



Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report Consultation Draft

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

May 2021

(minor typos corrected May 2022)

Strategic Environmental Assessment: Screening Report

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

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1 Introduction

- 1.0.1 The purpose of this report is to determine whether or not the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) through a process known as SEA screening.
- 1.0.2 This report provides details of the proposed Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan and explains the legislative background to SEA screening, before providing an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.0.3 In accordance with Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, consultation was undertaken on a first draft of this document with Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency, on 3rd August 2020. In this draft Dorset Council determined that SEA is not required for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan. This decision was agreed with Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish Council.
- 1.0.4 Historic England, in their response dated 14th September 2020 (Appendix II), stated that they did not believe sufficient evidence had been provided to allow for the conclusion that a full SEA is not required. Though they did not assert that a full SEA is required. Natural England, in their response dated 4th September 2020 (Appendix III), stated that they did not consider that a SEA is required for this Neighbourhood Plan. The Environment Agency did not respond to the request to comment.
- 1.0.5 In order to address to comments made by Historic England, the evidence base of the plan has been reviewed and James Weir, Senior Conservation Officer at Dorset Council, has undertaken an assessment of heritage assets likely to be affected by allocations made within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan. This is provided in Appendix II.
- 1.0.6 Subsequent to consultation on the first draft of the SEA screening, the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan was revised, with the addition of an allocation for housing at The Village Hall site (Section 6.4). As such, the likely environmental impacts of development at this site have been considered in addition to those sites already allocated at the time of the first draft of the SEA screening.
- 1.0.7 This screening document concludes that a full SEA is not required and states the reasons why, with evidence to support this conclusion.
- 1.0.8 In accordance with Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, consultation was undertaken on a first draft of this document with Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency, on 29th March 2021.
- 1.0.9 Historic England, in their response dated 29th April 2021 (Appendix IV), confirmed that they “have no objection to the view that a full SEA is not required”, following a more thorough assessment of heritage assets within the Plan area. Natural England, in their response dated 4th May 2021 (Appendix V), wrote to confirm that they “agree with the conclusions

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and hold no further comment regarding the SEA screening”. The Environment Agency, in their response dated 7th May 2021 (Appendix VI), stated that “there are no potential significant environmental effects that relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area”. It was also noted that “there are areas of fluvial flood risk and watercourses within the neighbourhood plan area, however on the basis that future development is steered away from these areas as currently proposed, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to cover the management of flood risk”.

- 1.0.10 This report meets the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment and the Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations (2004).

2 Legislative background to Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.0.1 European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment ('SEA Directive') introduces the need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') during the development of some plans and programmes. The main purpose of SEA, according to Article 1 of the SEA Directive, is:
- “[T]o provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.”
- 2.0.2 The SEA Directive is transcribed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which establishes the requirement to undertake a sustainability appraisal ('SA') for some documents used for planning purposes. The SA process incorporates the requirement for SEA, but typically has a broader scope and considers the social and economic issues in addition to the environmental effects.
- 2.0.3 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, which amends the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, provides clarification on the SEA documents which must be submitted alongside neighbourhood planning proposals.
- 2.0.4 Regulation 2(4) of the amendment Regulations 2015 adds to the list of documents that a neighbourhood planning group must submit to a local planning authority with a proposal for a neighbourhood plan, which is presented in regulation 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.
- 2.0.5 Regulation 6(4)(e) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires one of the following documents to be submitted alongside a neighbourhood planning document:
- (i) an environmental report prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004; or
 - (ii) where it has been determined under regulation 9(1) of those Regulations that the plan proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination.

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3 The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

3.0. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MELBURY ABBAS AND CANN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

3.0.1 The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area consists of two parishes. It occupies approximately 19km²¹ (1888ha) and has a combined population of approximately 1,189². It should be noted that out of the total population, approximately 434 are inmates of HMP Guys Marsh. If the prison population is excluded, the population is 755.

3.0.2 According to the 2011 census, the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area contains 350 households, comprising the following dwelling types:

	Cann	Melbury Abbas
Detached	57%	63%
Terraced	11%	4%
Semi-detached	31%	32%
Flats/Maisonettes	1%	1%
Mobile Homes/caravans	1%	0%

3.0.3 The 2011 census indicates that there are 462 residents in employment, 39% of which are in high skilled occupation, with 18% in low skilled occupation.

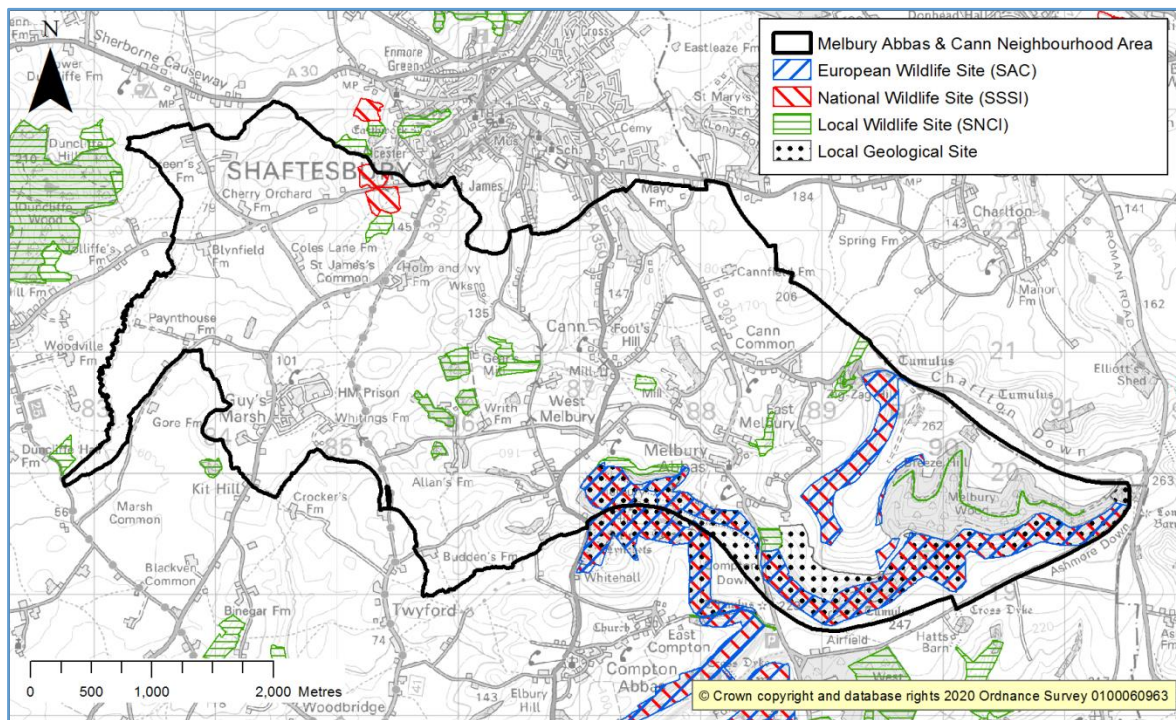
3.0.4 The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area and surrounding areas include a number of environmental designations, indicating the importance and sensitivity of the plan area from an environmental perspective.

3.0.5 These environmental designations include areas of importance for wildlife and habitats (Figure 3.1), the most important of which from an ecological perspective are the European Wildlife Designations which comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), and Ramsar sites. There is one SAC within the neighbourhood plan area. (It should be noted for the avoidance of doubt that there are no SPA or Ramsar sites within or near to the neighbourhood plan area.) The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area also contains national wildlife designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) which are also of high ecological importance, and non-designated wildlife sites (Sites of Nature Conservation Interest) which are of local importance for wildlife.

¹ Source: 2018 mid-year estimates, Office for National Statistics

² The draft neighbourhood plan gives a prison population figure of 324 in 2011. Wikipedia gives a population of 434 for September 2018 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HM_Prison_Guys_Marsh). The Government website in April 2020 gives an undated figure of 550 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guys-marsh-prison>).

Figure 3.1: Wildlife designations within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the blackline)



- 3.0.6 As noted above, the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area includes one European Wildlife site, which is of the greatest ecological importance, which is the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC. All SAC sites within the plan area are also SSSI, which are national wildlife designations.
- 3.0.7 The Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC occupies the steep hillsides in the south-eastern corner of the Melbury Abbas & Cann area. It consists of various separate parcels of land. The designation continues further south through the parish of Compton Abbas and into the parish of Fontmell Magna. The Fontmell and Melbury Downs consists of semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates. It is an important site for orchids and supports large populations of early gentian (*Gentianella angica*) – a plant now mainly found on the chalk downs of Dorset, Wiltshire and the Isle of Wight.³
- 3.0.8 Breach Fields SSSI is on the northern edge of the neighbourhood plan area. The SSSI comprises of three west-facing fields, one of which is in the neighbouring parish of Shaftesbury. The fields overlie Gault Clay and Upper Greensand. They have been relatively unmodified by agricultural improvement and support species-rich neutral grassland which is now rare both in Dorset and nationally.⁴

³ SAC citation available from <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012550>

⁴ SSSI citation available from <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1003758>

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3.0.9 In addition to the European and National wildlife designations at the site, there are 12 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and two Local Geological Sites (LGS) within the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area (Figure 3.2). The data for SNCIs is managed by the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (<http://www.derc.org.uk>) and data for LGSs is managed by Dorset's Regionally Important Geological Sites Group (<https://dorsetrigs.org/>).

Figure 3.2: The Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area

Name of SNCI	Area	Description
Allan's copse SNCI	1ha	A small damp deciduous copse
Breach Fields South SNCI	3.1ha	Semi-improved neutral grassland on undulating, gently sloping and south facing area. (Southern extension to the SSSI referred to above.)
Melbury Abbas SNCI	2.8ha	A varied site of mostly wetland habitats
Melbury Hill SNCI	3.9ha	A thin strip of chalk grassland. (Adjacent to SAC)
Melbury Hill SNCI	1.7ha	Semi-improved neutral grassland and rush pasture
Melbury Wood SNCI	1ha	Relict of chalk grassland along the main ride of a large beech plantation
Pug's Parlour SNCI	3.3ha	An oak/ash/hazel woodland with alder in wetter areas
Spread Eagle Hill SNCI	3ha	A small field of chalk grassland. (Adjacent to SAC)
Writh Copse SNCI	2.5ha	A damp deciduous copse
Writh Farm Meadows SNCI	7ha	Several areas of unimproved or semi-improved neutral grassland.
Young Coppice SNCI	3.2ha	An oak/ash/hazel wood with a typical flora
Zigzag Hill SNCI	3.4ha	A north-west facing slope of unimproved chalk grassland
Melbury Hill LGS	81.5ha	One of the highest points on the Dorset Chalk Escarpment. It is capped by an outcrop of the Blandford Chalk division of the Upper Chalk, and its lower slopes are formed of Middle and Lower Chalk. (Largely the same area as the SAC)
Melbury Down LGS	96.6ha	Forms one side of a deep valley system that is now completely dry. It is likely that this valley system was cut during the Pleistocene glacial events when north Dorset

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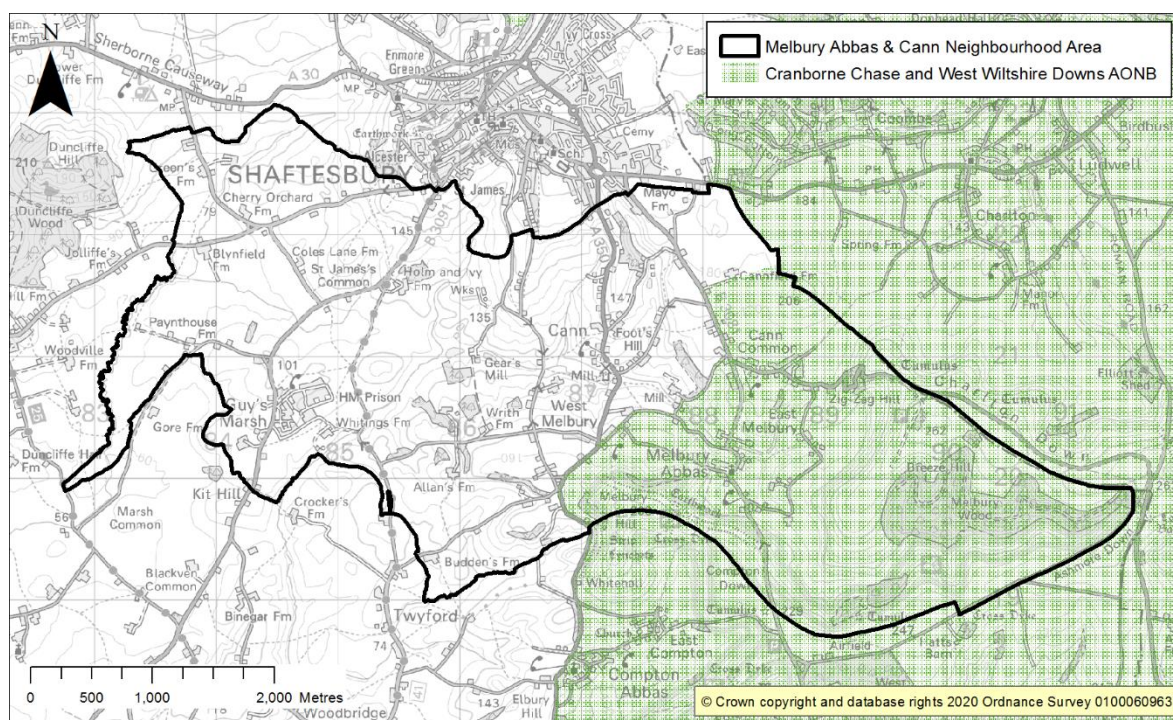
Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

		was experiencing a periglacial climate. (Largely the same area as the SAC)
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3.0.10 The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation represents a nationally important protected landscape. The AONB occupies large areas of countryside to the northeast, east and south of the neighbourhood plan area. It covers approximately the eastern third of the neighbourhood plan area, as shown on Figure 3.3 below.

Figure 3.3: The extent of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (shown in green) within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the black line).

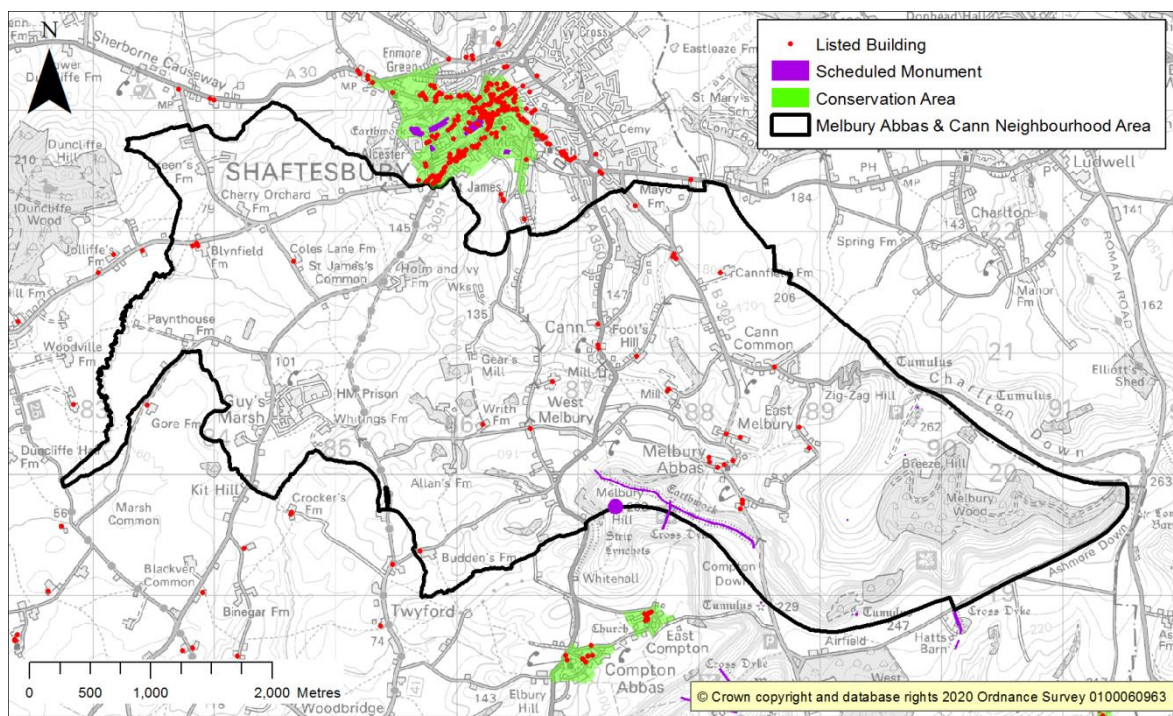


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3.0.11 In terms of heritage assets, there are no Conservation Areas within the neighbourhood plan area. However, the Shaftesbury Conservation Area lies immediately adjacent to the northern boundary, and the Compton Abbas Conservation Area lies approximately 850 metres to the south (as shown on Figure 3.4). The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area contains 32 Listed Buildings and structures, including the Church of St Thomas in Melbury Abbas which is Grade II*. There are six Scheduled Monuments within the neighbourhood plan area. These include Melbury Beacon, Cross Dyke (which forms a linear boundary to Melbury Hill), and four bowl barrows. No heritage assets are believed to be on Historic England's Heritage at Risk list in 2020.

Figure 3.4: Designated heritage assets within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the black line)



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Figure 3.5: Flood zones within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area (shown within the black line)



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3.1. THE MELBURY ABBAS AND CANN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 3.1.1 The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan is at an early stage of development. Regulation 14 consultation has yet to take place.
- 3.1.2 A Site Appraisal was undertaken by AECOM in August 2019. A report into Design Guidelines, also produced by AECOM, was published in December 2019. In April 2020 a draft version of the document (pre-Reg 14) was made available for the purposes of undertaking this SEA screening. It includes a vision and objectives set out on pages 9–10 of the draft plan. Four themes are established (Housing; Environment, design and heritage; Employment; and Leisure, community and well-being) and each of these has 3 to 7 policies. This section establishes that the intention is to allow for limited development, and in particular allocate four sites for residential development.
- 3.1.3 An overview map showing the proposed site allocations is on page 11 of the draft plan and is shown in Figure 3.6 below.

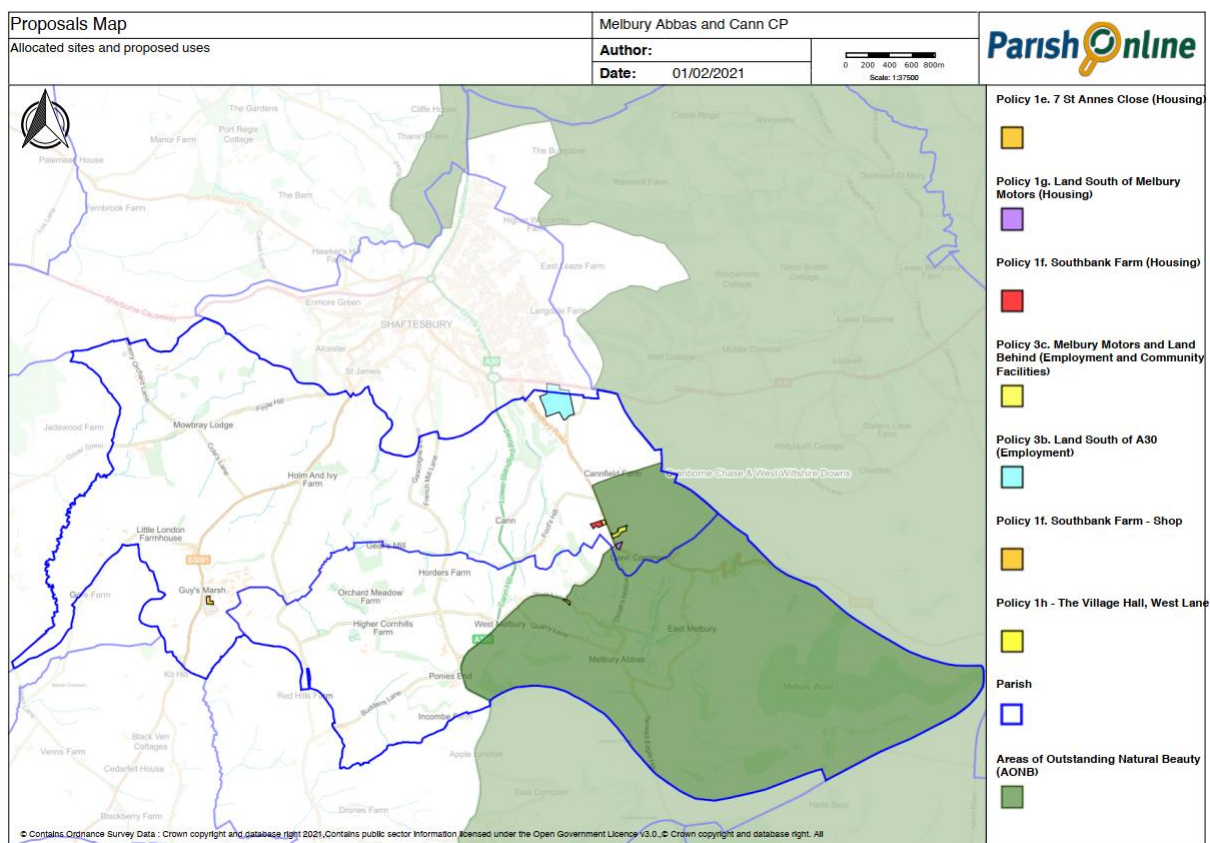


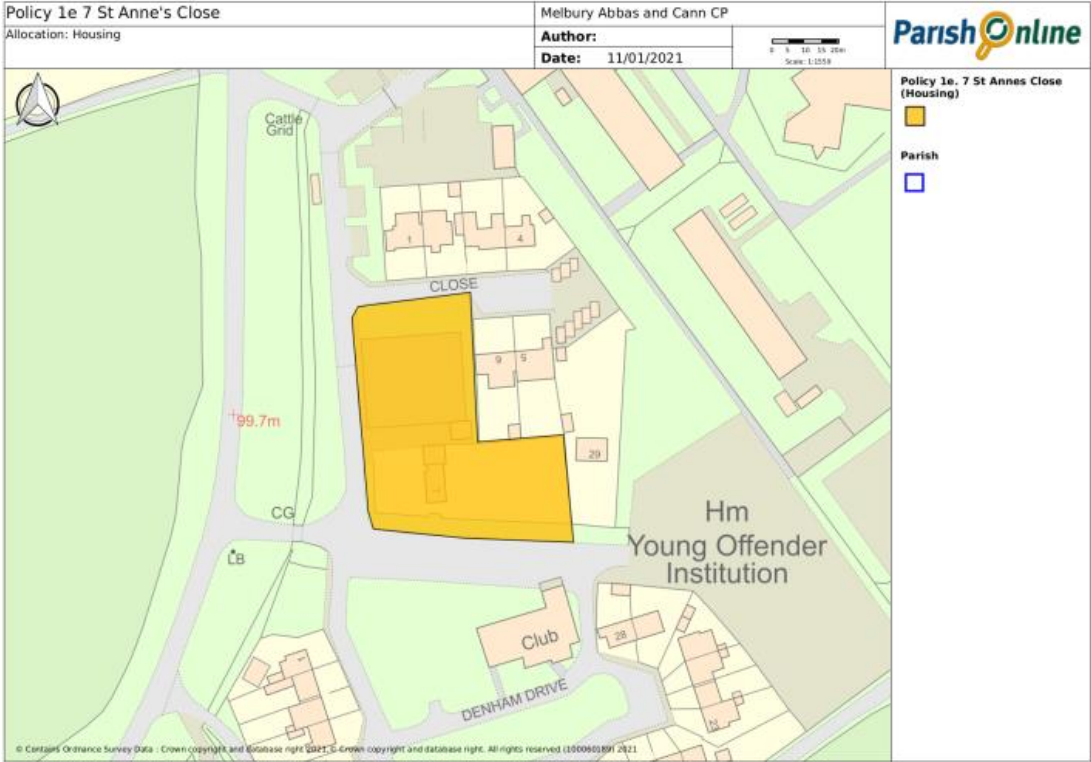
Figure 3.6: An overview of potential allocation sites (AONB indicated by green overlay).

- 3.1.4 The following provides a summary of the proposed policies in the April 2021 Draft Plan:

Draft Policy	Summary
1a	Support for limited development on brownfield or infill sites within existing settlement areas.

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1b	Allows for a minimum of 24 dwellings over the plan period on allocated sites, in order to support a sustainable population.
1c	Establishes the mix of housing types required.
1d	Establishes Affordable Housing requirements, including the tenure mix and preference for AH to prioritise people with a local connection.
1e	<p>Allocates a brownfield site (existing house and tennis courts) within the HMP Guys Marsh estate for up to 8 dwellings (100% affordable).</p>  <p>Policy 1e 7 St Anne's Close Allocation: Housing</p> <p>Melbury Abbas and Cann CP Author: Date: 11/01/2021</p> <p>Parish Online</p> <p>Policy 1e. 7 St Annes Close (Housing)</p> <p>Parish</p>
1f	Allocates land south of Melbury Motors (and adj to Barnfield), Cann Common for up to 4 dwellings. Note that this is a greenfield site and falls within the CCWWD AONB boundary.

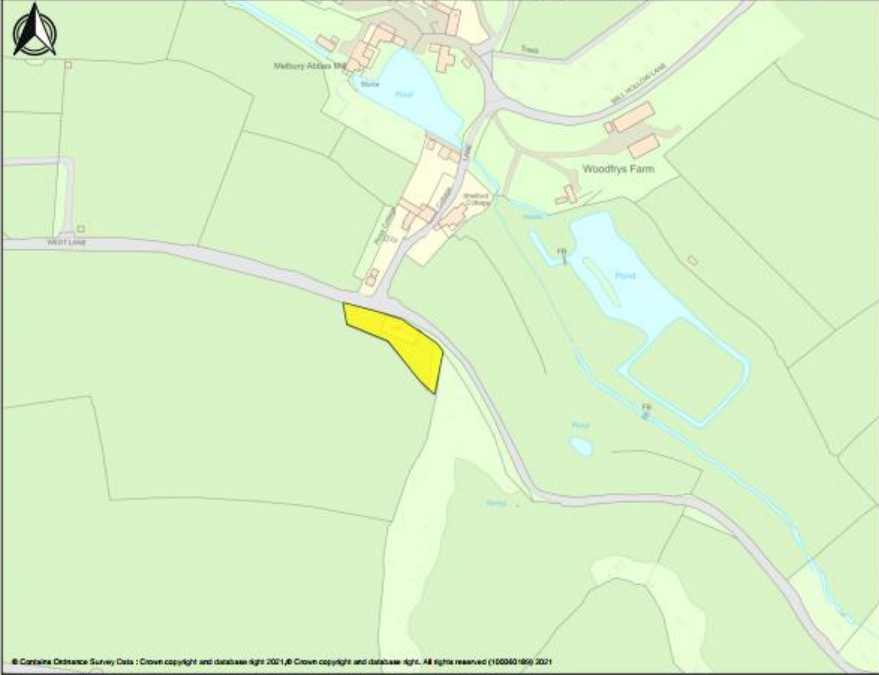
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	<p>Policy 1f. Land South of Melbury Motors Allocation: Housing</p> <p>Melbury Abbas and Cann CP Author: Date: 19/10/2020</p> <p>ParishOnline</p> <p>Policy 1g. Land South of Melbury Motors (Housing)</p> <p>Parish</p> <p>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</p>
1g	<p>Allocates the farmyard of South Bank Farm, Cann Common for a mixed-use scheme that includes up to 10 dwellings (the red area), plus a shop (the orange area) and recreational facilities. It is a greenfield site adjacent to the CCWWD AONB.</p> <p>Policy 1f. Southbank Farm Outline land uses</p> <p>Melbury Abbas and Cann CP Author: Date: 28/01/2021</p> <p>ParishOnline</p> <p>Policy 1f. Southbank Farm (Housing)</p> <p>Policy 1f. Southbank Farm • Sports Pitch</p> <p>Policy 1f. Southbank Farm • Shop</p> <p>Policy 1f. Southbank Farm • Permeable parking</p> <p>Policy 1f. Southbank Farm • Children's Play Facilities</p> <p>Southbank Farm • recreational facilities (play area)</p> <p>Parish</p>
1h	<p>Allocates the site of the Village Hall (West Lane, West Melbury) for development of up to three dwellings. The site is within the CCWWD AONB.</p>

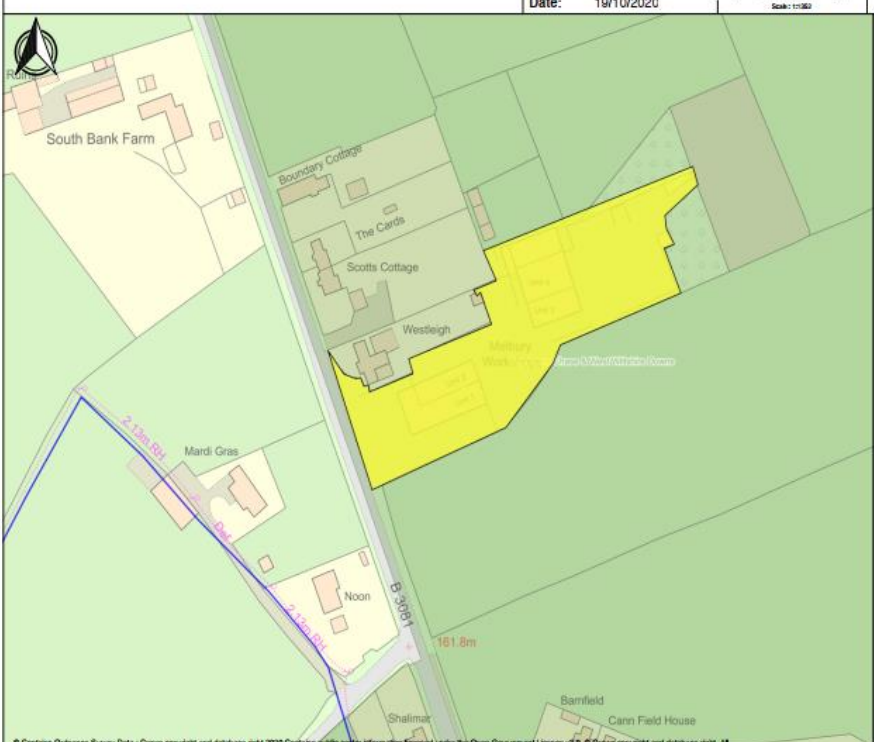
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	<p>Policy 1h The Village Hall, West Lane Allocation: Housing</p>	<p>Melbury Abbas and Cann CP Author: Date: 14/01/2021</p>  <p>ParishOnline</p> <p>Policy 1h - The Village Hall, West Lane</p> <p>Parish</p>
2a	Promotes high quality design. Development should follow the Design Guide, and wherever possible enhance the rural character and the AONB. Refers to local materials and traditional architecture, maximum height of two storeys, and promoting a village character where possible.	
2b	Gives great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty.	
2c	Development should not harm the network of local ecological features and habitats and wherever possible result in a net positive gain for biodiversity.	
2d	Protection of listed and non-listed heritage assets.	
3a	Support for local enterprise, including conversion / re-use of building in the countryside.	
3b	Protects land south of the A30 for employment purposes.	
3c	Allocates Melbury Motors site and land behind it for employment, community, retail, and tourism uses. Live/work units may be considered. Brownfield site within AONB.	

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	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Policy 3c. Melbury Motors and the land behind Allocation: Employment and Community Uses</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>Melbury Abbas and Cann CP</p> <p>Author:</p> <p>Date: 19/10/2020</p> </div> <div style="width: 20%; text-align: right;"> <p>ParishOnline</p> <p>Policy 3c. Melbury Motors and Land Behind (Employment and Community Facilities)</p> <p> Parish Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) </p> </div> </div>  <p>© Contains Ordnance Survey Data : Crown copyright and database right 2020. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. Other copyright and database right. All</p>
4a	Support for sustainable transport initiatives, such as protection and enhancement of public rights of way, and provision of electric charging points.
4b	Requires Transport Statements to consider conservation of the rural character, and requires development to address various transport related issues.
4c	Infrastructure (e.g. cabling and communications masts) should address any adverse impact on local character and the AONB. New community facilities are welcome, and the loss of community buildings will only be permitted if they are being replaced or they are no longer needed.
4d	Encourages sustainable build (e.g. BREEAM, solar PV), places restrictions on solar farms, and seeks to limit outdoor light pollution in the AONB dark skies area.
4e	Designates four areas of land as Local Green Space.

- 3.1.5 Overall the plan supports at least 24 additional dwellings during the plan period (2021–2031). It seeks to allocate two small greenfield sites through policies 1f and 1g and three small brownfield sites through policies 1e, 1h and 3c.
- 3.1.6 The plan also encourages infill and the development of brownfield sites. It should be noted that the settlements in the neighbourhood plan area do not have a defined settlement boundary, and the plan is not proposing to define one. (Strictly speaking, the southern fringes of the Shaftesbury settlement boundary, as defined by the Local Plan, enter the neighbourhood area along the plan's northern edge; however this has little bearing on the majority of the neighbourhood area and the neighbourhood plan does not intend to alter this.)

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- 3.1.7 The proposed Neighbourhood Plan provides general design guidelines to ensure that new development is of a type and standard that relates well to the character, needs and aspirations of local residents.
- 3.1.8 The proposed Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan identifies four potential Local Green Spaces. It also provides support for preserving existing community facilities as well as providing new ones.

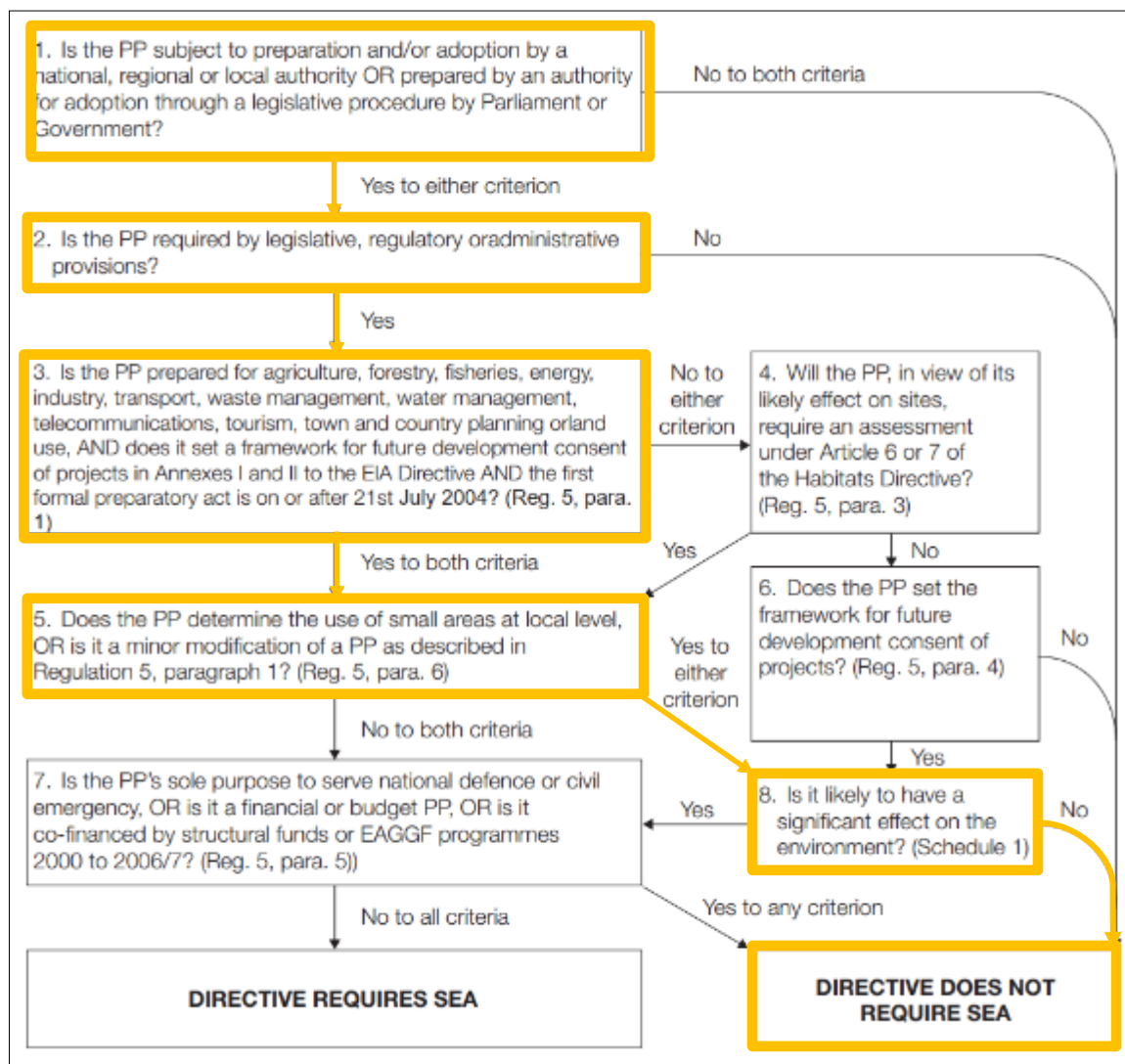
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4 Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

- 4.0.1 This Chapter provides an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.0.2 Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended) sets out the types of plan and programme that require SEA.
- 4.0.3 The SEA screening process is summarised in diagrammatic form in the flowchart shown in Figure 4.1. The screening for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan is highlighted in Figure 4.1 in orange and justification for the decisions made at each stage in the SEA screening process is given in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1: A diagram summarising the SEA screening process with the SEA screening for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan outlined in orange.



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Figure 4.2: a summary of the justification made for the decisions during the SEA screening for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan.

Question in SEA screening flow chart (Figure 4.1)	Response
1. Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	<u>YES</u> The intention is for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted by Dorset Council, a local authority, through a legislative procedure.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	<u>YES</u> The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan would be a Statutory document, prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive AND the first formal preparatory act is on or after 21st July 2004?	<u>YES</u> The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes and may indicate where future development which falls under Annex II of the EIA Directive which includes urban development projects under paragraph 10(b) takes place.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP as described in Regulation 5, paragraph 1?	<u>YES</u> The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan determines the use of small areas at a local level.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	<u>NO</u> Justification for this decision is given later in this chapter.

4.1. IS THE PLAN LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

- 4.1.1 The final question in the SEA screening process presented in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan was question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?
- 4.1.2 In order to answer this question, it is necessary to refer to Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, which sets out that the relevant criteria to be taken into account when determining whether there are likely to be significant effects. Therefore, the criteria in Schedule 1 have been taken into consideration when determining whether the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA, as presented in Figure 4.3.

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Figure 4.3: The assessment of the likely significance of effects of the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan (Taken from Annex II of the SEA Directive)

Criteria in Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations	Response	Is there a significant effect?
(1) Characteristics of the plan and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size, and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The framework for development projects within the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area is set by the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 ('Local Plan'), which provides the overarching policy for the location, size and nature of development projects in this area. The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan builds upon this framework by providing further details of development projects within this area, planning for a minimum of 24 additional dwellings on allocated sites in order to meet local needs. This would represent approximately 7% growth in the total number of dwellings. In addition, the draft plan provides a criteria-based policy to support infill in suitable locations.	No
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted alongside its parent document, the Local Plan. It will expand upon the existing policies in the Local Plan and provide supplementary information on a local scale rather than influencing the Local Plan.	No
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Any development which comes forward through the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to the environmental considerations of the Local Plan, the aim of which is to achieve sustainable development.	No
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The environmental problems within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area are not considered exclusive to the area and are similar to those considered and addressed in the Local Plan.	No

e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan.	No
(2) Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects.	It is anticipated that the plan period will be until 2031. However, this may be extended to 2038 to align with the emergin Dorset Council Local Plan. Whilst some effects of the plan may be irreversible, for example the housing element, it is not considered probable that significant effects will occur since the plan is only likely to bring forward a small number of additional dwellings.	No
b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area is immediately adjacent to three neighbourhood plans: Motcombe (made), Fontmell Magna (made) and Shaftesbury (plan due to go to referendum on 6 May 2021). Motcombe and Fontmell Magna make allocations for a small number of additional dwellings (21 and 40 respectively). The Shaftesbury NP does not allocate land for any additional housing (beyond what has been allocated in the local plan and/or granted planning permission).</p> <p>Gillingham Neighbourhood area is adjacent to Motcombe, and at its nearest is less than 1km from the Melbury Abbas & Cann neighbourhood area. However the 'made' Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan also does not allocate land for additional housing beyond what has been allocated in the local plan and/or granted planning permission.</p> <p>In addition to the neighbourhood plans in the surrounding areas, consideration must be given to other proposed development which may result in cumulative impacts, for example through Local Plan allocations and planning permissions.</p> <p>The North Dorset Local Plan (2003) allocates land to the south of the A30 at Shaftesbury for employment use (B use classes). The Shaftesbury–Cann parish boundary crosses through this site, and</p>	No

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	<p>approximately 5 hectares of this 7 hectare allocation falls within the Melbury Abbas and Cann neighbourhood area. An application (2/2018/1773/OUT) for a mixed-use scheme (incl. employment, residential, commercial and a school) has been submitted for the site, and as of March 2021 an appeal has been lodged for non-determination.</p> <p>Small ribbons of residential development extend southwards from Shaftesbury to cross the parish boundary into the neighbourhood area. These small areas are within the Shaftesbury settlement boundary, which gives general support for infill development. Cann Common had a settlement boundary, but this was deleted by the Local Plan Part 1 in 2016. Land outside of the settlement boundary, which includes the vast majority of the neighbourhood area, is classed as 'countryside' and development is strictly controlled unless required to meet essential rural needs.</p> <p>In December 2019 outline permission was granted on appeal for 55 dwellings on land at Higher Blandford Road at Shaftesbury. As with the employment land described above, the site crosses the parish boundary. Around 2 hectares of the 3 hectare site is within the Melbury Abbas and Cann neighbourhood area. As this is an outline application, it is not possible at present to say exactly how many of the proposed dwellings will fall within the MA&C neighbourhood area.</p> <p>Dorset Council monitoring indicates that between 2011 and 2020 there was a net gain of 2 dwellings in the MA&C neighbourhood area. At 1st April 2020 there was extant consent for 3 additional dwellings (in addition to a share of the 55 dwellings at Higher Blandford Road referred to above). More significantly, in the adjacent parish of Shaftesbury, approximately 400–500 dwellings are expected to be delivered between 2020 and 2031, and in nearby Gillingham a further 1,400 dwellings.</p> <p>Whilst there is a significant amount of development coming forward in nearby Shaftesbury and Gillingham, the Melbury Abbas & Cann neighbourhood plan is only planning for at least 24 dwellings (plus small-scale infill where there are opportunities). Therefore, the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to</p>	
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	result in significant environmental effects when considered cumulatively.	
c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant transboundary effects beyond the area of the Neighbourhood Plan due to the nature and scale of the proposals.	No
d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g due to accidents).	The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to introduce significant risks to human health and the environment, for example due to accidents, in light of the scale and type of development.	No
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area occupies approximately 19km ² and holds a population of approximately 1,189 people (including a prison population of approximately 434). The spatial extent of the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area and the magnitude of the population affected are not considered of a significant scale for the purposes of SEA.	No
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage	<p>The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area and its surrounding areas contain environmental designations of international value, reflecting the special natural characteristics and rich cultural heritage of this location.</p> <p>The special natural characteristics of the plan area include one European wildlife site, Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC (and SSSI), which is of the highest ecological importance. In addition, the Breach Fields SSSI is also in the neighbourhood plan area.</p> <p>According to monitoring undertaken by Natural England, Fontmell and Melbury Downs SSSI is 32% in an 'unfavourable recovering' condition. The threats to the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC include outdoor leisure and recreational activities, which may increase as a result of new development.</p> <p>The SSSI at Breach Fields is 44% in an 'unfavourable recovering' condition.</p> <p>The plan area also includes 12 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) which are of local importance to wildlife and are therefore less sensitive than the European and National wildlife designation. The SNCI within the plan area mainly comprise woodland, grassland, and aquatic habitats.</p>	No

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	<p>The area also includes two Local Geological Sites. These largely coincide with the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC/SSSI designation.</p> <p>The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area of national importance for landscape, occupies approximately a third of the plan area to the east. The setting of the AONB designation may be vulnerable to new development, which has the potential to compromise the special qualities of this designation.</p> <p>An assessment of heritage assets and the potential impact that the proposed allocations may have on them is set out in Appendix 1. The assessment concludes that none of the proposed allocations would impact on any designated heritage asset.</p> <p>In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the two that could be impacted by proposed allocations are Boundary Cottage (Dorset Historic Environment Record MDO27485) by Policy 1g, and a Roman burial site (HER MDO3645) by Policies 1f and 3c. Draft Policy 2d states that both Listed and Non-listed heritage assets should be conserved by development wherever possible, and development should be sensitive to its heritage and ecological setting. It also adds: "In the event that a site is located within the vicinity of an identified heritage asset, no development should take place unless there has been an archaeological investigation on the potential for additional heritage assets through a geophysical survey and/or evaluation. If identified, appropriate mitigation measures must be taken for their protection. Proposals to bring redundant and/or vacant historic buildings' which is missing in the list of amendments." Furthermore, Policy 5 in the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 provides protection to designated and non-designated heritage assets. Following the heritage assessment (see Appendix 1), parts of the neighbourhood plan have been amended. This includes adding a reference to Boundary Cottage in Policy 1g with further description in the supporting text. Reference to the Roman burial site has been added to the supporting text to Policies 1f and 3c. As such, it is felt that sufficient safeguards now are in place to protect all identified heritage assets.</p>	
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ii)	Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values	<p>The Council's air quality monitoring regime has not previously identified any exceedances in air quality standards in the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area. The proposals which are likely to come forward through the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to result in a significant increase in airborne contaminants due to the nature and scale of development, and therefore an exceedance in air quality standards is considered unlikely.</p> <p>There are areas of grade 2 'very good' agricultural land within the plan area, and these appear to be mostly in the north-east corner. The majority of the plan area to the west and south is grade 3, and the remainder are grades 4 and 5.</p>	No
iii)	Intensive land-use	The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent which would result in a significant intensification of land use, considering the scale of the development likely to come forward through the plan.	No
g)	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>The environmental designations within the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area and its surrounding areas of national, community or international protection status (see Chapter 3 for further details) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; • European wildlife designations (Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive) • Sites of Special Scientific Interest; • Conservation Areas (outside but immediately adjacent to plan area); • Listed Buildings (including Grade II and Grade II* Listed Buildings); <p>The CC&WWD AONB, which recognises the national importance of the landscape in this area, occupies approximately one third of the plan area, to the east. The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan intends to bring forward small scale and low-density development land either within or adjacent to the AONB at land south of Melbury Motors, at South Bank Farm, and at the Village Hall site on West Lane. These would provide 4, 10 and 3 dwellings respectively. Significant adverse impacts upon the AONB are considered unlikely. Furthermore, the protection provided by Local Plan and NPPF policy</p>	No

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	<p>will prevent development which results in harm to the character of the AONB.</p> <p>There are designated areas of wildlife importance on a local, national and European level within the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan area and its surroundings. The Fontmell and Melbury Downs European Site is sensitive to activities relating to leisure and recreation. The Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan will result in low density housing (14 dwellings) on approximately 1ha of land, approximately 1km from the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC (the SAC lies to the south-east, south, and south-west of the two allocations). Whilst this may result in a degree of additional use of the European Site for leisure and recreation, development of this scale is unlikely to result in significant impacts. The Breach Fields SSSI is sensitive to management practices and pollution from agriculture and runoff; it is unlikely to be significantly affected by proposals in the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan.</p>	
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5 Conclusion

- 5.0.1 The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan area includes sites of the highest environmental importance, some of which are greatly sensitive to the threats which may be posed by new development. However, the scope of Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan, and limited allocations for development, are such that these sensitive environmental assets are unlikely to be significantly affected by the plan.
- 5.0.2 The purpose of this consultation is to seek confirmation from the statutory environmental consultees that they concur with the view that a full SEA is not required for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.0.3 Initial consultation with the statutory bodies highlighted that Historic England had reservations over the conclusion of the SEA screening, citing insufficient evidence to support the conclusion that a full SEA was not required. Additional assessment of heritage assessments within the Plan area was therefore undertaken. Following inclusion of this assessment within the SEA screening, Historic England confirmed that they have no objection to the view that a full SEA is not required. Natural England maintained their position, that they agree with the conclusions of the SEA screening, through both rounds of consultation. Following the latter consultation, the Environment Agency also added that they consider there to be no potential significant environmental effects that relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 5.0.4 This report can therefore conclude that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan is not required.

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6 Appendix I: Assessment of Heritage Assets

- 6.0.1 The following is an assessment of the potential impact on heritage assets for each of the proposed development sites in the emerging Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan. The assessment has been undertaken by James Weir, Senior Conservation Officer at Dorset Council, and was completed in December 2020. This assessment was updated in March 2021 to include heritage assets within the vicinity of the Village Hall site.

6.1. POLICY 1E ST ANNE'S CLOSE, GUYS MARSH (SITE 1)

- 6.1.1 The site (c. 0.13 ha) comprises an area of hardstanding (seemingly disused tennis courts) situated in an area of late 20th century housing associated with the adjacent HMP Guy's Marsh, which opened in 1960.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.1.2 The site is not in a Conservation Area and does not contain any designated or non-designated heritage assets and neither the surrounding housing nor the prison have been identified as such. There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site, nor does it have a discernible relationship with those in the wider surroundings. The only designated heritage asset within 1km of the site is Crocker's Farmhouse (Grade II; 1324585), located 900 m to the S. The elements of the assets' setting which contribute to their significance are likely to include its immediate agricultural landscape and any relevant relationships to buildings/structures around it (e.g. separately listed Outbuilding (Grade II; 1172418). Taking this into account, along with the intervening distance and lack of visual connection, it is not considered that development of the site has the potential to affect its significance.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.1.3 Approximately 200m to the SW of the site is Blackhorse Cottage (MDO27495), which is listed in the RCHME Inventory as a late 18th/early 19th century cottage and is likely to be considered a non-designated heritage asset. As it is not listed, the asset would be considered to be of local importance. The site has no discernible visual or non-visual relationship with the asset. The asset is recorded in the 19th century as an inn and may have originated as a farmhouse or related dwelling. The elements of the asset's setting which contribute to its significance are likely to include its surrounding undeveloped agricultural landscape; its possible spatial and functional relationship with Lydfords Farm to the SW; its spatial relationship with a section of widened road, which forms a green to the E of the building; and the resulting visual experience from the road, where it occupies a prominent position. Taking the above into account, it is not considered that development of the site has the potential to affect the significance of the asset.

6.2. POLICY 1F LAND S OF MELBURY MOTORS, CANN COMMON (SITE 7)

- 6.2.1 The site (c. 0.21 ha) comprises a small area of agricultural land at the junction of the B3081 and Dinah's Hollow at the west end of a row of 20th century housing.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.2.2 The site is not in a Conservation Area and does not contain any designated or non-designated heritage assets, though it is within an AONB. There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. The Glyn Arms (Grade II; 1110319) is situated approximately 390m to the ESE of the site and there is no discernible visual or non-visual relationship with the site. The contribution of setting to its significance is likely to include: its spatial relationship with the loose agglomeration of houses that formed the hamlet of Cann Common; and its visual experience from the B3081, where its position and orientation both emphasise its prominence from the road and maintain a sense of a public house setting. Taking the above into account, it is not considered that development of the site has the potential to affect the significance of the asset.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.2.3 The site is approximately 160m to the SW of the site of a Roman burial discovered in 1916 (MDO3645). There is potential on the site for finds of a similar date and of similar local/regional importance. Any features on the site would be truncated or destroyed by development and therefore it is likely that further archaeological investigations, including trench evaluation, would be required.
- 6.2.4 The site is within 200m of a number of buildings identified in the RCHME Inventory and which would likely be considered to be non-designated heritage assets (including Boundary Cottage, MDO27485; Box Cottage, MDO27486; Plum Tree Cottages, MDO27487; Chapel Cottage, MDO27488). These are not listed and would therefore be considered to be of local importance. The elements of their setting contributing to their significance are likely to include: their visual experience from the roadway; and the loose, low-density development around them which characterises their historic setting as part of the hamlet. Development on the site would be small-scale and continues a legible pattern of development along the B3081 and is therefore unlikely to result in harm to the significance of these assets.

6.3. POLICY 1G SOUTHBANK FARM, CANN COMMON (SITE 6)

- 6.3.1 The site (c. 0.93 ha) comprises a vacant late 20th-century farmhouse and outbuildings immediately S of Ponsonby Farm.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.3.2 There are no designated heritage assets on the site and it is not within a Conservation Area, though the site is adjacent to an AONB boundary. There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. The site is located c. 425m SSW of Cannfield Farmhouse (Grade II, 1305175). The contribution of setting to its significance is likely to include its undeveloped agricultural surroundings and any spatial/functional relationships with buildings on the farmstead. Taking this into account, it is not considered that development on the site has the potential to affect its significance.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

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- 6.3.3 The site is directly opposite Boundary Cottage (MDO27485), a building identified in the RCHME Inventory and likely to be considered as a non-designated heritage asset. This is not listed and would therefore be considered to be of local importance. The elements of its setting contributing to its significance are likely to include: its visual experience from the roadway; its spatial relationship at the edge ('the 'boundary') of the hamlet; and the loose, low-density development around it which characterises its historic setting as part of the hamlet. Development on the site therefore has the potential to result in harm to the significance through increasing the built density in the vicinity of the asset. However, this could potentially be minimised through layout and landscaping on the site.

6.4. POLICY 1H THE VILLAGE HALL (SITE 5)

- 6.4.1 The site (0.14ha) comprises the current Village Hall for Melbury Abbas and Cann, and associated car parking.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.4.2 There are no designated heritage assets on the site and it is not within a Conservation Area, though the site is within the AONB. There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. The site is located c. 160m SSE of Melbury Abbas Mill (Grade II, 1110280) and c. 180m SSE of Barfoot farmhouse (Grade II, 1110279). The contribution of setting to their significance is likely to include their spatial and functional interrelationships, and their undeveloped agricultural landscape which relates specifically to their historic siting and function.
- 6.4.3 Given the topography, the allocated site will be highly visible from these assets and there is a possibility that development could result in harm to their significance through impacts on their setting. However, it is not considered that development on the site has the potential to cause substantial harm, and any harm could be mitigated through ensuring a minimum quantum and careful design.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.4.4 There are no buildings within the vicinity of the site identified in the RCHME Inventory or any buildings which would likely be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. The nearest non-designated heritage asset is Parhams Farm c. 350m east of the site. This is not listed and would therefore be considered to be of local importance.

6.5. POLICY 3C EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES ALLOCATION, MELBURY MOTORS AND LAND BEHIND (SITE 8)

- 6.5.1 The site (c. 0.35 ha) comprises a 20th-century commercial site to the rear of Melbury Motors.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.5.2 The site is not in a Conservation Area and does not contain any designated or non-designated heritage assets, though it is within an AONB. There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. The Glyn Arms (Grade II; 1110319) is situated

approximately 420m to the SE of the site and there is no discernible visual or non-visual relationship with the site. The contribution of setting to its significance is likely to include: its spatial relationship with the loose agglomeration of houses that formed the hamlet of Cann Common; and its visual experience from the B3081, where its position and orientation both emphasise its prominence from the road and maintain a sense of a public house setting. Taking the above into account, it is not considered that development of the site has the potential to affect the significance of the asset.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 6.5.3 The site is approximately 100m from Boundary Cottage (MDO27485), a building identified in the RCHME Inventory and likely to be considered as a non-designated heritage asset. This is not listed and would therefore be considered to be of local importance. The elements of its setting contributing to its significance are likely to include: its visual experience from the roadway; its spatial relationship at the edge ('the 'boundary') of the hamlet; and the loose, low-density development around it which characterises its historic setting as part of the hamlet. The site is already partly developed and any additional small-scale development for employment use is unlikely to affect the significance of the asset.
- 6.5.4 The site is approximately 70m to the NW of the site of a Roman burial discovered in 1916 (MDO3645). Though the site is already partially developed, there is potential on the undeveloped parts of the site for finds of a similar date and of similar local/regional importance. Any features on the site would be truncated or destroyed by development and therefore it is likely that further archaeological investigations, including trench evaluation, would be required.

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7 Appendix II: Historic England first consultation response

Dear Philip

Thank you for your consultation on the SEA Screening for the emerging Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan. From our records this would appear to be our first introduction to the specific aspirations of this Plan's community.

The focus of our attention in such exercises is whether the Plan in question proposes to allocate sites for development and the Screening Report identifies 3 sites proposed as allocations. Where such allocations are proposed we look to see that they are supported by appropriate evidence to demonstrate conformity with national policy for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and where SEA Screening is concerned evidence to demonstrate that significant environmental effects in terms of harmful impact on heritage assets are unlikely.

The Screening Report identifies the scope of nationally designated heritage assets which exists in the Plan area and concludes that "Proposals in the Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to have an impact on any of these heritage assets as none are near to the allocated sites." However, no evidence is provided within the Report of how this conclusion has been arrived at, and distance between assets and proposed development is not in itself automatically an adequate gauge of likely impact. The draft Plan may have evidence within it which can be drawn upon, and may have been so though without reference in the Report, but this document has not been made available. We have also looked at the Plan's website and although there is notionally a page intended to include documents which might contain relevant evidence there are no documents on it.

Based on the information provided we are therefore reluctantly obliged to advise that we do not believe there is sufficient evidence associated with the Screening Report to allow for the conclusion that a full SEA is not required. This is not to assert that a full SEA is required. We would therefore encourage a review of the Report – and possibly the evidence base produced to date in support of the Plan – in accordance with our respective guidance on The Setting of Heritage Assets, Site Allocations, and SEAs. Although we would have provided relevant links to our website on previous occasions I include them again here, together with that for our general guidance on Neighbourhood Planning.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>

The process for determining whether heritage assets are likely to be affected or harmed by the proposed site allocations may be a simple and straightforward exercise which your authority's own conservation team is able to advise on or assist with. For that reason I have copied in Alison Turnock to this response. Such an exercise may also be able to identify whether, should the principle of the allocations be acceptable, the policies should then contain specific criteria to ensure development does not harm relevant heritage assets, and possibly be modified as appropriate to ensure levels of proposed development are consistent with that objective.

Once the Screening Report has been reviewed we would be happy to be consulted again and update our advice as appropriate. Until that time we must formally on a default basis disagree with the view that a full SEA is not required.

Kind regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places Adviser South West

Strategic Environmental Assessment: Screening Report

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

8 Appendix III: Natural England first consultation response

Dear Philip,

Thank you for your consultation. Natural England agree with the conclusion in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report Consultation Draft that a SEA will not be required for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Nick Squirrell

Conservation and Planning Lead Advisor

Dorset Team

Wessex Area Team

Natural England

9 Appendix IV: Historic England second consultation response

Dear Sam

Thank you for your revised SEA Screening Opinion consultation on the emerging Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan.

We are pleased to see that our advice on the previous SEA Screening consultation has been followed and that this has led to a more thorough assessment of relevant heritage considerations to inform the Screening outcome. We are also pleased to note that the findings of the site assessments carried out by your conservation officer have prompted the community to modify the Plan to accommodate his recommendations for the protection and enhancement of heritage assets in accordance with overarching national and local policy.

On that basis we have no objection to the view that a full SEA is not required. This position assumes that your conservation officer is also happy with that conclusion, how the Plan has accommodated his advice, and its provisions generally.

We hope you agree that the approach your authority ended up adopting for this SEA Screening procedure, in ensuring that heritage considerations are appropriately evaluated, can if implemented from the outset help save time and effort in such exercises and thereby achieve an efficiency of benefit to all concerned.

Kind regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places Adviser

Historic England | South West

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Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

10 Appendix V: Natural England second consultation response

Dear Mr Williams,

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan- SEA screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 12 April 2021.

I can confirm that Natural England agree with the conclusions and hold no further comment regarding the SEA screening.

Yours sincerely,

James Gale

Lead Adviser, Sustainable Development

Dorset Team

Wessex Area Team

11 Appendix VI: Environment Agency second consultation response

Sam Williams
North Dorset District Council
Nordon Salisbury Road
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 7LL

Our ref: WX/2006/000033/OR-16/IS1-L01
Your ref:

Date: 07 May 2021

Dear Sam,

SEA Scoping Opinion - Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighborhood Plan

Thank you for consulting us on the Strategic Environmental Assessment screening report for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan. My apologies for the delay in providing our response. We aim to reduce flood risk and protect and enhance the water environment. Based on our review of the draft plan, we think there are **no** potential significant environmental effects that relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area.

There are areas of fluvial flood risk and watercourses within the neighbourhood plan area, however on the basis that future development is steered away from these areas as currently proposed, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to cover the management of flood risk.

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment. For your information, 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. This is available at:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/consider-environment-neighbourhood-plans/>

If you have any queries regarding our response please get in touch at swx.sp@environment-agency.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Pearce
Planning Advisor

Email – swx.sp@environment-agency.gov.uk