usage for everyone. This is a positive impact of the SMNP as it allows for greater and safe usage of local roads. Additionally, the policies seek to ensure potential development does not adversely impact the existing transport network, through effective traffic management schemes and the setting out of transport assessments. As such, **long term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to this SEA theme.

Conclusions at this current stage

- 5.36 In the context of the above, the assessment has concluded that the Regulation 14 version of the SMNP is likely to have significant positive effects in relation to the 'Population and Community' and 'Health and Wellbeing' SEA Themes. This principally links to the SMNP's support for high-quality proposals which would deliver suitable and appropriate housing for the local community (via a range of types and tenures), improve availability and accessibility to services, facilities, and amenities, and support enhancements to key opportunity areas within the neighbourhood area (such as the Bailie Gate Industrial Estate) which will encourage employment opportunities. These policy provisions will support social inclusion, and community and economic vitality. The SMNP is also likely to facilitate improvements to the public realm (including through green

infrastructure enhancements) and encourage healthier and active lifestyles. These policy provisions will support the quality of life of residents.

- 5.37 The SMNP will also bring positive effects in relation to the 'Landscape' and 'Historic Environment' SEA Themes. These benefits largely relate to the SMNP's emphasis on protecting and enhancing the relationship between the natural and built environment (i.e., between the village and the open countryside), encouraging high-quality design which respects and enhances local distinctiveness and sense of place, protects important landscape and villagescape features, facilitates improvements to quality of the public realm, and increases awareness, understanding and appreciation of the historic environment. Given the SMNP also set out a comprehensive range of provisions relating to the natural and built environment, including through the application of 'key design principles', this will help provide an appropriate basis for any development proposals which may come forward during the plan period.
- 5.38 Additionally, the SMNP will bring positive effects in relation to the 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' SEA Theme by encouraging proposals to protect existing and establish new habitats and wildlife corridors, enhance ecological networks (including through green infrastructure enhancements), and embrace opportunities for nature conservation. The HRA concludes that no adverse impacts to the integrity of internationally designated sites are expected as a result of the policies and proposals within the SMNP.
- 5.39 Regarding the 'Climate Change' SEA Theme, the SMNP will potentially lead to positive effects through supporting proposals which deliver energy efficient designs and layouts, proactively respond to the potential impacts of climate change (e.g., flood risk concerns from increased storms / rainfall events), and by encouraging opportunities to engage in active travel within the neighbourhood area. However, this is dependent on the extent to which proposals incorporate mitigation and adaptation measures through design.
- 5.40 The SMNP will also initiate several beneficial approaches regarding the 'Transportation' SEA Theme, given its focus on enhancing the active travel network (including public rights of way and cycle routes), supporting the principles of low-traffic neighbourhoods and highway safety, and encouraging public transport improvements.
- 5.41 More broadly in relation to the 'Land, Soil, and Water Resources' SEA Theme, the SMNP outlines several provisions which will help support the capacity of the landscape to regulate soil and water quality. As the SMNP does not contain any site allocations for development, it is also not likely that the SMNP (in its current form) would result in the loss of productive agricultural land.

Appendix A SEA Scoping – Context review and baseline

A.1 Air quality

Focus of theme

- Air pollution sources.
- Air quality hotspots; and
- Air quality management.

Policy Context

Table A1.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A1.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to air quality

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
The Clean Air Strategy	2019
UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations	2017
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Dorset Council Local Plan	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which predominantly seeks early planning to reduce / mitigate air quality impacts in development and to take advantage of opportunities to improve air quality. Measures to improve air quality include traffic and travel management and green infrastructure provision. Strategic development is expected to be focused in locations that have or will be provided with high levels of accessibility; supporting both a reduced need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Smaller-scale development should consider the potential for cumulative effects in relation to air quality.
- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.
- Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are declared in areas which exceed national objectives for levels of particulates, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, benzene, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons,

butadiene, carbon monoxide, lead and/ or nitrogen oxides. Christchurch and East Dorset District Council currently does not have any AQMAs²⁵.

- To improve air quality across the UK, national strategies have in the last few decades focused on regulatory frameworks, investment by industry in cleaner processes and a shift in the fuel mix towards cleaner forms of energy (largely at point sources). Whilst there are dedicated strategies to reducing roadside emissions (as a significant source of nitrogen dioxide emissions), recent objectives outlined in the Clean Air Strategy seek to recognise wider sources (including smaller contributors and diffuse sources) that contribute to poor air quality. This includes power generation, heating our homes, producing food, manufacturing consumer goods and powering transport.

Baseline Summary

Current baseline

In line with the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) as set out in Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995), Councils are required to assess Air Quality standards within the region on an annual basis. In this regard, there are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Christchurch and East Dorset. Although there are two AQMAs in Dorset - Chideock (along the A35) and High East Street (Dorchester) - neither of these are within close proximity to the neighbourhood area.

Emissions from vehicles are the main source of nitrogen dioxide, and air quality hotspots can arise in areas prone to traffic congestion. The ASR notes that traffic emissions are the most significant source of air pollution within Christchurch and East Dorset District, with large traffic flows at peak times experienced at some points of the A31 trunk road, which runs through the south part of the neighbourhood area. Other roads susceptible to traffic emissions noted by the Plan group are the A350 and Station Road²⁶.

Future baseline

Future growth in the neighbourhood area will ultimately affect the levels of traffic and congestion experienced and in the absence of suitable planning and mitigation this could lead to a deterioration in air quality. However, given the absence of any AQMAs within Christchurch and East Dorset District it is unlikely that this will be significant (providing that suitable mitigation measures are incorporated into the design of new development areas).

Positive planning could also be beneficial for air quality through opportunities to improve accessibility, particularly in terms of active travel and encouraging more local walkable journeys and sustainable connections. This is important in the local context, given the proximity of Sturminster Marshall to the neighbouring towns of Poole and Bournemouth.

²⁵ East Dorset District Council (2019): '2019 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR)' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/281348/East+Dorset+Air+Quality+Status+2019.pdf/63e91600-fcf0-9f8e-778d-07467bbdbf6a?version=1.0&t=1619397689949>

²⁶ Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Group (2020): 'Residents Survey 2020 - Summary of Responses' [online] available at: http://www.sturminstermarshall-pc.gov.uk/_UserFiles/Files/Household%20Questionnaire%20Summary.pdf

A.2 Biodiversity and geodiversity

Focus of theme

- Nature conservation designations.
- Geological sites; and
- Priority habitats and species.

Policy Context

Table A2.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A2.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which highlights that opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. This includes utilising a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure at the wider catchment or landscape scale.
- Support is given through the Framework to establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. Trees notably make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards).
- Over the past decade policy (e.g. The Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020) has demonstrated a move away from the traditional approach of protecting biodiversity, to a wider landscape approach to enhancing biodiversity, as part of the overall aims to halt biodiversity loss. The 25 Year Environment Plan places emphasis on improvements to the natural environment; identifying the need to “replenish depleted soil, plant trees, support wetlands and peatlands, rid seas and rivers of rubbish, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cleanse the air of pollutants, develop cleaner, sustainable energy and protect threatened species and habitats.” Working at a landscape scale transformation is expected to connect habitats into larger corridors for wildlife.

- The emerging Environment Bill will provide further provisions in relation to biodiversity when granted royal assent. The Bill will set parameters for biodiversity gain as a condition of planning permission, as well as biodiversity gain site registers and biodiversity credits. The Bill identifies a general duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including through biodiversity reports and local nature recovery strategies. Local nature recovery strategies will identify biodiversity priorities for the strategy area as well as a local habitat map. Furthermore, habitat maps are expected to include recovery and enhancement areas which are or could become of importance for biodiversity.
- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.

Baseline Summary

Current baseline

International and nationally designated sites

There are no internationally designated sites within the neighbourhood area. However, the Dorset Heathlands is located between 200m (two small parcels of land) and 500m (from the south eastern border) of the neighbourhood area. The site was designated in 1998 and had extensive fragmented heathland areas which contain numerous wet heath and acid valley mire habitats which are usually restricted to the Atlantic fringe of Europe. There are also 'transitions' to coastal wetland and fen habitat types. The wetland flora and fauna support a number of nationally rare species, as listed below:

- Nationally important plants - Dorset heath, bog orchid, and inundated marsh clubmoss.
- Nationally important birds - Dartford warbler, nightjar, woodlark, hen harrier, merlin; and
- Nationally important invertebrates - sundew moth, horse flies, and Blair's wainscot moth.

Regarding nationally designated sites for biodiversity, whilst there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the neighbourhood area the following sites are within an approximate 2km radius: Corfe Mullen Pastures SSSI (immediately to the south east, and the closest SSSI to the neighbourhood area), Upton Heath SSSI and Poole Harbour SSSI. With further reference to Corfe Mullens Pastures SSSI, the site supports dwarf shrub heath (lowland) habitat, scrub and small copses, and a number of species including willow, downy birch, nightshade and wild strawberry and is in a 'favourable' condition²⁷.

The main settlement of Sturminster Marshall is within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for '*any residential development with a total net gain in residential units*'. In this respect, new development areas have the potential to adversely impact these sites in the absence of suitable mitigation measures.

²⁷ Natural England (2021): 'Corfe Mullens Pastures SSSI' [online] available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1006519>

In addition to the above sites, there are a number of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) within the neighbourhood area. These are detailed in **Table A2.2** overleaf.

Table A2.2 SNCIs in Sturminster Marshall²⁸

Name of SNCI	Area (ha)	Description
Dullar/West Woods	4.17	Mainly deciduous woodland on a sand and clay soil.
Elder Moor	19.66	A varied area of woodland habitats with a rich flora.
Great Coll Wood	55.50	Semi-natural deciduous woodland and conifer plantation.
Henbury Farm Wood	1.84	Semi-natural deciduous woodland.
Higher Sandy Coppice	1.91	A small acidic oak wood.
Rushall House	1.84	A small but varied site of acid grassland and heathland habitats.
Sturminster Marshall Ponds	0.06	A series of ponds with populations of great crested newts.
West Wood	5.54	Deciduous woodland on an acid soil.
Westley Wood	9.04	Semi-natural deciduous woodland.

Locally important sites

Walnut Tree Field Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was designated by East Dorset District Council in 1996 and is situated in Back Lane at the edge of the village. The nature reserve has an unimproved grassland habitat present on site and provides views of the River Stour²⁹. The Walnut Tree is estimated to be almost 300 years old, and has been pollarded in order to encourage new growth and prolong the life of the tree. The LNR is also designated as a scheduled monument. During the construction of the trench and flood bank, many interesting archaeological finds were made, dating back to early Neolithic times. The site appears to have been of some importance throughout the course of history, with finds including Neolithic flint tools, late Saxon period pottery fragments, and a box of animal bones.

Priority habitats and species

Additionally, there are a number of priority habitats in the neighbourhood area shown in **Figure A2.2**, including:

- Deciduous woodland - small parcels of land at Almer, Lion Lodge and a large amount of land at Henbury Quarry and at Kindersley.
- Ancient woodland - including Great Coll Wood, Little Coll Wood, Little Almer Wood, Big Almer Wood, Westley Wood; and

²⁸ Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Group (2021): 'Neighbourhood Plan Screening Report'.

²⁹ Natural England (n.d.): 'Walnut Tree Field LNR' [online] available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1009265>

- Floodplain grazing marsh - particularly at the east part of the neighbourhood area.

Future baseline

Habitats and species will potentially face increasing pressures from future development within the neighbourhood area, with the potential for negative impacts on the wider ecological network. This may include a loss of habitats and impacts on biodiversity networks, which may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. This has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition of habitats.

Internationally and nationally designated sites are particularly sensitive to air quality issues and recreational pressures. Regarding air quality, exceeding critical values for air pollutants may result in changes to the chemical status of habitat substrate, accelerating or damaging plant growth, altering vegetation structure and composition and thereby affecting the quality and availability of nesting, feeding or roosting habitats. Additionally, the nature, scale, timing, and duration of some human activities can result in the disturbance of species at a level that may substantially affect their behaviour, and consequently affect the long-term viability of their populations.

The Neighbourhood Plan presents an opportunity to maximise benefits for biodiversity by including consideration of important habitats, species, and designated sites at an early stage of planning for future growth. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will be important to not only protect and enhance important habitats but the connections between them. It will be crucial to effectively coordinate the delivery of housing, employment, and infrastructure to ensure that opportunities to improve green infrastructure and ecological corridors are maximised within the neighbourhood area and in the surrounding areas.

Figure A2.1: Designated biodiversity sites

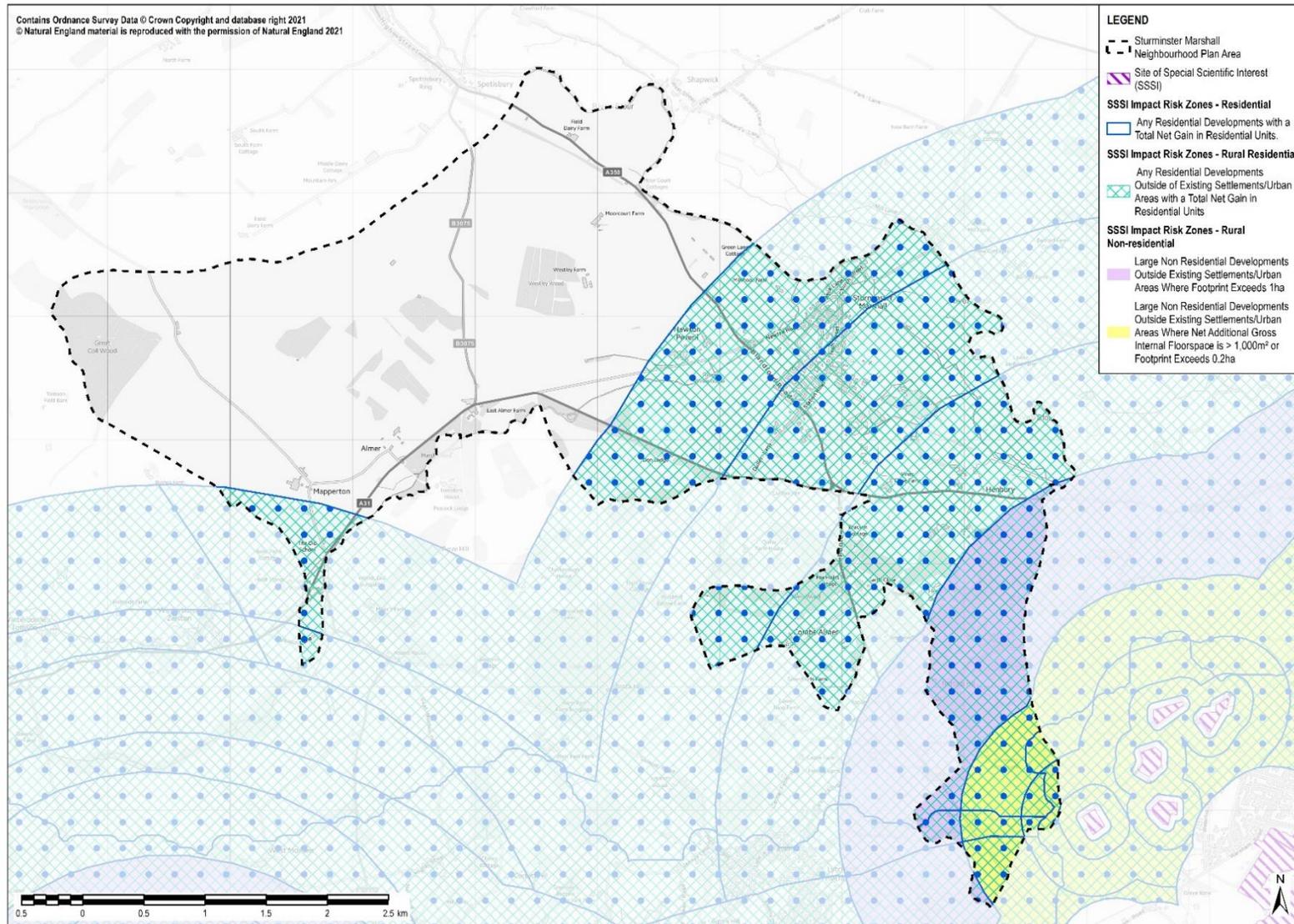
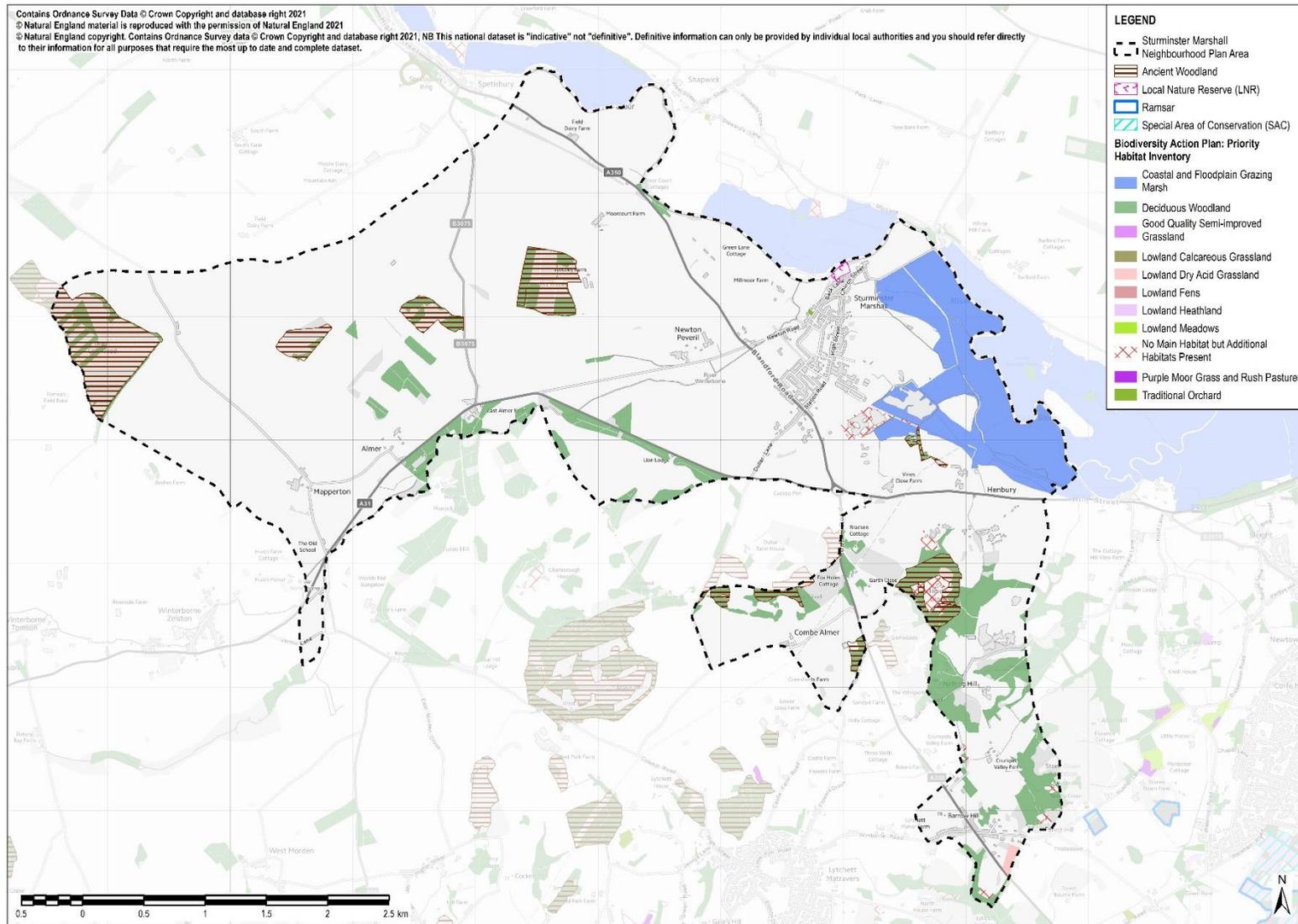


Figure A2.2: Locally designated sites and priority habitats



A.3 Climate change

Focus of theme

- Contribution to climate change.
- Effects of climate change.
- Climate change adaptation; and
- Flood risks.

Policy Context

Table A3.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A3.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to climate change

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
UK Climate Change Act	2008
UK (second) National Adaptation Programme 2018 to 2023	2018
The Clean Air Strategy	2019
Clean Growth Strategy	2019
UK Sixth Carbon Budget	2020
25-Year Environment Plan	2019
National Infrastructure Assessment	2018
UK Climate Change Risk Assessment	2017
Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Strategy	2020
Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The Neighbourhood Plan will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which requires proactive planning to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies are expected to improve the resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, avoid inappropriate development in the flood plain, and support the move to a low carbon economy. The NPPF recognises the potential for planning to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and deliver long-term resilience, including through reuse, regeneration, and conversion.
- Notably, access to a network of high-quality open spaces can deliver wider benefits for nature, supporting efforts to address climate change, while

improvements in green and other infrastructure can reduce the causes and impacts of flooding.

- Planning Practice Guidance presents the following list of ‘examples’ of ways local planning can support adaptation:
 - “Considering future climate risks when allocating development sites to ensure risks are understood over the development’s lifetime.
 - Considering the impact of and promoting design responses to flood risk for the lifetime of the development.
 - Considering availability of water and water infrastructure for the lifetime of the development and design responses to promote water efficiency and protect water quality.
 - Promoting adaptation approaches in design policies for developments and the public realm relevant.”
- The UK Climate Change Act requires Government to present to Parliament an assessment of the climate change risks for the UK every five years. Following the publication of each Change Risk Assessment, the Government must lay out its objectives, policies, and proposals to address the climate change risks and opportunities. The second National Adaptation Programme (NAP2, 2018-2023), setting out these objectives, policies, and proposals, was published in 2018. The ASC is required by the Act to assess the NAP and present progress reports. The most recent report was published in 2019, concluding that climate change adaptation needs to be addressed at a national scale and the Government’s response to date has not been successful³⁰. The Sixth Carbon Budget, required under the Climate Change Act, provides ministers with advice on the volume of greenhouse gases that the UK can emit during the period 2033 to 2037.
- The Clean Growth Strategy, Clean Air Strategy and the 25-year Environment Plan are a suite of documents which seek to progress the government’s commitment under the UK Climate Change Act to becoming net zero by 2050. The documents set out detailed proposals on how the government will tackle all sources of air pollution, whilst maintaining an affordable energy supply and increasing economic growth. This parallels with the 25-year Environment Plan, which further seeks to manage land resources sustainably, recover and reinstate nature, protect soils and habitats, increase resource efficiency, improve water quality, and connect people with the environment. The documents also interlink with the government’s commitment to decarbonising transport, a recognised challenge that needs more work in a timely manner if government are to achieve net zero targets. Furthermore, the decarbonisation plan recognises the twinned need to undertake action to adapt the transport sector and increase resilience to climate change risks; and this challenge is more directly addressed through the UK’s National Adaptation Programme.

³⁰ CCC (n.d.): ‘UK adaptation policy’ [online] available at: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-adaptation-policy/>

- The National Infrastructure Assessment identified the key national challenges, and the government is developing a National Infrastructure Strategy. The NIC also published two key reports in 2019:
- Strategic Investment and Public Confidence – this report is clear that *“the regulatory system has not adequately addressed societal interests: it needs to work more effectively to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, transition to full-fibre digital networks, and manage the increasing risks of floods and drought.” It calls for a much more coordinated approach, explaining that:*³¹ *“The current system leaves strategy primarily to infrastructure owners and providers. But they may not be best placed to assess the coming challenges, and they do not have the right incentives to build the right infrastructure to address them... There are some good examples of the system delivering strategic, long-term investment, however in general the system is not designed to deliver this... [R]egulators should demonstrate how they have taken consideration of the strategic vision of... local government...”*
- Resilience Study Scoping Report - includes a section on ‘Resilience in the planning system’, although the focus is on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) more so than local infrastructure.³²
- The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report aiming to understand the current and future climate risks and opportunities. The evidence report contains six priority risk areas requiring additional action between 2017 and 2022, see below:
 - Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses, and infrastructure.
 - Risks to health, well-being, and productivity from high temperatures.
 - Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry.
 - Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine, and freshwater ecosystems, soils, and biodiversity.
 - Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
 - New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants, and animals.
- The Flood and Water Management Act was introduced in 2010 as a response to the need to develop better resilience to climate change. The Act requires better management of flood risk, creating safeguards against rises in surface water drainage charges, and protecting water supplies for

³¹ NIC (n.d.): ‘Strategic Investment and public confidence’ [online] [nic.org.uk/publications/strategic-investment-and-public-confidence/](https://www.nic.org.uk/publications/strategic-investment-and-public-confidence/)

³² NIC (n.d.): ‘Strategic Investment and public confidence’ [online] [nic.org.uk/publications/resilience-study-scoping-report/](https://www.nic.org.uk/publications/resilience-study-scoping-report/)

consumers. Good flood and coastal risk management is further outlined through the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2020).

- The Committee of Climate Change's 2012 report entitled 'How Local Authorities Can Reduce Emissions and Manage Climate Change Risk' emphasises the crucial role councils have in helping the UK meet its carbon targets and preparing for the impacts of climate change. It outlines specific opportunities for reducing emissions and highlights good practice examples from Local Authorities.
- The National Design Guide (NDG) and the National Design Code address how the Government recognises "well-designed places" including opportunities for climate change measures. Notably the NDG defines what constitutes a well-designed place using ten characteristics under three themes of climate, character, and community. Under the climate theme, homes and buildings should be functional, healthy, and sustainable, resources should be efficient and resilient, and buildings should be made to last.
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy released a framework for heat networks which includes proposals to increase access to renewable heat sources and achieve a net zero target by 2050.
- The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2017) sets several priorities for the next five years in line with the Climate Change Act, in order to mitigate and adapt to rising temperatures from greenhouse gas emissions.
- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.

Baseline Summary

Current baseline

Contribution to climate change

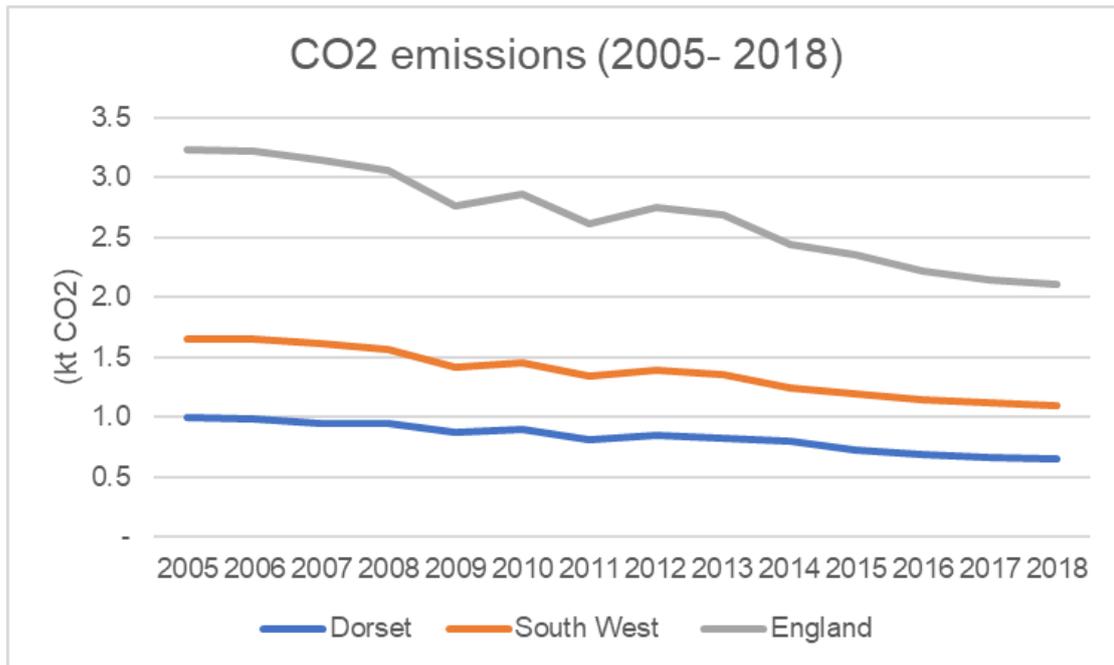
Dorset Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019, which was updated to a climate and ecological emergency in November 2019. Subsequently, Dorset Council released a climate and ecological strategy³³.

Carbon dioxide emissions shown in **Figure A3.1** indicate that carbon dioxide emissions in Dorset are lower per km² in comparison to figures for the South West and England as a whole. Additionally, over the period of 2014- 2018, carbon dioxide emissions decreased by 19.3% in Dorset, higher than emissions decreases for the South West (11.8%) and England as a whole (12.3%)³⁴.

³³ Dorset Council (2020): 'Climate & ecological emergency' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/281288/Climate+and+ecological+emergency+strategy.pdf/ceaa97d4-ae8-e8a3-6dd0-c30ca64a0f36>

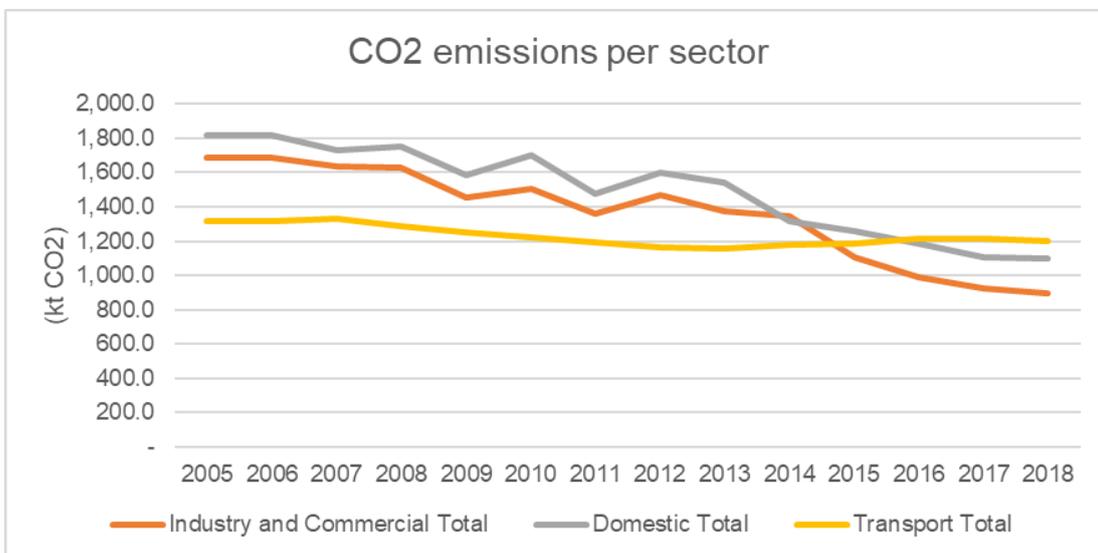
³⁴ Department of Energy and Climate Change (2011) 2005 to 2018 UK local and regional CO2 emissions: Per capital local CO2 emissions estimates; industry, domestic, and transport sectors [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018>

Figure A3.1 CO₂ emissions (2005 - 2018)



As shown in **Figure A3.2**, the largest contributing sector with regards to CO₂ emissions was the domestic sector, up until 2013. After this period, emissions from the transportation sector increased, now contribute the highest amount out of all three sectors.

Figure A3.2 CO₂ emissions by sector



The uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) will contribute positively towards the reduction of road transport related emissions. In line with assumptions made by the Department for Transport’s ‘Road to Zero’ report (2018), it is assumed that ULEV uptake will increase rapidly in the coming decade and therefore aside from HGVs, all vehicles could be ultra-low emission (powered either by hydrogen or electricity) by 2030.

Electric vehicles (EVs) do not burn fuel and create almost no noise. They are battery powered and have the potential to be ‘zero-emission vehicles’ (ZEVs) if powered by

renewable electricity. As of August 2021, there are two EV charging points in the main settlement, shown in **Figure A3.3** below, at Railway Drive and Townsend. However, it is understood that these are privately owned charging points.

Figure A3.3 EVs in Sturminster Marshall³⁵



The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy publishes annual statistics on renewable energy generation, disaggregated by Local Authority. In 2019, photo-voltaic (solar panel generation) had the highest renewable energy installed capacity in Dorset: 95.6% of total installed capacity.

Climate change adaptation

Research on the probable effects of climate change in the UK was released in 2018 by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP18) team. UKCP18 gives climate information for the UK up to the end of this century and projections of future changes to the climate are provided, based on simulations from climate models. Projections are broken down to a regional level across the UK and are shown in probabilistic form, which illustrate the potential range of changes and level of confidence in each prediction.

As highlighted by the research, the effects of climate change (under medium emissions scenarios 50th percentile and RCP6) for the South West during the period 2020-2039 compared to the period 1981-2000 are likely to be as follows:

- A central estimate of increase in annual mean temperatures of between 0°C and 1°C; and
- A central estimate of change in mean precipitation of 0 to +10% in winter and 0 to -10% in summer.

During the period 2040-2059 this is estimated further as:

- A central estimate of increase in annual mean temperatures of between 1°C and 2°C; and

³⁵ Zapmap (2020) Zap Map [online] available at: <https://www.zap-map.com/live/>

- A central estimate of change in annual mean precipitation of 0 to +20% in winter and -10% to -20% in summer.

Due to these changes, a range of risks may exist for the neighbourhood area, including:

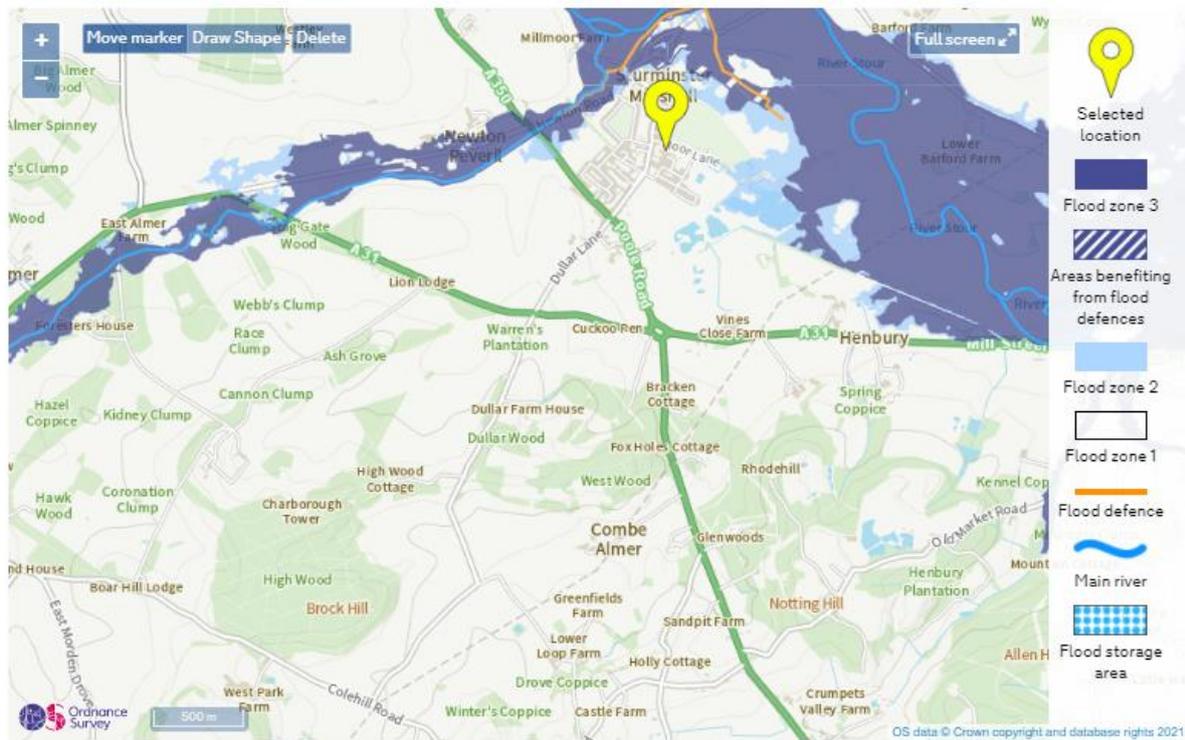
- Increased incidence of heat related illnesses and deaths during the summer.
- Increased incidence of illnesses and deaths related to exposure to sunlight (e.g. skin cancer, cataracts).
- Increased risk of injuries and deaths due to increased number of storm events.
- Effects on water resources from climate change.
- Reduction in availability of groundwater for abstraction.
- Adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain.
- Increased risk of flooding, including increased vulnerability to 1:100-year floods.
- A need to increase the capacity of wastewater treatment plants and sewers.
- A need to upgrade flood defences.
- Soil erosion due to flash flooding.
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their southerly distribution.
- Spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution.
- Increased drought and flood related problems such as soil shrinkages and subsidence.
- Risk of road surfaces melting more frequently due to increased temperature; and
- Flooding of roads³⁶.

Flood risks

As shown in **Figure A3.4** overleaf, fluvial flood risk in the neighbourhood area is highest at the land adjacent to the River Winterborne and River Stour, in the west and north east part of the neighbourhood area. This includes a significant area of land to the north and north east of Sturminster Marshall village. However, the settlement of Sturminster Marshall itself generally experiences low fluvial flood risk.

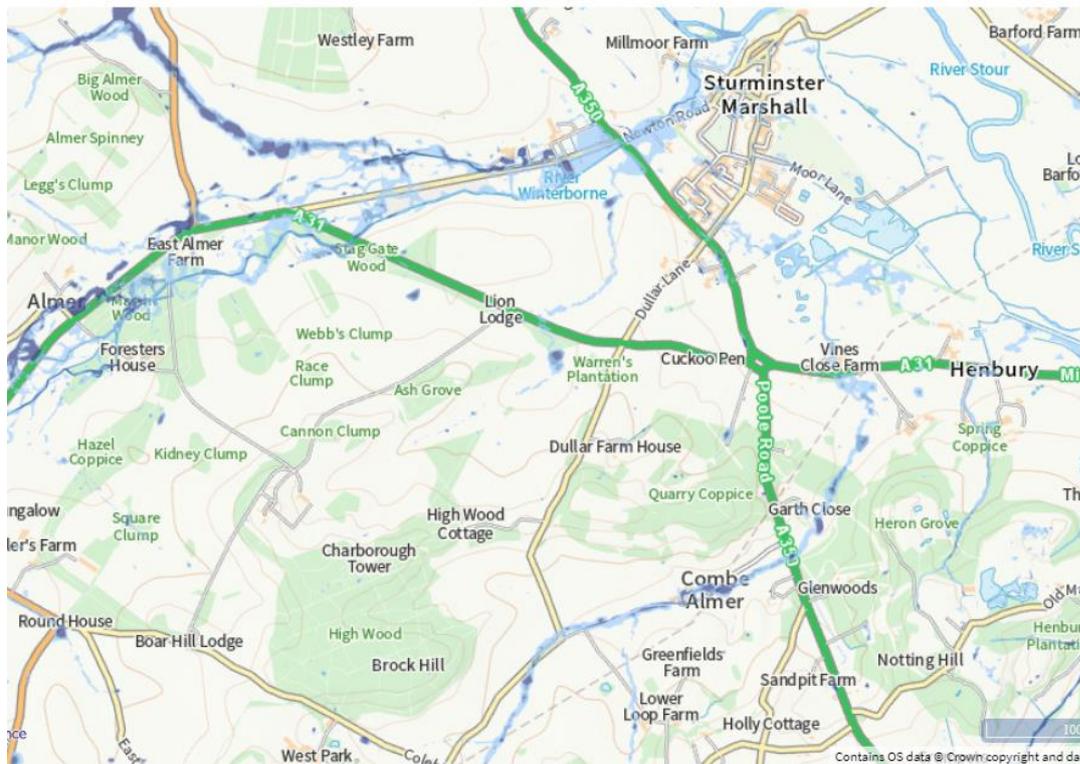
³⁶ Gov UK (2020): 'Flood Map for Planning' [online] available at: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

Figure A3.4 Fluvial flood risk³⁷



With regards to surface water flood risk, there are areas of high risk situated outside the main settlement, at Newton Road. However, there are some smaller areas at Railway Drive which have higher surface water risk (greater than 3.3%). This is shown below in **Figure A3.5**.

Figure A3.5 Surface water flood risk³⁸



³⁷ Gov UK (2021): 'Flood Map for planning' [online] available at: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

³⁸ Gov UK (2021): 'Long term flood map for planning' [online] available at: <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk/map>

Surface water flooding is also relatively extensive within Sturminster Marshall village. It occurs along the “Straight Mile” between Newton Peveril and Stag Gate, in Church Street, Back Lane, King Street and Mill Lane. In the last of these, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group note that it has led to closure of the road, cutting off access from across White Mill Bridge. After periods of heavy rain, flooding also occurs in High Street near the school and at the entrance to Jubilee Way. There was an occurrence of flooding in Railway Drive some years ago, as a result of a blocked drain.

Future baseline

In line with UK trends and national commitments, emissions are likely to continue to fall as energy efficiency measures, renewable energy take-up and new technologies, such as EVs and solar PV, become more widely adopted. Notably, the Government has consulted on changes to England’s Building Regulations introducing a ‘Future Homes Standard’ and the Department for Transport recently published ‘Decarbonising Transport; setting the challenge’ a first step towards publishing a full transport decarbonisation plan.

In the future, new development could have the potential to increase flood risk through factors such as changing surface and ground water flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing and future flood risk. It is further recognised that climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events. This has the potential to put existing properties and new development areas at increased risk of flood exposure. However, in line with the NPPF (2019) sequential testing is likely to ensure that development within areas at highest risk of flooding is largely avoided, and development is likely to deliver mitigation such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

A.4 Historic environment

Focus of theme

- Designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- Setting, special qualities, and significance of heritage assets.
- Locally important heritage features; and
- Historic character of the neighbourhood area.

Policy Context

Table A4.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A4.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to the historic environment

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
The 25 Year Environment Plan	2018
The National Design Guide	2019
National Model Design Code	2021
Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management	2019
Historic England Advice Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets	2017
Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	2016
Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The key high-level principles for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are as follows:
 - The historic environment is a shared resource.
 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.
 - Understanding the significance of places is vital.
 - Significant places should be managed to sustain their values.
 - Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent; and
 - Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.³⁹

³⁹ Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance

- The significance of places is the key element which underpins the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Significance is a collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, be it a building, an archaeological site, or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape.
- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which ultimately seeks to conserve and enhance historic environment assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. The NPPF seeks planning policies and decisions which are sympathetic to local character and history without preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation of change. The NPPF supports the use of area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.
- As set out in the NPPF, it should be ensured that the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. Design Codes can set out a necessary level of detail in sensitive locations, for example, with heritage considerations, and they can set out specific ways to maintain local character.
- Planning Practice Guidance expands on the NPPF recognising the proactive rather than passive nature of conservation.
- The role of the historic environment, as part of healthy and thriving ecosystems, landscapes, and cultural values, including settlement identity, is reiterated through the key messages of the 25 Year Environment Plan and National Design Guide.
- Historic England's Advice Notes provide further guidance in relation to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Of relevance for the SMNP is the emphasis on the importance of:
 - Understanding the different types of special architectural and historic interest which underpin designations, as well as how settings and/ or views contribute to the significance of heritage assets.
 - Recognising the value of implementing controls through neighbourhood plans, conservation area appraisals and management plans; and
 - Appropriate evidence gathering, including clearly identifying those issues that threaten an area or assets character or appearance and that merit the introduction of management measures.
- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.
- In addition to conserving the historic environment, the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan should seek to identify opportunities to enhance the fabric and setting of the historic environment. It should also seek to rejuvenate features and areas which are at risk of neglect and decay.

Baseline Summary

Current baseline

Historic character of Sturminster Marshall

The village of Sturminster Marshall has many marks of an ancient village, including thatched cottages, but also contains more modern buildings such as an industrial estate. The name 'Sturminster' refers to minster (i.e. church) on the River Stour.

One of the most notable buildings in the area is the Church of St Mary, which stands on the site of earlier Saxon buildings. The village itself used to include the villages of Hamworthy, Lytchett Minster and Corfe Mullen. The 'Marshall' of the village name was William Marshall (1146-1219), the first Earl of Pembroke, who was one of the witnesses to Magna Carta. In present times, land surrounding the settlement is gently rolling, and land use is predominantly agricultural, under both pasture and arable cultivation.⁴⁰

Designated heritage assets and areas

There are 28 listed buildings in the neighbourhood area, including two Grade I listed buildings, three Grade II* listed buildings and twenty-three Grade II listed buildings. Grade I and Grade II* buildings are listed below:

- Grade I
 - **White Mill Bridge** – 16th century bridge situated across the River Stour, composed of Ironstone and Limestone.⁴¹
 - **Church of St Mary Almer** – The Church of St Mary, with 12th century features such as a nave and north arcade, and 14th century rebuilding of the north aisle.⁴²
- Grade II*
 - **Henbury House** – a Country mansion, linked to a stable block which will be converted into residential units. The mansion is dated from the early 18th and mid-19th centuries.⁴³
 - **Almer Manor** – a Farmhouse dated back to the 16th century, with early 17th century extensions and 20th century alterations. The Manor contains walls of flint and limestone bands, with some ironstone rubble.⁴⁴
 - **The Church of St Mary** – A 12th century church, with 13th century features from an extension, and 14th and 15th century changes. The tower was rebuilt in the 19th century.⁴⁵
 - **Charborough Park** – An early 19th century park, gardens, and pleasure grounds developed from an 18th century deer park and mid-17th century formal gardens, elements of which survive today. The area

⁴⁰ DorsetLife (n.d.): 'Sturminster Marshall' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetlife.co.uk/2009/04/sturminster-marshall/>

⁴¹ Historic England (n.d.): 'White Mill Bridge' [online] available at: <https://HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1120035>

⁴² Historic England (n.d.): 'Church of St Almer' [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1154550>

⁴³ Historic England (n.d.): 'Henbury House' [online] available at: <https://HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1120055>

⁴⁴ Historic England (n.d.): 'Almer Manor' [online] available at: <https://HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1120056>

⁴⁵ Historic England (n.d.): 'Church of St Mary' [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1154649>

is a designated Registered Park and Garden, partly overlapping with the southern section of the neighbourhood area.

There are two scheduled monuments within the neighbourhood area, detailed below.

- ‘A shrunken medieval village and earlier prehistoric settlement remains at Walnut Tree Field’ is situated next to the River Stour in the north east of the neighbourhood area. The monument includes the remains of a shrunken medieval village surviving as a complex of extant earthworks, with prehistoric settlement remains surviving as buried features, set in a field adjacent to the River Stour.⁴⁶
- ‘Medieval standing cross 15m south west of St Mary's Church’ includes the remains of a stone cross of probable 14th century date, situated in the north east of the neighbourhood area.⁴⁷

There are three Conservation Areas in Sturminster Marshall, which have each been appraised, shown in **Figure A4.1** and detailed below:

- **Sturminster Marshall Conservation Area** - designated in 1987 by East Dorset Council, identifies the parts of Sturminster Marshall which are considered to have particular historic character. The area contains a high proportion of older buildings, including the northern part of the village which includes the village greens and the Church, together with parts of Kings Street as far south as Stour Lodge and Cottmans. Much of the boundary of the Conservation Area adjoins the open countryside of the Stour valley. There are three phases of building which can be identified within the Sturminster Conservation Area: 17th century cottages (mostly thatched), Victorian brick and slate villas and post war housing, mostly built since the 1960s.⁴⁸
- **Almer Conservation Area** - located in the western section of the neighbourhood area, the area was designated in 1990 due to the architectural importance of the Church of St Mary and Manor. The hamlet is situated on flat land, surrounded by low hills and woods. There are long distance views to the south towards West Morden and to the north-east, resting on Westley Wood.⁴⁹
- **Mapperton Conservation Area** - located in the western section of the neighbourhood area, the area was designated in 1992. The area is approached either directly from the A31 from the south, or indirectly via Almer, from the north-east. The southern approach climbs a low hill before descending to the village. The Conservation Area includes the important trees which lie on the two approaches to the village and those on the hillside to the south-west, which form part of the backdrop to the village.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Historic England (n.d.): ‘Shrunken medieval village’ [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008750>

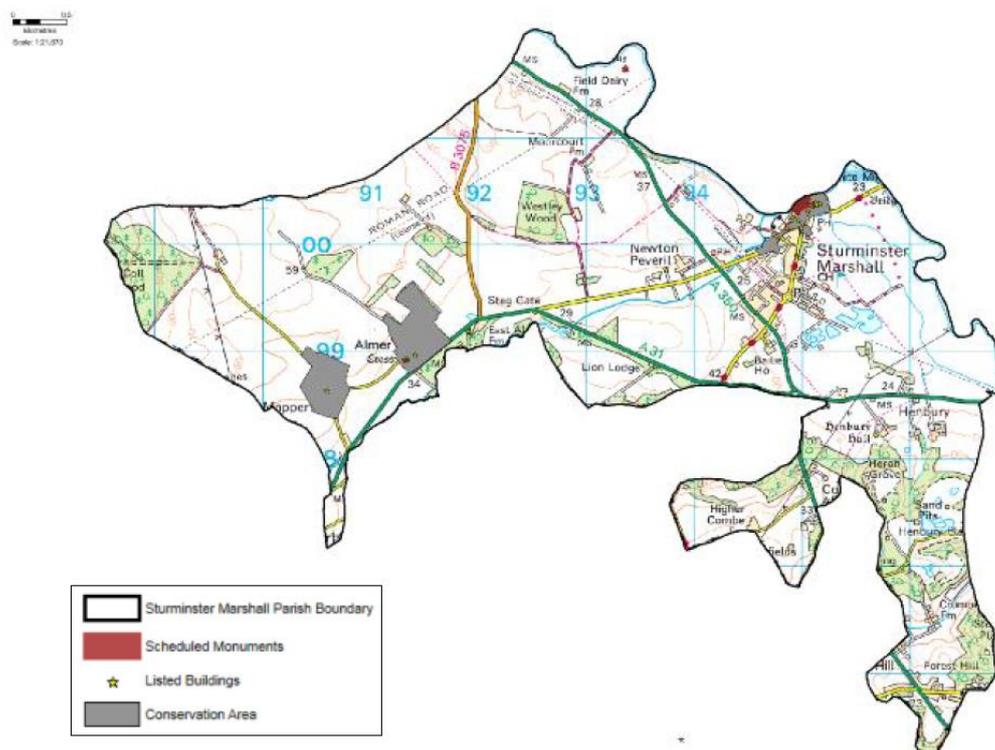
⁴⁷ Historic England (n.d.): ‘Medieval standing’ [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1014755>

⁴⁸ Dorset Council (n.d.): ‘Sturminster Marshall Conservation Area’ [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/287469/SPG13+Sturminster+Marshall+Conservation+Area.pdf/737b606c-7664-39eb-c825-054cdf2ab90b>

⁴⁹ Dorset Council (n.d.): ‘Almer Conservation Area’ [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/287469/SPG01+Almer+Conservation+Area.pdf/bbef902e-1364-31e7-d2a1-63c237e38b52>

⁵⁰ Dorset Council (n.d.): ‘Mapperton Conservation Area’ [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/287469/SPG08+Mapperton+Conservation+Area.pdf/88c7d279-69ab-1933-a313-11fc84d659e7>

Figure A4.1 Conservation areas in Sturminster Marshall



The Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER) lists 28 records within the village, including historic field boundaries, churches, undated ditched and medieval archaeology such as flint. These assets provide an important element to the historic interest of a neighbourhood area and should be preserved where possible.⁵¹

Heritage at risk

Since 2008, Historic England has released an annual Heritage at Risk Register. The Heritage at Risk Register highlights the Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings, scheduled monuments, historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields, wreck sites and conservation areas deemed to be ‘at risk’.⁵² As of August 2021, the Heritage at Risk Register does not identify any designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area.

Future baseline

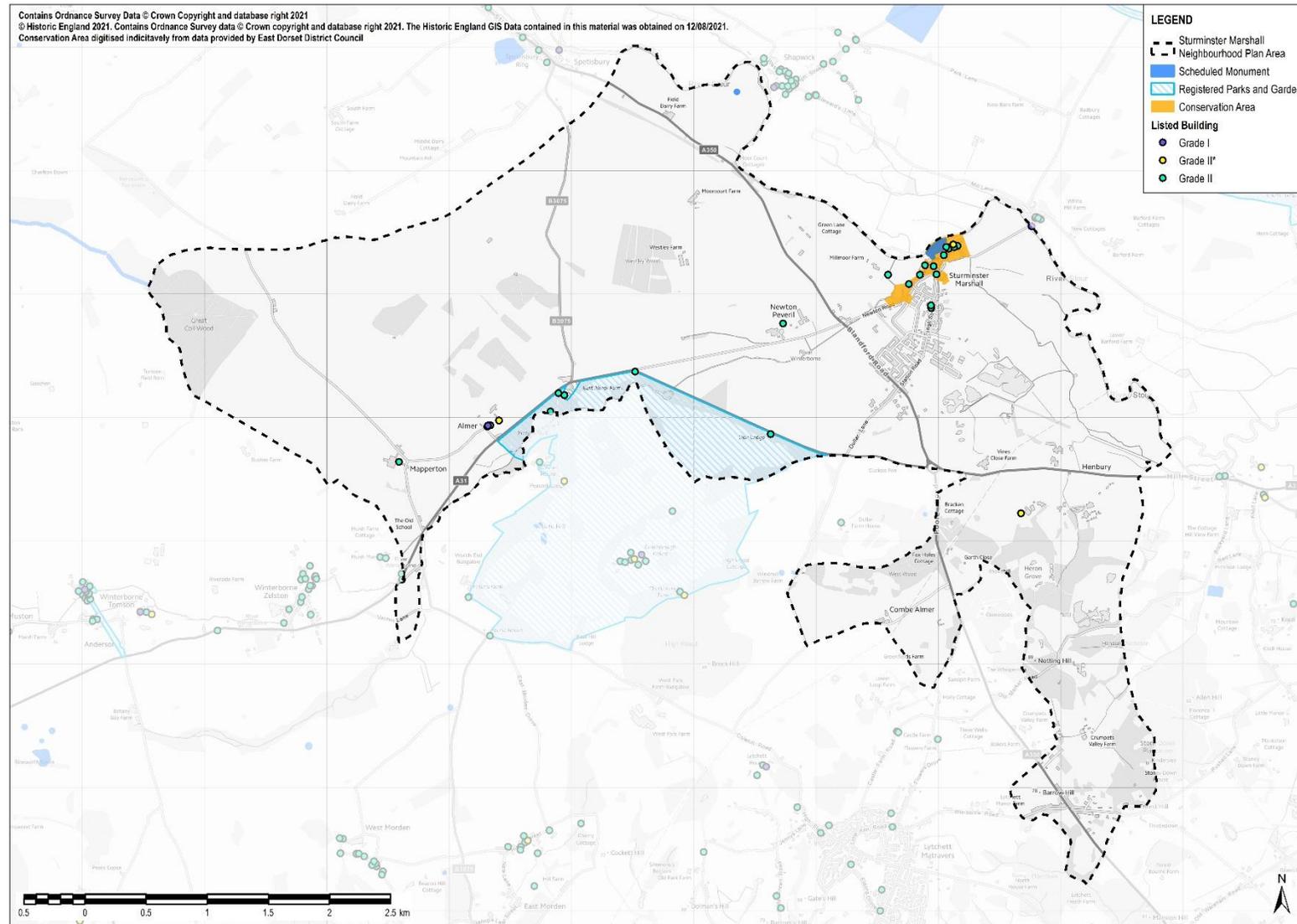
New development areas in the neighbourhood area have the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets; for example, through inappropriate design and layout, and increasing the impacts of traffic within conservation areas. It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations offer a degree of protection to heritage assets and their settings.

Alongside, new development need not be harmful to the significance of a heritage asset, and in the context of the neighbourhood area there may be opportunity for new development to enhance the historic setting of the parish’s settlements, support historic landscape character and better reveal assets’ heritage significance.

⁵¹ Historic England (2020): ‘Dorset HER search results’ [online] available at: https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Application.aspx?resourceID=1012&index=16

⁵² Historic England (2018): ‘Heritage at Risk Register’ [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>

Figure A4.2 Designated heritage assets



A.5 Health and wellbeing

Focus of theme

- Health indicators and deprivation; and
- Influences on health and wellbeing

Policy Context

Table A5.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A5.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to health and wellbeing

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
National Planning Practice Guidance – Healthy and Safe Communities	2019
The 25 Year Environment Plan	2018
Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On	2020
Planning for Sport Guidance	2019
Active Dorset: Sport & Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment	2017
Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which seeks to enable and support healthy lifestyles through provision of appropriate infrastructure, services and facilities, including; green infrastructure, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling. The NPPF recognises the role of development plans in helping to deliver access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity which contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities. The health benefits of access to nature, green spaces and green infrastructure is further reiterated through the 25-year Environment Plan.
- The 2020 Health Equity in England report identifies that the health gap between less and more deprived areas has grown in the last decade, where more people can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health, and where improvements to life expectancy have stalled or declined.
- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.
- District Leisure and Open Space Strategies plan for a network of high-quality, accessible, and affordable community sporting and recreation facilities to meet resident needs. It recognises the role that leisure opportunities play in contributing to a wider range of health determinants.

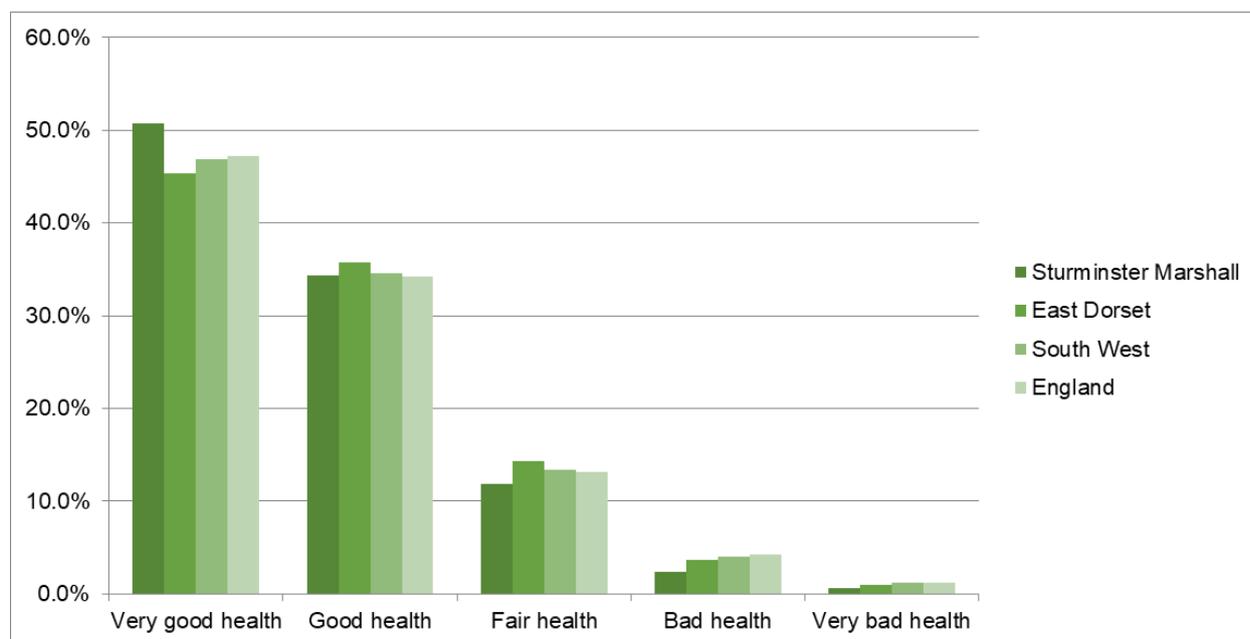
Baseline Summary

Current baseline

General health

As shown in **Figure A5.1**, the majority of residents in the neighbourhood area have very good or good health (48.8%), higher in comparison to East Dorset (31.3%), the South West (27.6%) and England as a whole (28.4%).

Figure A5.1 General health



Green infrastructure networks

The South East Dorset Green Infrastructure Report indicated that there is a deficit of local green spaces in Sturminster Marshall village.⁵³ Further, the Local Green Spaces Report for Sturminster Marshall⁵⁴ identifies a number of green spaces, listed below:

- Bartons Ground.
- Charborough Green.
- Churchill Close.
- Market Place (Maypole Green).
- Stocks Green.
- Timber Green.
- Trafalgar Green.
- The Old Railway Lane; and

⁵³ South East Dorset Green Infrastructure Steering Group (2010): 'South East Dorset Green Infrastructure' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/306647/Evidence+and+Opportunities+Study.pdf/907bbb78-9e15-bec5-c0cf-1e6b9f30dcd7>

⁵⁴ East Dorset District Council (2007): 'Open Space Study' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/285921/EDDC+Sturminster+Marshall+LNA.pdf/5de5c840-9aec-2e93-0cdf-50c7f1fdd72b>

- Walnut Tree Field.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

The Dorset JSNA⁵⁵ details how East Dorset performs against specific health indicators, in comparison to other 'localities' in Dorset (defined as groupings of middle super output areas (MSOAs)), during childhood and adolescence, adulthood and senior years, presented below:

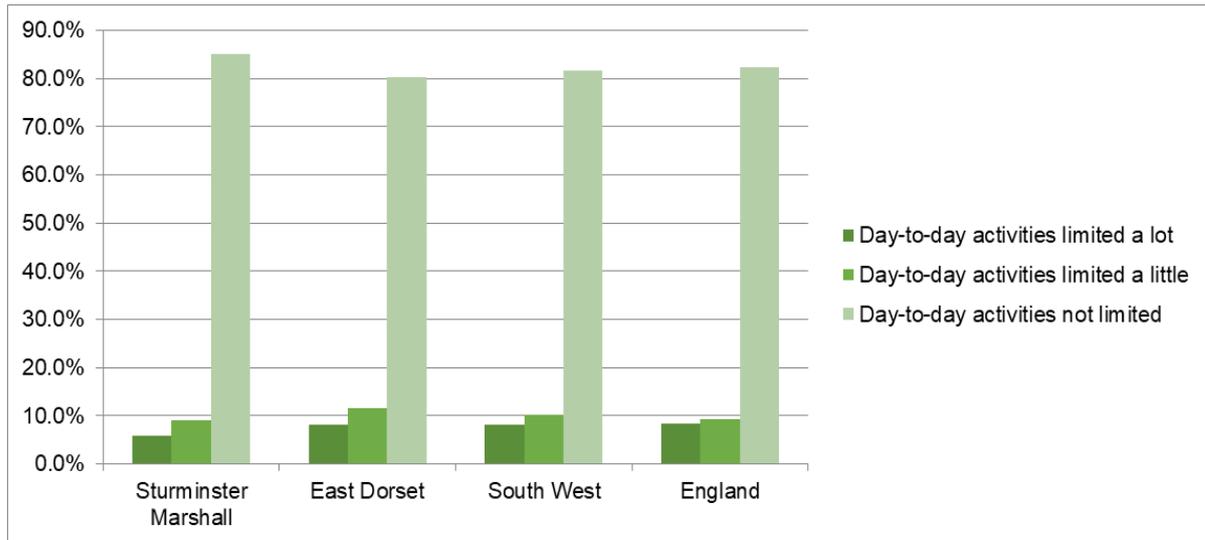
- East Dorset has the 4th highest percentage of births that are of low weight across the 13 Dorset localities.
- The rate of admissions for injuries in under 5s varies considerably across the 11 areas within East Dorset.
- East Dorset has the 3rd lowest rate of hospital admissions for under 15s in the Dorset localities.
- Modelled estimates of obese adults, healthy eating and binge drinking in adults all suggest that the areas within East Dorset are all similar to England as a whole.
- East Dorset has a significantly better (lower) score for older people in deprivation than England.
- East Dorset has (significantly) similar to England levels of expected new cancer cases and the joint 2nd lowest of the 13 Dorset Localities.
- In the East Dorset locality the prevalence of diabetes has increased in line with national trends.

Indicators of health and wellbeing

As shown in **Figure A5.2** overleaf, the majority of residents in the neighbourhood area with long term health conditions are not limited in their day-to-day activities (85.1%), higher than comparative figures for East Dorset (80.3%) and England as a whole (82.4%).

⁵⁵ Public Health Dorset (2020): 'East Dorset locality profile 2020 template' [online] available at: <https://www.publichealthdorset.org.uk/intelligence/localities/2020-locality-profiles/2020-01-20-draft-east-dorset-narrative-based-on-template-v9.pdf>

Figure A5.2 Long-term health category



Health services

There are no GPs within Sturminster Marshall, with the closest GP surgeries located in Corfe Mullen and Wimborne Minster, though some residents do use Blandford GPs or those in Bere Regis. Those on Wimborne Road (Jubilee Cross) use Lytchett Matravers. There is a pharmacy within the village which has a small consulting room.

Future baseline

In light of the low medical provision within the neighbourhood area, the accessibility of development to suitable services will be particularly important in terms of supporting resident health and wellbeing. The importance of local services and facilities, and access to open green spaces and recreational areas has been further highlighted through the ongoing pandemic. These factors are more likely to be appropriately considered and addressed through planned development rather than unplanned development.

A.6 Land, soil, and water resources

Focus of theme

- Quality of agricultural land.
- Water resources and water quality; and
- Mineral safeguarding areas.

Policy Context

Table A6.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A6.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to land, soil, and water resources

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
The 25 Year Environment Plan	2018
Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England	2009
Future Water: The government's water strategy for England	2011
Water for Life	2011
The National Waste Management Plan	2013
Wessex Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP)	2019
Dorset Council Minerals Strategy	2014
Dorset Council Waste Plan	2019
Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which seeks to protect high quality soil resources, and improve the water environment; recognising the wider benefits of natural capital and derived from ecosystem services. Furthermore, the NPPF recognises the need to take account of the long-term implications of climate change and build resilience in this respect. The NPPF encourages efficient land use, utilising brownfield land opportunities and land remediation schemes where appropriate and delivering environmental gains.
- The 25-year Environment Plan presents a focus for environmental improvement in the next couple decades, with aims to achieve clean air, clean and plentiful water, and reduced risk from environmental hazards. This includes measures to improve soil quality, restore and protect peatlands, use water more sustainably, reduce pollution, maximise resource efficiency and minimise environmental impacts. This leads on from and supports the soil strategy for England (Safeguarding our soils) which seeks to ensure that all England's soils will be managed sustainably

and degradation threats tackled successfully by 2030, as well as the national water strategies which seek to secure sustainable and resilient water resources and improve the quality of waterbodies, and the national waste plan which seeks to identify measures being taken to move towards a zero waste economy.

- Wessex Water's WRMP further highlights the acute stresses that the catchment faces in the coming years and the challenges faced by the WRZ for Sturminster Marshall, in terms of securing water resources into the future in one of the driest regions in England. The Plan outlines how Wessex Water aim to confront and manage these issues to ensure the timely provision of clean water to all residents in the period up to 2045.
- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the Dorset Minerals Strategy and Waste Plan, form part of the Local Development Frameworks for the County. These plans identify and safeguard sites and resources important to the continued sustainable management of mineral extractions and waste arisings.
- Furthermore, the SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.

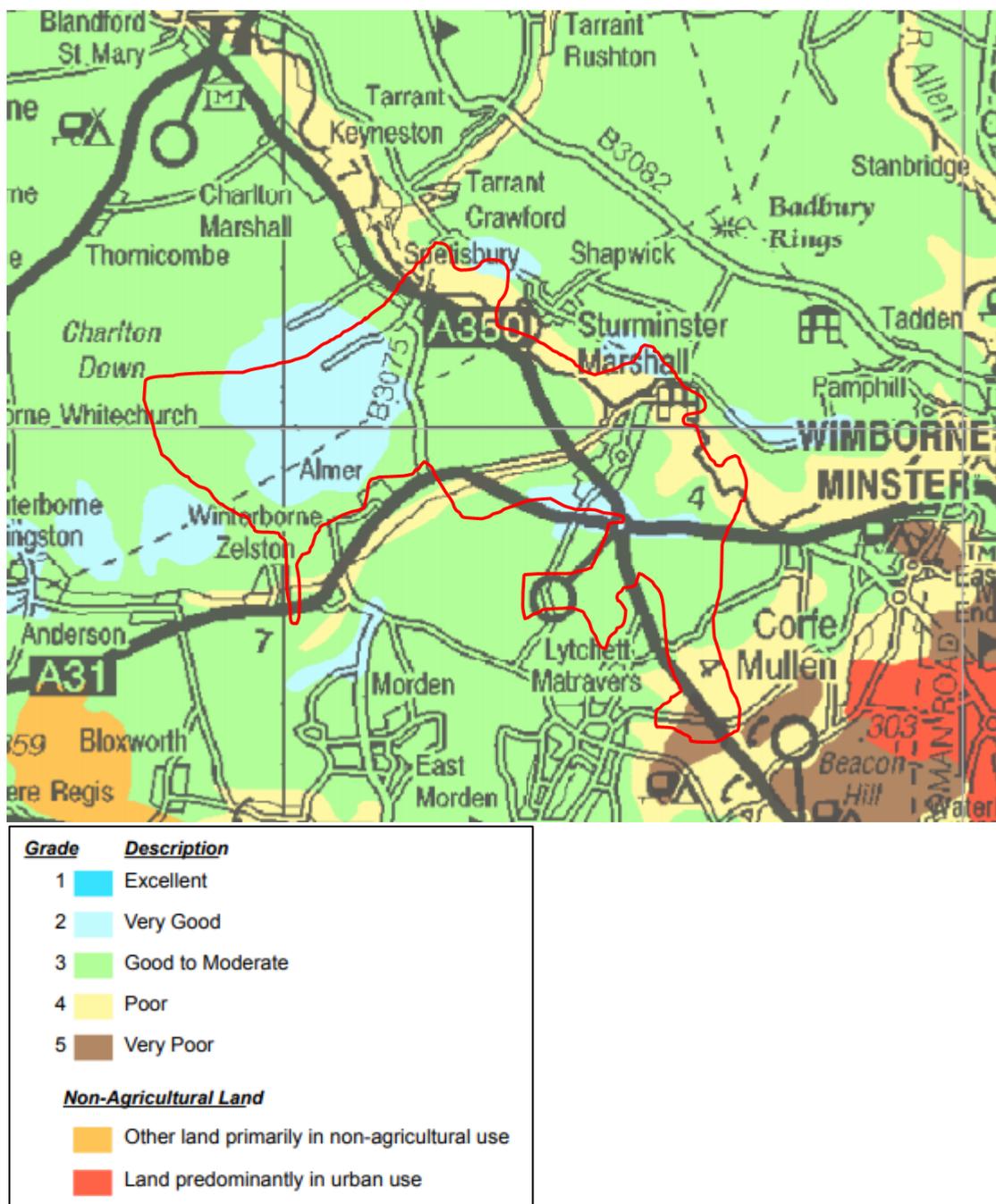
Baseline Summary

Current baseline

Soil resources

As shown in **Figure A6.1** overleaf, there are some isolated areas of the neighbourhood area which are underlain by 'very good' agricultural land (Grade 2), however these are outside of the village boundary. Most of the land surrounding Sturminster Marshall village is underlain by Grade 3 (Good to Moderate) agricultural land, though an assessment has not been undertaken to identify whether these are 3a (i.e. best and most versatile land) or 3b quality (not best and most versatile).

Figure A6.1 Agricultural Land Classification (ALC)⁵⁶



Water resources and quality

In terms of water quality, the neighbourhood area falls within the Dorset Management Catchment and Stour Dorset Operational Catchment. The two main water bodies in the neighbourhood area are the Middle downstream Pimpere Brook, a section of the River Stour, which forms the eastern boundary of the neighbourhood area, and the North Winterborne, which runs through the north west part of the neighbourhood area.

The ecological quality of the Pimpere Brook is poor, and the chemical quality of the Brook failed to meet the required standards of the Environment Agency's 2019

⁵⁶ Natural England (2011): 'ALC – South West' [online] available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/144017?category=5954148537204736>

classification cycle.⁵⁷ Reasons for not achieving good status and deterioration include poor nutrient management and sewage discharge (continuous).

The ecological quality of the North Winterborne is poor, and the chemical quality of the river failed to meet the required standards of the Environment Agency's 2019 classification cycle. Reasons for not achieving good status and deterioration include flood protection management, drought, and groundwater abstraction.⁵⁸

As mentioned within the latest available Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs), Water Resource Zones (WRZs) are the largest possible zone in which all resources, including external transfers, can be shared and hence the zone in which all customers experience the same risk of supply failure from a resource failure. Wessex Water has a single WRZ, serving a population of 1.3 million customers in the South West of England. The main centres of demand are in Poole, Bath, Yeovil, Taunton, Bridgwater, Salisbury, Dorchester, Chippenham and Salisbury.⁵⁹ The Wessex WRMP notes the following key strategic risks in the WRZ:

- Moderate impact on the water system from more severe droughts in the Wessex Water region.
- Concerns regarding forthcoming potential sustainability reductions and capping of license limits.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) denote areas at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution and the whole of the neighbourhood area is identified as an NVZ.⁶⁰ NVZs identify rules in relation to the use of fertilisers and manures as well as a requirement to prevent water pollution from farm areas. The entirety of the neighbourhood area falls within the North Winterborne surface water NVZ.⁶¹

Furthermore, the entirety of the neighbourhood area lies within a Drinking Water (Surface Water) Safeguard Zone (Lower River Stour), which contains Pesticide Metaldehyde. These are areas identified as at risk of failing national drinking water protection objectives. Whilst non-statutory designations, action is taken within these areas to address water contamination; with the aim of avoiding extra treatment by water companies.

Mineral resources

With regards to mineral resources, the eastern part of the neighbourhood area falls within an aggregates mineral resource block for sand and gravel, shown in **Figure A6.2** overleaf. This includes land surrounding Sturminster Marshall village (i.e. the most likely location for new development areas within the neighbourhood area). In this respect, consultation with Dorset Council is likely to be required to determine whether there are likely to be any significant impacts to mineral resources within the SMNP associated with new development proposals.

⁵⁷ Environment Agency (2019): 'Stour (Middle d/s Pimperne Brook' [online] available at: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB108043016052>

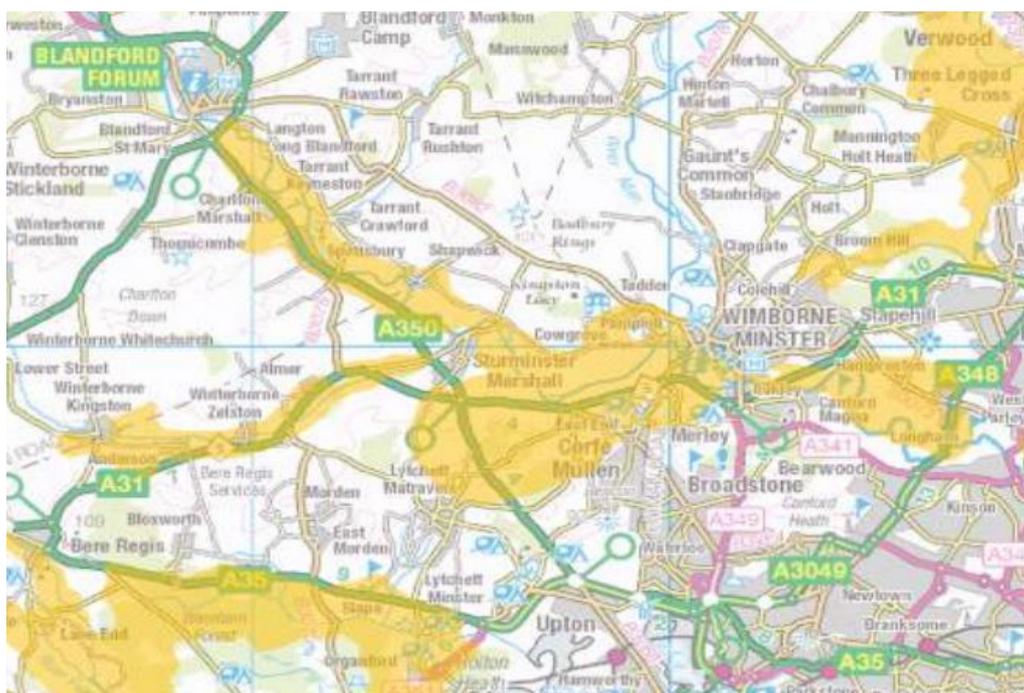
⁵⁸ Environment Agency (2019): 'North Winterborne' [online] available at: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB108043015990>

⁵⁹ Wessex Water (2019): 'Wessex water supply area' [online] available at: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/environment/water-resources/management-plan>

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Environment Agency (2017): 'NVZ designation- North Winterborne NVZ' [online] available at: http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/nvz/NVZ2017_S688_Datasheet.pdf

Figure A6.2 Sand and gravel resource zones⁶²



Future baseline

Future development has the potential to affect water resources and quality through increased consumption, diffuse pollution, waste-water discharges, water run-off, and modification. It is considered that Wessex Water will seek to address any water supply and wastewater management issues over the plan period in line with the WRMP 2019; and the requirements of the Water Framework Directive are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality within the neighbourhood area and wider area. However, it will be important for new development to avoid impacts on water quality and to contribute to reducing consumption and improving efficiency.

Given the presence of best and most versatile land within parts of the neighbourhood area, new development areas have the potential to result in the permanent loss of productive agricultural land. In this respect, the Neighbourhood Plan should (where possible) seek to retain greenfield land and make best use of brownfield sites for development.

It is considered unlikely that the small-scale development likely to come through the Neighbourhood Plan will have a significant impact on the wider area's Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designation given the strategic scale of the overall NVZs. Additionally, a large source of detriment to NVZ comes from agricultural use, which is not anticipated to be brought forward through the SMNP.

⁶² Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole County Council (2014): 'Minerals Strategy' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/283152/minerals-strategy-2014-chapters-1-8-compressed.pdf/9022e767-ff8a-d94b-14de-9c3a5279f961>

A.7 Landscape

Focus of theme

- Nationally protected landscapes.
- Landscape and villagescape character and quality; and
- Visual amenity.

Policy Context

Table A7.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Figure A7.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to landscape

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
The 25 Year Environment Plan	2018
The National Design Guide	2019
National Model Design Code	2021
Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing protected landscapes, as well as landscape character and scenic beauty. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.
- The NPPF recognises the role of green infrastructure in landscape settings, as well as the importance of designated biodiversity sites, habitats, woodland, historic features, agricultural land, and cultural landscapes. The positive contribution that land remediation can make in terms of addressing despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land is also recognised.
- The 25-year Environment Plan and National Design Guide complement each other with their aims for a cleaner, greener country which puts the environment first and celebrates the variety of natural landscapes and habitats. Design is focused on beautiful, enduring, and successful places, which respond to local character and provide a network of high quality green open spaces.
- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.

Baseline Summary

Current baseline

Nationally protected landscapes

The Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located 80m from the neighbourhood area (to the north east).

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is part of the extensive belt of chalkland which stretches across southern England and is divided into two areas.

To the south, Cranborne Chase with its smooth rounded downs, steeply cut combes and dry valleys shows a typical chalk landscape. To the north, the topography of the Wiltshire Downs is more varied and broken, with shapely knolls and whaleback ridges.

The AONB is known for its ecological importance with protected ancient downland sites, herb-rich fen and river meadow to scattered deciduous woodland, which includes remnants of the ancient Cranborne Chase hunting forest. See **Figure A7.1** below for a key view over the AONB from within the neighbourhood area, provided by a member of the Steering Group.

Figure A7.1 Looking across the Stour Valley towards the AONB



A large proportion of the eastern part of Sturminster Marshall also falls within the South East Dorset Green Belt. An assessment of potential development sites conducted in 2020 indicated that some parts of the neighbourhood area were

subsequently more susceptible to disrupting the unique features of the Green Belt, namely open, expansive agricultural landscapes in the north of the settlement.⁶³

National Character Areas

The neighbourhood area falls within the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase NCA. This NCA has a *'strongly rural and agricultural feel, characterised by large, open fields of pasture and arable, punctuated by blocks of woodland draped over the undulating chalk typography'*.⁶⁴

Natural England have identified Statements of Opportunity (SEOs) for the NCAs which provide guidance for future development. The SEOs for the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase NCA are:

- **SEO 1:** Plan for and manage changes in the agricultural landscape by encouraging and supporting business choices that balance food production with protecting soils and water, enhancing ecosystems (particularly those associated with semi-natural grasslands) and restoring ecosystem services.
- **SEO 2:** Manage and enhance the historic character of the NCA, including the rich assemblage of settlement and field patterns, heritage features (including prehistoric assets), and the patterns of woodland, vegetation and geodiversity that give the NCA its sense of place.
- **SEO 3:** Manage and enhance the recreational and educational potential of the NCA in a way that clearly shows the links between people and the landscape, and between geodiversity, ecosystems and the services they provide. Aim to heighten people's enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of the NCA, as well as their ability to take positive, informed action to enjoy and conserve their surroundings.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

The landscape sensitivity assessment for East Dorset and Purbeck assessed several areas in Sturminster Marshall, shown in **Figure A7.2** overleaf. Results are detailed below.

- **STURM 1:** Overall, this area has moderate landscape sensitivity due to semi-natural habitats and features associated with the golf course, intervisibility with the wooded skylines of Kingston Lacy and the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB, alongside a general rural character.
- **STURM 2:** Overall, this area has low-to-medium sensitivity due to the flat and low-lying landform, uniform arable land cover, high level of visual enclosure provided by boundary vegetation, and proximity to existing development.
- **STURM 3:** Overall, this area has moderate sensitivity due to the gently sloping landform, semi-natural features including hedgerows and woodland, the undeveloped character of the area, and the rural setting and skyline.
- **STURM 4:** Overall, the assessment area has moderate sensitivity, with sensitivities presented by its role as an immediate rural setting to the village

⁶³ LUC Consulting (2020): 'Sturminster Marshall Stage 1 site assessment [online] available at: <https://www.bpcouncil.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Planning-policy/BCP-Local-Plan/Evidence-base-studies/Green-belt/Docs/Stage-1-Appendix-B-Sturminster-Marshall.pdf>

⁶⁴ Natural England (2013): 'NCA Profile: 134 Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase' [online] available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5846213517639680?category=587130>

(overlooked by existing housing), its intervisibility with Charborough Park and the sense of separation it provides between Sturminster Marshall and Newton Peveril.

Figure A7.2 Landscape sensitivity areas⁶⁵



Local landscape

Sturminster Marshall is a village in east Dorset, eight miles north-west of Poole on the A350 and A31. The River Stour runs along the northern edge of the village. Land surrounding the settlement is gently rolling, and land use is predominantly agricultural, under both pasture and arable cultivation. The southern parts of the village are on gently rising ground above the flood plain.⁶⁶

During the process of making the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy, the Council produced the East Dorset District Council Areas of Great Landscape Value Report (AGLV) in 1997⁶⁷, which identified four areas of great landscape value in order to protect them from the potential adverse visual effects of new development. Although Sturminster Marshall is excluded from the AGLV, it was noted in the report that the Stour Valley/Mapperton AGLV area is nonetheless influenced by the settlement, particularly on the western side. Whilst the village centres are compact, buildings both ancient and modern, stretch outwards along the rural lanes, creating a more open character.

⁶⁵ LUC Consulting (2021): 'East Dorset & Purbeck Areas Landscape & Heritage Study' [online] available at: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/337048/East+Dorset+%26+Purbeck+Stage+2_Tier+3.pdf/e3320a6d-52e8-4f1d-feef-67deffc99e15

⁶⁶ Christchurch and East Dorset District Council (2002): 'Policies and Proposals for Sturminster Marshall' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/282265/Chapter-16+Sturminster+Marshall.pdf/cccf163-17bd-5ca0-3c32-cd7822d5da87>

⁶⁷ Dorset Council (2021): 'Protected landscapes in Dorset' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/-/protected-landscapes-in-east-dorset>

Tree preservation orders

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) have been applied to two woodlands in this Sturminster Marshall, at Herons Grove and Forest Hill. A small group of trees beside Newton Road in Sturminster Marshall village, trees on Bartons Ground and its approach from High Street, and a number of individual trees in the former parkland of Henbury Hall and Henbury House also have TPOs, together with a few other isolated trees within the parish.⁶⁸

Visual amenity

Key views in the neighbourhood area are detailed in the East Dorset & Purbeck landscape assessment and shown in **Figures A7.3 – A7.6** below.

Figure A7.3 View north-east from Wareham Forest Way footpath on the eastern edge of the area



Figure A7.4 View north west from the public footpath across arable field to houses on Station Road



⁶⁸ Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan Group (2021): 'SEA Screening Post Consultation Report'.

Figure A7.5 View south from the footpath at the field boundary to the enclosed pasture field with wooded skyline



Figure A7.6 View north east from Dullar Lane to the settlement edge of Sturminster Marshall

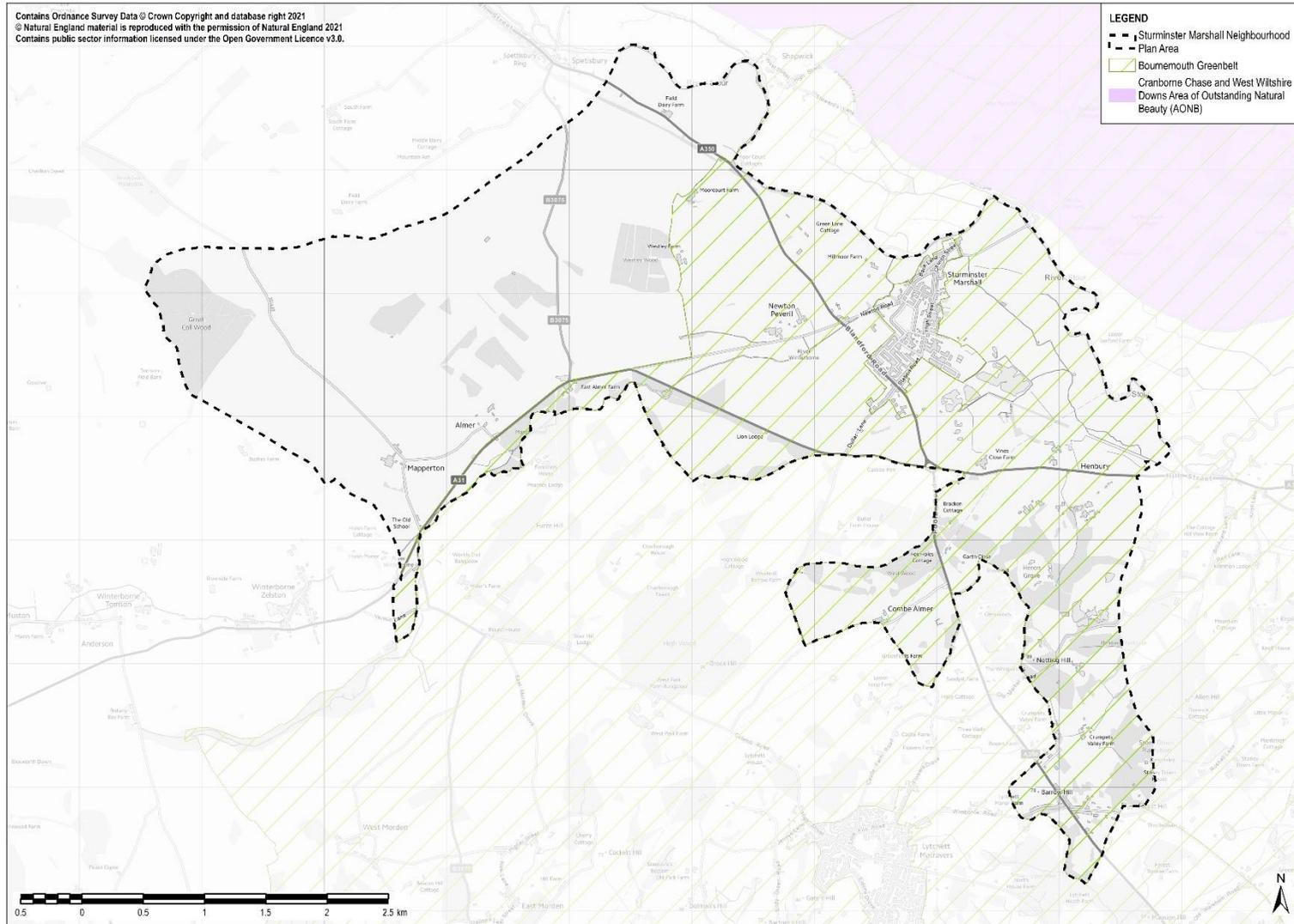


Future baseline

New development, including infrastructure development, has the potential to lead to incremental changes in landscape quality in and around the neighbourhood area. In the absence of the Neighbourhood Plan more speculative development may come forward within the open countryside or countryside setting, which could place increased pressure on local settings. This may negatively impact upon the landscape features which contribute to the distinctive character, in particular the unique qualities of the AONB and Green Belt.

However, locally distinctive landscape features, characteristics and special qualities can be protected, managed, and enhanced through the Neighbourhood Plan. New development that is appropriately designed and landscape-led has the potential to support the area's inherent landscape character and quality. This may, for example, include regeneration and brownfield development that improves the village setting, delivering green infrastructure improvements and/ or new recreational opportunities and enhanced framing of key views.

A7.7 National landscape designations



A.8 Population and community

Focus of theme

- Population demographics.
- Age structure.
- Deprivation issues.
- Housing mix and affordability.
- Education and skills.
- Employment and economy; and
- Community assets and infrastructure.

Policy Context

Table A8.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A8.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to population and community

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Dorset Homelessness Strategy (annual update)	2019
Dorset Enabling Communities Strategy	2021
Active Dorset: Sport & Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment	2017
Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)	2021
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy	2014
East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which on the whole seeks to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.
- The framework seeks to protect settlement and community identities, ensuring that appropriate tools such as masterplans and design guides or codes are used to secure a variety of well-designed and beautiful homes to meet the needs of different groups in the community. Furthermore, the NPPF recognises the benefits of creating cohesive communities, in safe environments where crime and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life of residents.
- As set out in the NPPF, it should be ensured that the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated

standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. The Design Guide and Model code illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

- The district homelessness and community strategies each seek to support the appropriate delivery of housing and community infrastructure. The strategies recognise the importance of targeting resources at those most at risk/ most vulnerable and supporting all residents needs for affordable, safe and good quality housing in the right places. Furthermore, the strategies recognise the need to create choice in terms of securing a long-term stable home and create adaptable homes supported by high levels of accessibility.
- Furthermore, the SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the adopted Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.

Baseline Summary

Current baseline

Population

Table A8.2, as shown below, demonstrates how the population of Sturminster Marshall has increased by 8.4% over the period of 2011- 2019, higher than comparative figures for the South West and England as a whole.

Table A8.2 Population change (2011- 2019)⁶⁹

Population	Sturminster Marshall	East Dorset	South West	England
2011	1,969	87,166	5,288,935	53,012,456
2019 mid-year estimate	2,134	n/a	5,624,696	56,286,961
% change	+8.4%	n/a	+6.3%	+6.2%

Age structure

With regards to the age structure of the neighbourhood area, there are a lower proportion of residents in the 60+ age category in comparison to average figures for East Dorset, though not for the South West and England as a whole. Comparatively, there is a higher proportion of 0-15 year olds in the neighbourhood area (18.7%) in comparison to East Dorset and the South West. This is shown in **Table A8.3**.

Table A8.3 Age structure⁷⁰

Age structure	Sturminster Marshall	East Dorset	South West	England
0-15	18.7%	15.6%	17.6%	18.9%
16-24	10.6%	8.4%	11.3%	11.9%
25-44	18.9%	18.5%	24.6%	27.5%
45-59	25.4%	21.1%	20.1%	19.4%
60+	26.4%	36.3%	26.4%	22.3%

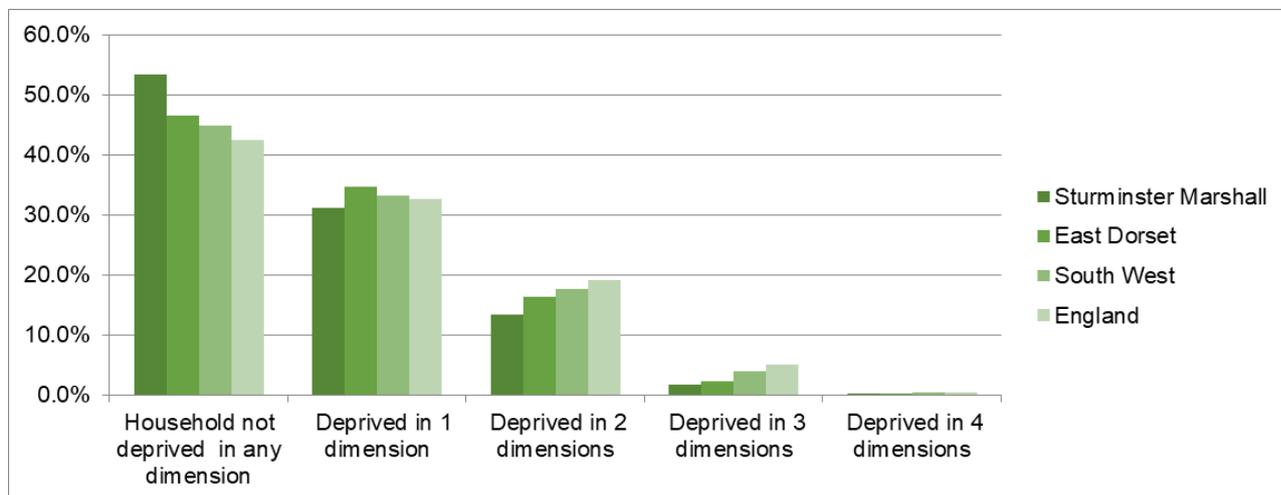
⁶⁹ Gov UK (2011): 'Census 2011' [online] available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

⁷⁰ Gov UK (2011): 'Census 2011' [online] available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

Household deprivation

Overall, levels of deprivation in the neighbourhood area are high (53.4%), when compared to East Dorset (46.5%), the South West (44.8%) and England (42.5%), presented in **Figure A8.1** below.

Figure A8.1 Household deprivation⁷¹



Index of Multiple Deprivation

Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardized geographies designed to be as consistent in population as possible. The SMNP falls within the East Dorset 005C LSOA and the East Dorset 005D LSOA.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD)⁷² is an overall relative measure of deprivation constructed by combining seven domains of deprivation according to their respective weights. The deprivation levels for the two LSOAs within East Dorset are presented in **Table A8.4** overleaf. The East Dorset 005D LSOA is within the 50% most deprived areas in the UK. In particular, the LSOA is deprived in the following key areas:

- Education, Skills and Training- lack of attainment and skills in the local population.
- Crime- risk of personal and material victimisation at the local level; and
- Living Environment deprivation- the quality of the local environment.

Further, the East Dorset 005C LSOA is within the 50% most deprived areas for barriers to housing and services.

Table A8.4 Deprivation levels⁷³

Domain	East Dorset 005C	East Dorset 005D
Income deprivation	20% least deprived	40% least deprived
Employment deprivation	20% least deprived	30% least deprived

⁷¹ Gov UK (2011): 'Census 2011' [online] available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

⁷² IMD (2019): 'Interactive viewer' [online] available at: https://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html#

⁷³ GOV UK (2019): 'Indices of Deprivation' [online] available at: https://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html#

Domain	East Dorset 005C	East Dorset 005D
Education, Skills and Training	40% least deprived	40% most deprived
Health Deprivation and Disability	10% least deprived	10% least deprived
Crime	20% least deprived	40% most deprived
Barriers to Housing and Services	50% most deprived	10% least deprived
Living Environment deprivation	50% least deprived	10% most deprived
Income deprivation affecting children	30% least deprived	30% least deprived
Income deprivation affecting older people	10% least deprived	50% least deprived
Overall	20% least deprived	50% most deprived

Housing tenure

73.6% of residents in Sturminster Marshall own their own homes, lower than comparative figures for East Dorset (80.9%), but higher than figures for the South West (67.4%) and England as a whole (63.3%). Additionally, a higher proportion of residents in Sturminster Marshall live rent free (3.2%) than figures for East Dorset (1.3%), the South West (1.4%) and England (1.3%), indicative of the higher proportion of younger residents in the neighbourhood area, shown in **Figure A8.2**, below.

Figure A8.2 Tenure⁷⁴



Education and skills

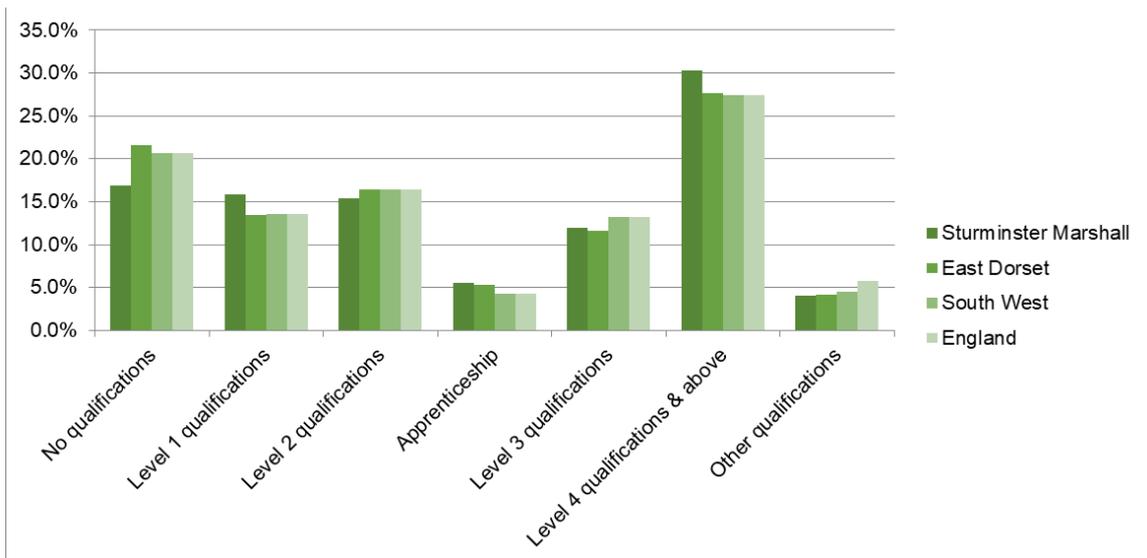
As shown in **Figure A8.3** below, the proportion of residents with Level 4 qualifications & above is higher than comparative figures for East Dorset, the South West and England as a whole. Only 16.9% of residents have no qualifications, in

⁷⁴ Gov UK (2011): 'Census 2011' [online] available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

comparison to 21.5% of residents in East Dorset, 20.7% in the South West and 20.7% in England as a whole.

The neighbourhood area has a three-tier system of education. In this respect, the First School feeds one of two Middle Schools which, themselves feed into Upper Schools, either Lockyers in Corfe Mullen and thence Corfe Hills in Broadstone (the main route) or Allenbourne in Wimborne and then Queen Elizabeth’s. Some also go to St Michael’s in Colehill. Children use buses to access Middle and Upper schools.

Figure A8.3 Highest level of qualification⁷⁵



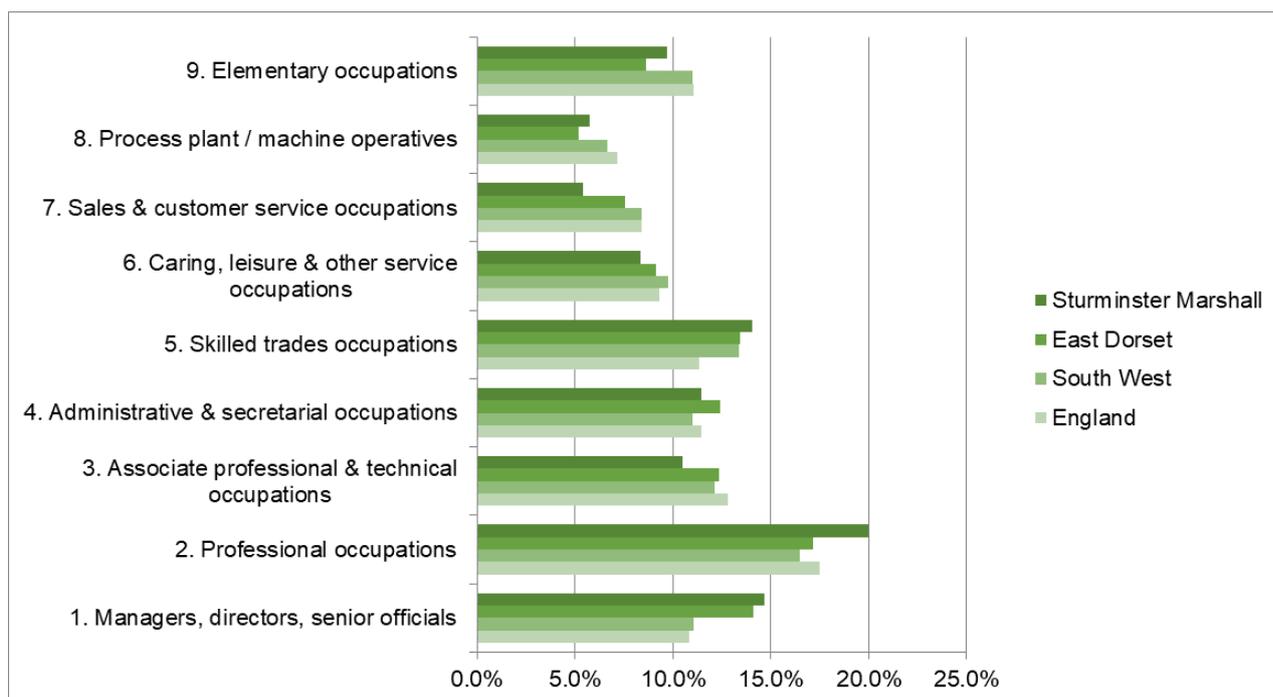
Employment and economy

With regards to occupation, and as shown in **Figure A8.4**, below, the following occupations describe 48.8% of working residents in the neighbourhood area:

- Professional occupations (20.0%).
- Managers, directors and senior officials (14.7%).
- Skilled trades occupations (14.1%).

⁷⁵ Gov UK (2011): 'Census 2011' [online] available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

Figure A8.4 Occupational bands⁷⁶



Community assets and infrastructure

Sturminster Marshall Golf Course is located in the north east part of the neighbourhood area, which is a valuable asset to the community and local economy.

Additionally, there are three retail outlets: Co-op on Station Road, Nisa store and pharmacy in High Street, and Vines Close farm shop complex on the A31. There are also 3 pubs: The Red Lion in Church Street, The Golden Fox on the A350 and The World’s End at Mapperton. The two “venues for public events,” are The Memorial Hall in Churchill Close and The Old School in Church Street.

Future baseline

The neighbourhood area has a higher proportion of younger residents in comparison to East Dorset and the South West, and therefore a higher number of residents are currently living at home. Unplanned development may have wider implications in terms of delivering the right mix of housing types, tenures and sizes in suitably connected places to meet this unique market. Continued development of housing types and tenures of market preference may also increase housing imbalance and increase deprivation in relation to the living standards domain. Conversely, opportunities to better connect the younger community to education and employment will be beneficial.

Considering the ongoing pandemic, homeworking is likely to become a more prevalent trend, and this is likely to alter the commuting patterns and access trends of residents into the future. Whilst uncertainty remains, the SMNP provides opportunities to guide development which accommodates for changing working patterns and lifestyles, and places greater emphasis on access to local services, facilities and employment options and strategic connectivity.

⁷⁶ Gov UK (2011): ‘Census 2011’ [online] available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

A.9 Transportation

Focus of theme

- Transport infrastructure.
- Traffic flows and congestion.
- Accessibility.
- Car ownership; and
- Travel to work.

Policy Context

Table A9.1 below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan.

Table A9.1 Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to transportation

Document title	Year of publication
<u>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>	2021
<u>The Transport Investment Strategy – Moving Britain Ahead</u>	2017
<u>Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan (2011- 2026)</u>	2012
<u>Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP)</u>	2021
<u>East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Part 1- Core Strategy</u>	2014
<u>East Dorset and Christchurch Local Plan Review</u>	2019

The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The SMNP will be required to be in general conformity with the NPPF, which seeks the consideration of transport issues from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals to address any known issues and maximise opportunities to increase accessibility, particularly by walking, cycling and public transport. Larger developments are expected to be delivered in areas which are or can be made sustainable by limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is recognised that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural environments.
- National transport strategies set out investment priorities which ultimately all seek to improve the connectivity, effectiveness and reliability of transport networks, whilst reducing impacts on the natural environment (including through decarbonisation). Furthermore, they place great emphasis on making cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journeys. This includes investment in new and upgraded infrastructure, changing perceptions, and increasing safety.
- The Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, published by Dorset Council sets out proposed transport solutions for the County up to 2026, with a focus on enabling sustainable economic growth. Alongside the Local Plan and Core Strategy, the SMNP will be required to

be in general conformity with the strategic policy aims of the Transport Plan.

- The SMNP will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.

Baseline Summary

Current baseline

Rail network

There are no train stations within the neighbourhood area. The closest available station is Hamworthy Station, located 8km from Sturminster Marshall (in the neighbouring town of Poole), where trains operated by South Western Railway provide services to London, Wareham and Weymouth.

Most residents would go to Poole for services eastwards to London via Southampton or westwards to Weymouth via Dorchester.

Bus network

There are two regular bus services which serve Sturminster Marshall⁷⁷:

- The 88 service, operated by Dorset Community Transport, which runs a circular route through Wimborne and Colehill, operating on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays until the mid-afternoon.
- The X8 service, operated by Damory Coaches, which runs through Poole to Blandford, operating on weekdays and weekends (hourly).

Road network and congestion

The main settlement of Sturminster Marshall is predominantly served by the main High Street, Station Road, and some smaller residential roads. At the local level, the results of the residents' survey for the SMNP Consultation⁷⁸ indicated that there was a need to improve traffic management and road safety by reducing speeding and the volume of traffic, particularly on the High Street.

With regards to the strategic road network, the A350 (north-south, and the route to the M4) and A31 (east-west) run through the neighbourhood area, and connect Sturminster Marshall to larger service areas such as Bournemouth, Southampton and Winchester in the east, Bath in the north, and Dorchester to the west. The South East Dorset Multi-Modal Transport Study (2012)⁷⁹ highlighted a number of challenges in the wider area with regards to the strategic road network. These key findings directly relating to the neighbourhood area are detailed below.

- There are persistent congestion problems on the A31.
- Inadequate north-south transport routes were raised by the wider reference group with journey time reliability problems on the A350.

⁷⁷ Bustimes (n.d.): 'Sturminster Marshall' [online] available at: <https://bustimes.org/localities/sturminster-marshall>

⁷⁸ Sturminster Neighbourhood Plan Group (2020): 'Sturminster Marshall Residents' Survey' [online] available at: <http://www.sturminstermarshall-pc.gov.uk/UserFiles/Files/Household%20Questionnaire%20Summary.pdf>

⁷⁹ Atkins (2012): 'South East Dorset Multi-Modal Transport Study' [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/288596/South+East+Dorset+Multi-Modal+Transport+Study.pdf/1c40d941-ae9c-66a2-578c-b0efc93e67f5>

- The A350 provides important links to cross-channel ports but does not provide good access for a number of villages; and
- Freight was identified in the consultation as being problematic throughout the whole South East Dorset region, with HGVs using local roads.

Public rights of way network (PRoW)

With regards to the PRoW network (see **Figure A9.1** below), the neighbourhood area is relatively well served by footpaths in the village centre, but less so in the western part. There are regularly-used paths (mostly by people from neighbouring parishes) close to Great Coll Wood in the western part of the parish.

Figure A9.1 PRoWs in Sturminster Marshall⁸⁰

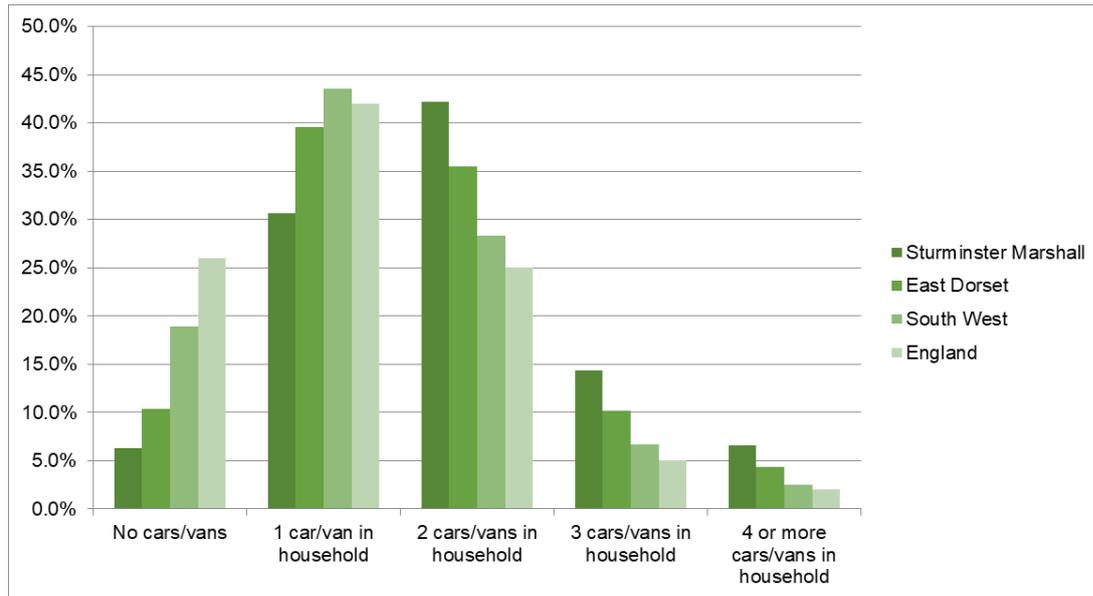


Access to cars and vans

As shown in **Figure A9.2** overleaf, car ownership in the neighbourhood area is high. 93.7% of residents have at least one car/van, higher than comparative figures for East Dorset (89.7%), the South West (81.1%) and England as a whole (74.0%). Of those who have cars, the majority have 2 cars/vans (35.5%).

⁸⁰ Rowmpas (2021): 'Public rights of way' [online] available at: <https://www.rowmaps.com/showmap.php?place=Thame&map=BingOS&lat=51.7482&lon=0.979488&lonew=W>

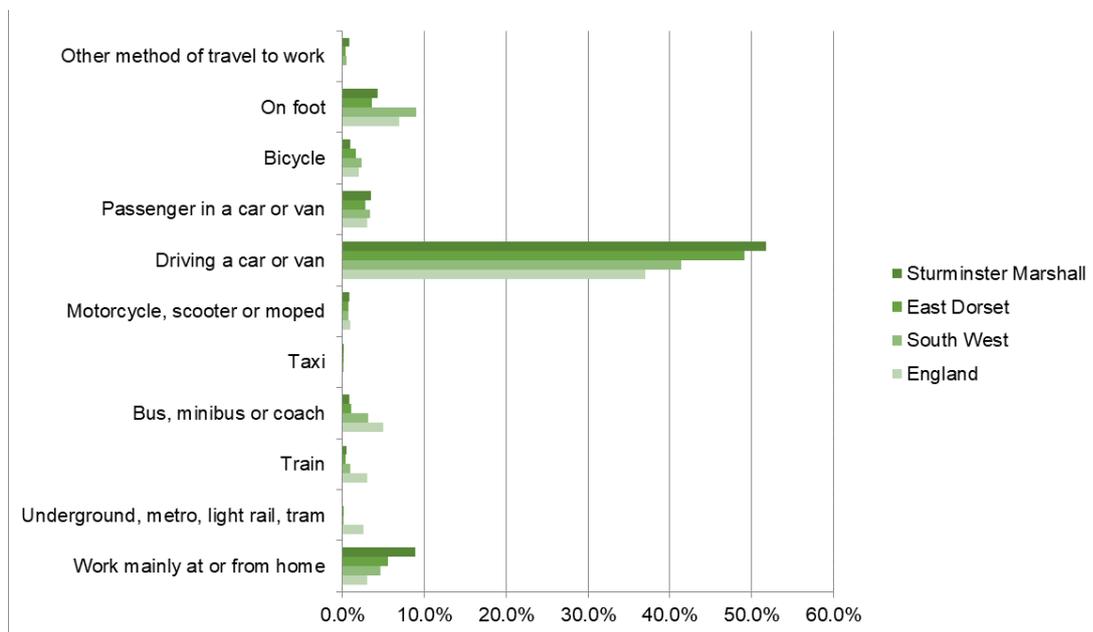
Figure A9.2 Car/van ownership



Method of travel to work

With regards to travel to work (see **Figure A9.3** below), over half of residents travel to work by car (51.8%), higher than comparative figures for East Dorset (49.1%), the South West (41.4%) and England as a whole (37.0%). Beyond this, residents choose to work mainly at or from home (8.9%), or travel on foot (4.3%).

Figure A9.3 Method of travel to work



Future baseline

Given the rural nature of the village and lack of sustainable transport options, in the absence of strategic transport interventions, growth in the neighbourhood area will likely increase the reliance on the private vehicle for travel. This has the potential to increase traffic and lead to additional localised issues, as detailed in the Transport Study for South East Dorset, which in turn may reduce road safety. A key concern in this respect is the High Street and Station Road.

The Neighbourhood Plan can however support small-scale infrastructure improvements and active travel opportunities that seeks to maximise opportunities for pedestrian and cyclist movements. Additionally, given increasing levels of working from home seen in Sturminster Marshall in light of the recent pandemic, new development should seek to provide space and services to enable working remotely.

