

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

Prepared on behalf of Shaftesbury Town Council

SHAFTESBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW
PREPARED DECEMBER 2024, UPDATED MAY 2025

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review is likely to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitat Regulations Assessment in order to comply with the requirements set out in European legislation relating to the environment.

BACKGROUND

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:

“to 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”.

The SEA Directive is transcribed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Regulation 15(1)(e) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires one of the following documents to be submitted alongside a neighbourhood development plan:

- (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 or the modification proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination.

Although a Habitat Regulations Assessment screening determination is not specified on the list of documents that needs to be submitted by a qualifying body, the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations do make clear in para 17 that the local planning authority must provide the Examiner with information in accordance with regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Government guidance¹ summarises the position by saying “In some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This initial assessment process is commonly referred to as a ‘screening’ assessment.”

A screening assessment is therefore needed in order to understand whether a fuller environmental assessment of the plan will be required in line with European Directives, and whether further information needs to be provided in relation to the possible requirement for a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

¹ NPPG Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 11-027- 20190722 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

Following consultation with the statutory bodies (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) the screening determination is normally made by the Local Planning Authority in agreement with the qualifying body for the Neighbourhood Plan, given their respective responsibilities for preparing and making the Neighbourhood Plan.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan area was designated by North Dorset District Council in September 2017. It follows the parish boundaries, as shown in Figure 1.1.

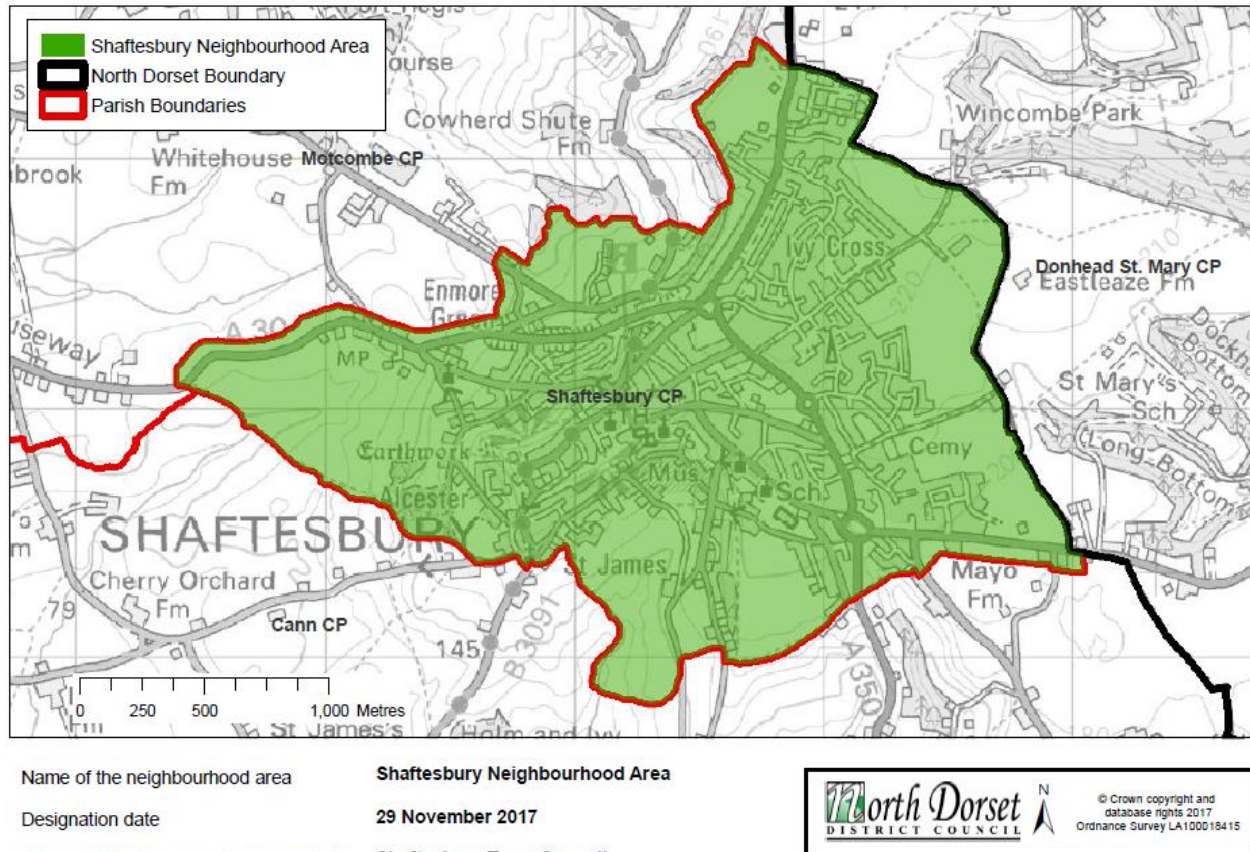


Figure 1.1: the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan area

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (MADE) AND PREVIOUS SCREENING

The made Neighbourhood Plan was originally subject to a screening determination in June 2019. This concluded that neither an SEA or HRA were required. The Screening Determination Statement was published as part of the examination documents at that time² is attached as Appendix 1.

As such, the original screening assessment and resulting determinations has been used to inform the basis of the screening for this review, updated and refreshed as necessary.

²

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/283410/04+Shaftesbury+SEA+determination+and+appendices.pdf/a13806ea-0bc0-e18c-4247-d7f475a6c8ef>

THE LOCAL PLAN CONTEXT

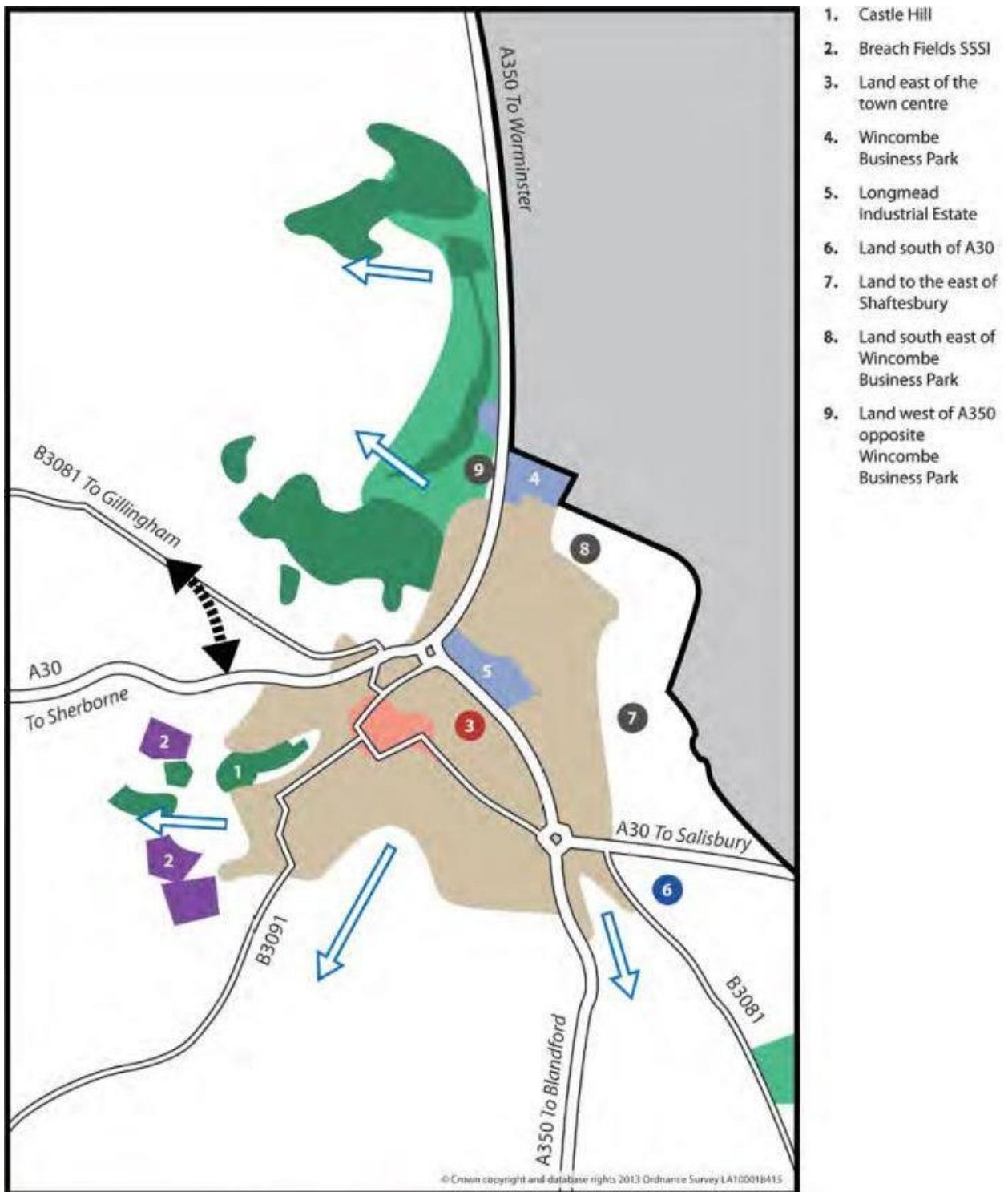


Figure 1.2: the 2016 Local Plan key diagram for Shaftesbury

The Local Plan was adopted in January 2016, replacing much of the 2003 Local Plan (although some non-strategic policies remain saved).

The 2016 Local Plan anticipates at least 1,140 dwellings will be built in Shaftesbury between 2011 and 2031. A minimum of 7.1 hectares of employment land is also to be provided by 2031.

The key spatial aspects of the refreshed 2016 Local Plan strategy are:

- focusing housing growth on the flat plateau land to the east of the town, north of the A30 (as at April 2015 some 523 dwellings had been built, a further 167 dwellings had consent, and land identified for about 80 more dwellings)
- allowing some growth (in the region of 400 new homes) on smaller sites to the north of the town on either side of the A350 (near Wincombe Business Park);
- locating the bulk of new employment uses on land to the south of the A30 (on a greenfield site comprising 7 hectares of land as allocated in the 2003 Local Plan) – noting that additional sites could also be allocated through the neighbourhood planning process;
- making the land to the east of the town centre (west of Christy's Lane) the focus for regeneration that could include community facilities with supporting retail and housing provision (no estimate of housing potential given);
- ensuring that all development, is accommodated within landscape and biodiversity constraints and enhances the town's historic character.

In early 2021 Dorset Council published the first draft of its new Local Plan, which will eventually replace the North Dorset Plan. This plan is now being progressed as part of a more streamlined process of plan-making, and is anticipated to be finalized in late 2027. Whilst the first draft is not given any significant weight in planning decisions, and is likely to change as a result of the revisions to national planning policy and the housing target (as published in December 2024) it is noted that the first draft did not propose any further growth around Shaftesbury other than the sites already planned and windfall development within the settlement boundary.

2 INFORMATION ASSESSED

The significance of the effect of a Neighbourhood Plan on the environment depends on the proposals within the plan, and the environmental sensitivity of the area. The following formed the basis for the previous screening opinion, and has been refreshed as part of this review.

THE FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

VISION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The vision for the neighbourhood plan is shown below, and is proposed to have a very minor change through the inclusion of the final four words (underlined):

Shaftesbury is the best example of how an historic, hilltop market town adapts and thrives in the 21st century, working towards net-zero emissions whilst keeping its unique identity and character and respecting its beautiful countryside setting and nationally renowned views.

The key objectives identified are that planning decisions should:

- Support projects and proposals that go beyond the current standards for sustainable development, including zero carbon, significant biodiversity benefits and the take-up of sustainable transport modes;
- Support the vibrancy of the town centre, with its independent shops and markets, and strong association with arts/crafts
- Ensure further housing and employment provision reflects the needs of local residents and businesses – in this review we have added in specific policies to ensure the sites that are likely to come forward within the town are sensitively developed
- Protect important green spaces and corridors, and maximise their potential for recreation, walking and cycling links and as wildlife areas
- Make sure that new buildings are of high quality that complement the best of Shaftesbury whilst being environmentally friendly
- Establish that the social, educational, healthcare and road infrastructure is sufficient for future needs, and that any improvements are delivered in a timely manner.

REVISED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

The made plan included 24 policies in total under five themes (Town Centre; Housing and Employment; Green Infrastructure; Design and Heritage; and Community, Leisure & Tourism). All of these policies have been carried forward, with amendments being made as considered appropriate. The main changes to these policies (at Regulation 14) are summarised below, and more detail can be found in the modifications statement.

Policy	Change summary
SFTC 1 - The Town Centre and priorities for development	No change
SFTC 2 - The primary shopping area and main frontages	A relatively minor change has been made to the primary shopping area, to reflect the lack of retail within the southernmost part of Salisbury Street which is now primarily residential.
SFTC 3 – The character and design of the historic town centre	Very minor change (changing ‘may be considered’ to ‘may be supported’ in regarding to using more energy

	efficient glazing units in traditional shop fronts)
SFTC 4 - Congestion and the need for adequate parking in the town centre	A minor change has also been made to the Town Centre Map to include the Coppice Street Car Park which is now operational, as part of the off- street parking spaces serving the town centre
SFHE1 - Sustainability of new developments	<p>This policy has been updated to include an appropriate housing target for the area, and to reiterate support for maintaining the settlement boundary in light of the fact that the housing land supply exceeds the housing target. It also allocates five potential infill sites within the settlement boundary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) – the last remaining part of the allocated site from the 2003 Local Plan saved policy SB8, which has not yet come forward and has an estimated capacity of 60 dwellings; - The former ATS Euromaster site, which has planning permission for 24 dwellings but has not yet been built - Land adjoining Lidl, Christy’s Lane – which has planning permission for 41 retirement apartments but has not yet been built - Barton Hill House and grounds, Barton Hill – is a redevelopment opportunity identified through the Neighbourhood Plan following the decision to close Shaftesbury School’s boarding provision - Post Office / Police Station site – a redevelopment opportunity identified through the Neighbourhood Plan in light of the reduction in services (the ‘front desks’ closed at the Police Station in 2015) <p>Additional detail on south of these sites is provided in supplementary policies SFHE1a-d that takes account of the localised constraints and overarching strategy and policies of the development plan.</p>
SFHE2 - Large-scale housing developments in Shaftesbury	This policy has been revised to be more easily understood / applied, but is not significantly different from the existing policy in its content.
SFHE3 - Attracting and retaining employment	This policy has been updated to reflect the outline planning permission on land to the south of the A30 and range of employment uses permitted on the area within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary. Further detail has been added in respect of the design approach to this site.
SFHE4- Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corrido	No change
SFGI1 - Important and locally valued green spaces	Minor amendments to the policy wording to seek to ensure it remains consistent with Green Belt policy, and the related maps has been amended to extend the LGS at Breach Common (to better align with the boundary), and

	include a new LGS provided as part of the greenspace for the housing development and important for its landscape link to the Fontmell and Melbury Downs. Several Important Treed Areas (ITAs) have been added / extended.
SFGI2 - Shaftesbury's topography and position in the landscape	An additional paragraph has been added to the policy to highlight the requirement to address the geological instability of the steep and shallow slopes where development is proposed in those areas (based on the geological maps now included in Map SFGI2).
SFGI3 - Shaftesbury's Green Infrastructure network	Minor changes have been made for clarity, to give highlight the importance of wildlife corridors and choice of planting (to take into account the species' resilience to climate change).
SFGI4 - Dark skies	The dark sky guidance has been updated in relation to the correlated colour temperature (CCT), changing this from 3,000 to 2,700K which has been advised by the Cranborne Chase National Landscape team.
SFDH1 – Local Character	Minor amendments have been made to the character zone maps to better match the period of development..
SFDH2 - High quality designs	Minor amendments to add information on sustainable design measures based on the recently published Dorset Council sustainability checklist.
SFDH3 - The scale, positioning and orientation of buildings	No change
SFDH4 - Public realm	Minor amendments to improve clarity, including reference to waste bins, signage and other street furniture, and the inclusion of street trees.
SFDH5 - Accommodating vehicles	No change
SFDH6 - Building styles and detailing	Very minor amendments to improve clarity (such as the inclusion of 'local' in reference to the use of traditional buildings).
SFDH7 - Building materials	The expectation that materials should have high sustainability credentials where feasible has been inserted.
SFDH8 - Shaftesbury's unique and fascinating past	Additional wording has been added to clarify the approach to be taken should an archaeological find be uncovered.
SFDH9 - Locally important buildings	Barton Hill House is proposed to be added to the list of Locally Important Historic Buildings.
SFCL1 - Community facilities	Whilst the policy wording has not changed, Map SFCL1 has been updated to include the Mampitts Hub project and new areas of play and recreation space.
SFCL2 - The tourist economy	Whilst the policy wording has not changed, Map SFCL2 has been updated to remove the former TIC building

	(which has now been incorporated into the Morrisons supermarket).
SFCL3 - Safe walking and cycling routes	Whilst the policy wording has not changed, Map SFCL3 has been updated to better reflect the existing routes that have been provided and remaining routes that are proposed.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

In appraising the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, the environmental problems relevant to the plan area, together with the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

- > the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, or higher levels of protection
- > special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
- > exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, and intensive land-use

all need to be taken into account. The following therefore provides an overview of the potential environmental issues relevant to Neighbourhood Plan area.

LANDSCAPE QUALITY

Most of the Plan area, including the town of Shaftesbury, sits within the rolling vales of the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour character area. The countryside around Shaftesbury is described as a tranquil, peaceful landscape, of undulating, rolling hills with an irregular pattern of farmland, fields, small streams and brooks, dense hedgerows and copses. It provides a rural setting for Shaftesbury which overlooks the area. Shaftesbury is a major source of light pollution, together with Guy's Marsh prison to the south-west of the town.

The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) covers a small section of the neighbourhood plan area and extends to the east, north and south of the town. As such, development within the CCNL, and also on those edges of the town facing out to the CCNL, may impact on the enjoyment of this nationally valued landscape. The landscape character has recently been re-assessed (2024) and does not appear to highlight any particular issues relating to Shaftesbury town.

BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY ASSETS

An area of the Breach Fields SSSI lies to the west of the town, south of Long Cross, of particular interest as an area of lowland neutral grassland. Further south, within adjoining Cann parish, are two further areas of Breach Fields SSSI close together. Most of the SSSI is in a favourable condition, with the exception of the southernmost area that lies in the adjoining parish of Cann and which is recorded as being in an unfavourable but recovering condition (as last assessed in 2011).

There are a number of areas within Melbury Abbas and Compton Abbas parishes, all to the east of the A350, which form part of the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SSSI, which is also a Special Area of Conservation (of European importance). The citation for this site explains that it is part of the edge of the chalk escarpment and holds unimproved chalk grassland and scrub communities which have high botanical interest (including some rare orchids that do not occur locally elsewhere) and high entomological interest (the diversity of grassland and scrub

provides excellent habitat for many insects, including rare butterflies). Chalk grassland habitats are necessarily naturally low in nutrients, and therefore the enrichment of soils through the deposition of atmospheric nitrogen (as a result of pollution from traffic) represents a potential threat to the integrity of these European sites, as does potential recreational pressures.

In addition to these nationally and internationally important sites, a number of sites of local nature conservation importance have also been designated. These include Pensbury Plantation to the north of the town. To the west of the town Castle Hill is an SNCI, and two further areas of land at Breach Fields, between the different parts of the SSSI.

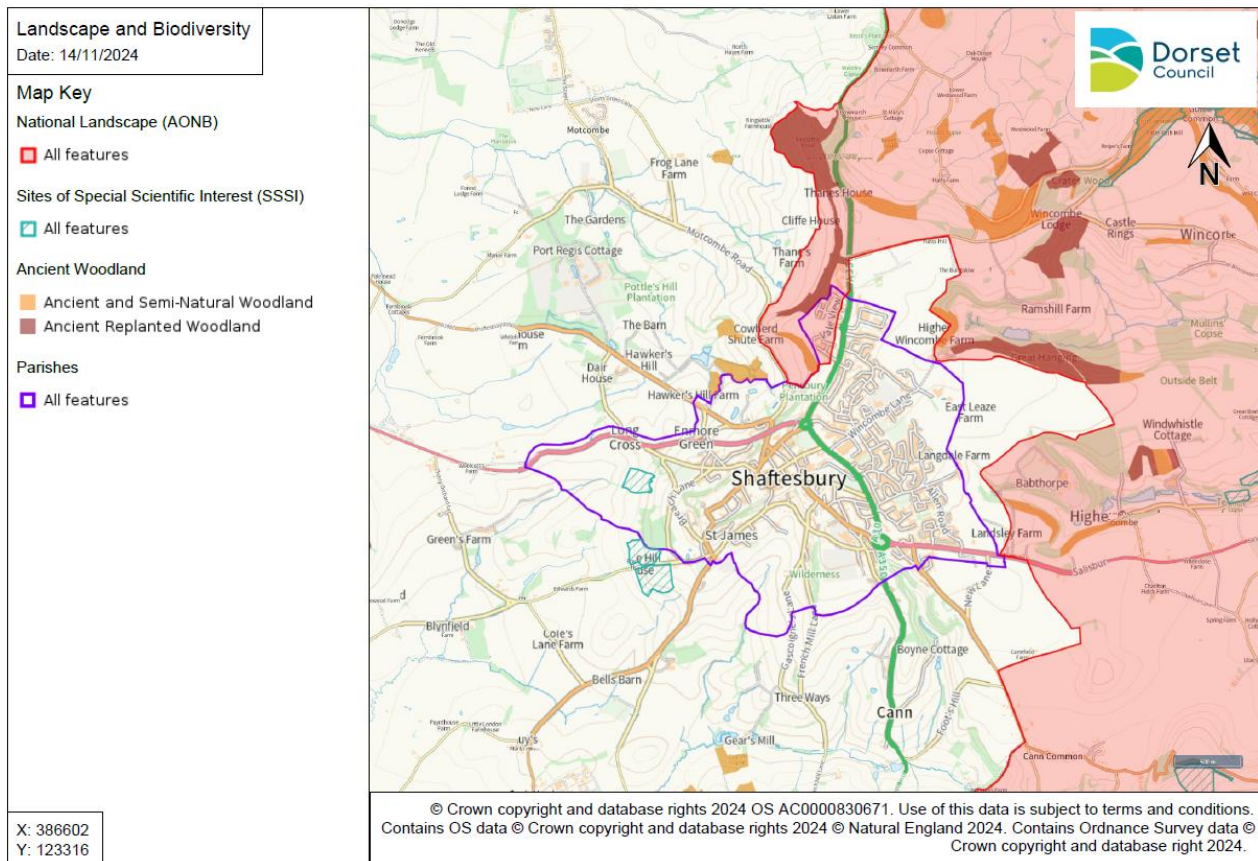


Figure 2.1: Map extract courtesy of Dorset Council (2024) showing CCNL and wildlife sites in relation to the parish.

HERITAGE ASSETS

There are 275 Listed buildings or structures within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The most significant of these are:

- Park Wall, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury: Grade 1
- The remains of Shaftesbury Abbey, Shaftesbury: Grade 1
- Church of St Peter, High Street, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*
- Ox House, 13, Bimport, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*
- Pensbury House, Motcombe Road, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*
- The Grosvenor Arms Hotel, 5 And 7, High Street, Shaftesbury: Grade 2*

Much of the built-up part of the town, south of the A30, is designated as a Conservation Area. There is no conservation area appraisal, but a major study of the historic town was carried out as part of the Dorset Historic Towns Study in 2011.

There are also 6 scheduled monuments in the plan area:

- Abbey precinct wall on Gold Hill
- Fishponds S of Layton Lane
- Late Saxon urban area E of Castle Hill
- Medieval fortified house at Castle Hill
- Shaftesbury Abbey
- Site of St John's Church

The Scheduled Monument of the Medieval fortified house at Castle Hill is on the Historic England At Risk Register, due to its declining condition and vulnerability to scrub / tree growth. There are a significant number of non-scheduled monuments in the parish.

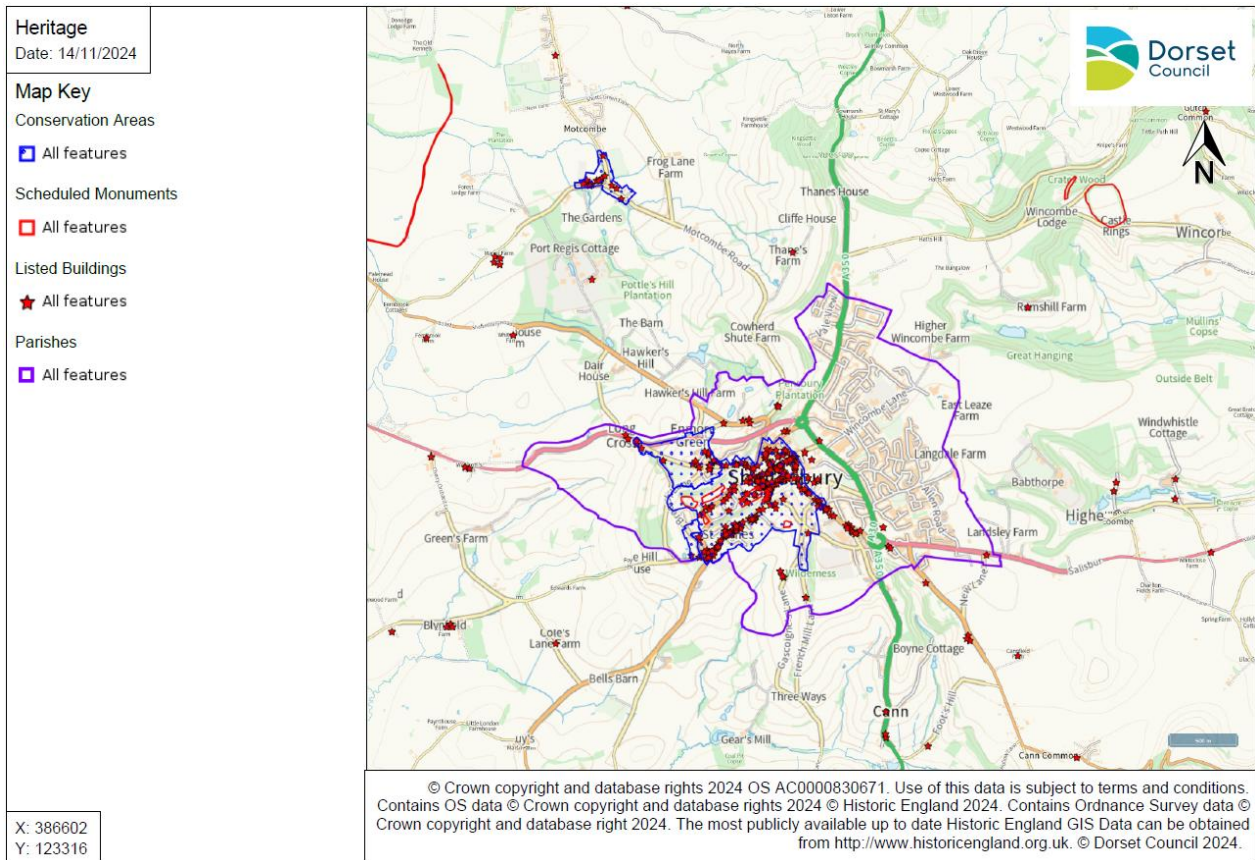


Figure 2.2: Map extract courtesy of Dorset Council (2024) showing scheduled monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas in relation to the parish

There are no registered historic parks or gardens in or close to the area, but Park Walk in Shaftesbury (to the south of the Shaftesbury Abbey ruins) is a locally listed park. This was originally open pasture for the Abbey. Robert Dyneley, Lord of the Manor, created Park Walk and gave it to the town in 1753.

FLOOD RISK AND WATER QUALITY

There are no areas at risk from fluvial flooding within the parish. There are various areas at risk from surface water flooding throughout the area. The area around Enmore Green, is also potentially more susceptible to groundwater flood risk.

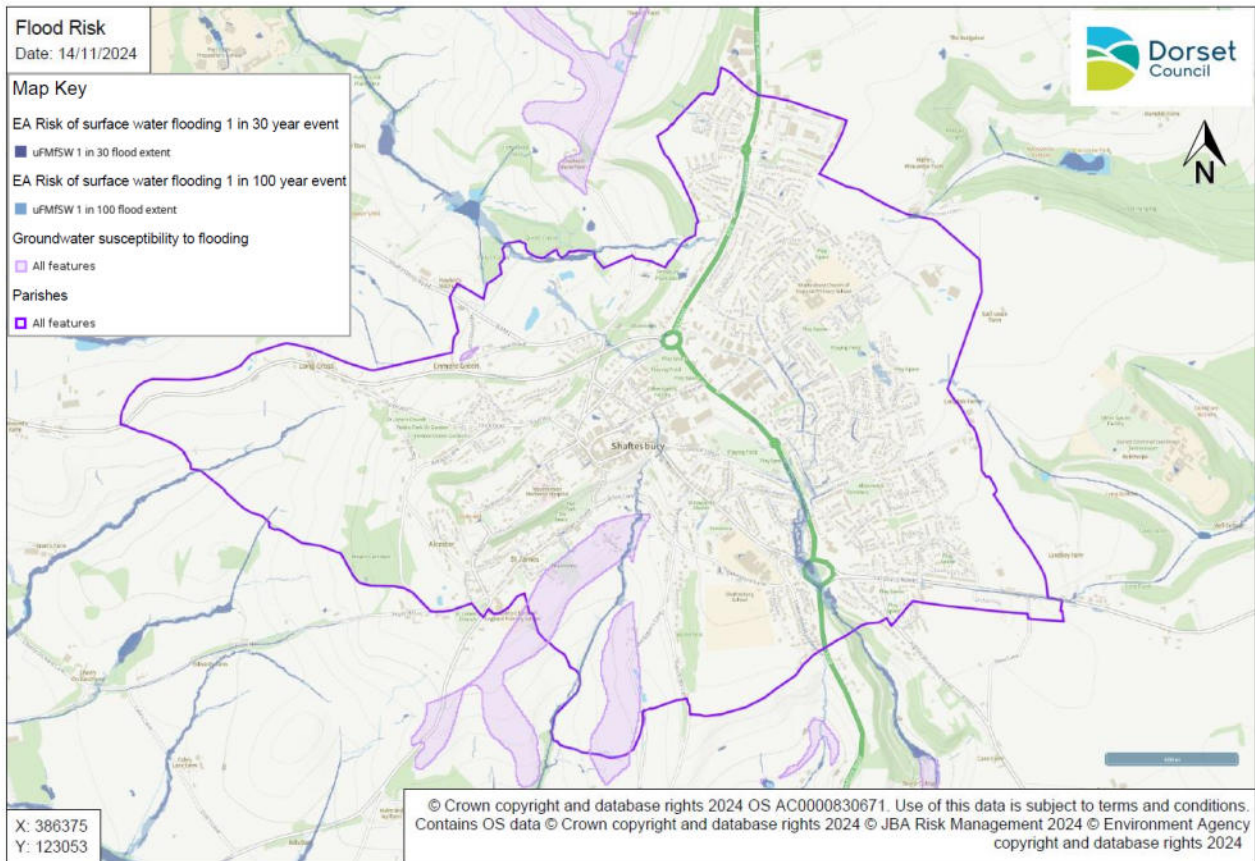


Figure 2.3: Map extract courtesy of Dorset Council (2024) showing flood risk areas in relation to the parish

AGRICULTURAL LAND VALUE

The farmland east and south-east of the town is primarily Grade 2 (very good), with Grade 3 (moderate) to Grade 4 (poor) quality across much of the remaining area. The best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a.

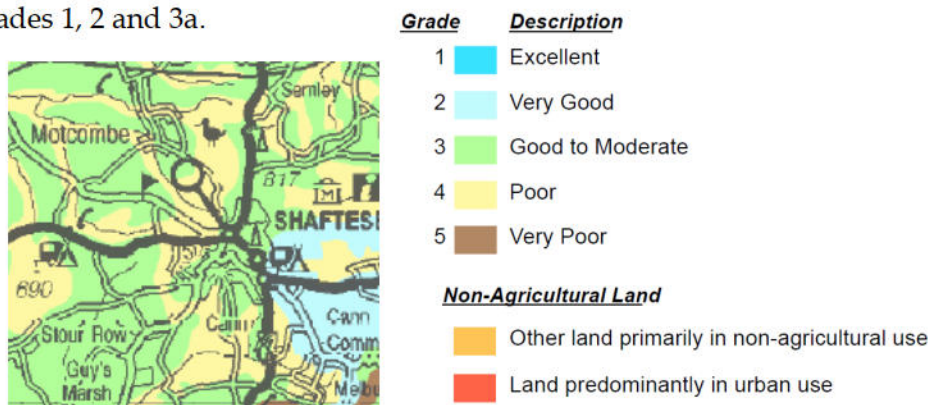


Figure 2.4: Map extract from South West Region 1:250 000* Series Agricultural Land Classification, produced by SWRGU 05/08/2010 Map Reference 10-111f. © Crown copyright © Natural England 2010.

POLLUTION RISKS

Much of the central and eastern parts of the town and the area to the south and east forms lie within a groundwater source protection zone (with inner zones defined on land south of Ivy

Cross roundabout and the Royal Chase roundabout). A more extensive area including much of the town and land to the south is part of the groundwater vulnerability zones.

MAGIC Groundwater Vulnerability / Protection

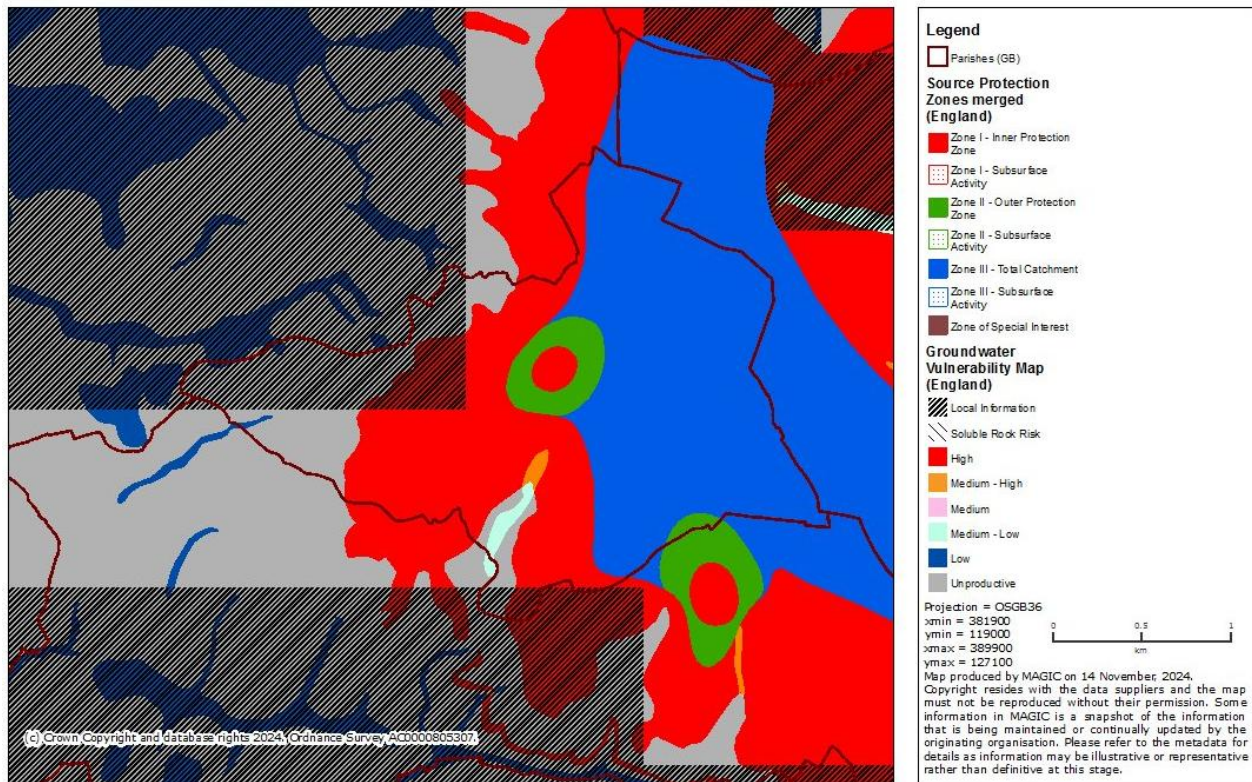


Figure 2.5: Map extract from Magic Map.

There is a historic landfill site at Great Lane in Shaftesbury (no data available) and a disused quarry at Manor Farm, Quarry Lane, Melbury Abbas used for household, industrial and commercial waste in the early 1980s. There is a waste recycling company that operates from Wincombe Business Park, as well as the Household Recycling Centre

There is a sewage treatment works about 1km to the south of the town in Cann parish.

There are no Air Quality Management Areas in the area.

MINERALS AND WASTE PROPOSALS

There are mineral safeguarding areas within the neighbourhood plan area, but these are unlikely to impact on any sites within the settlement boundary.

3 THE SCREENING PROCESS

PROCESS

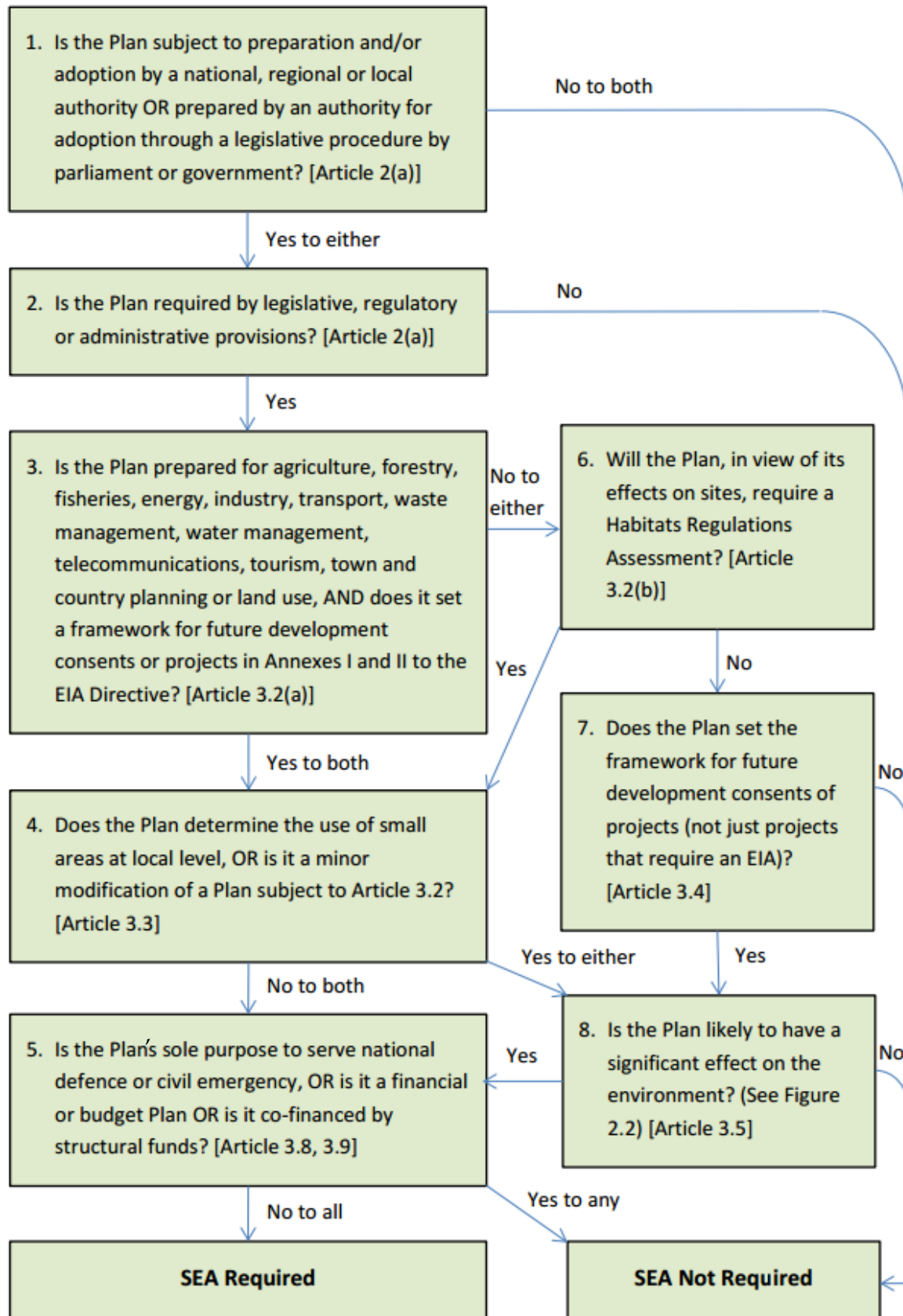


Figure 3.1: Diagram Summarising the SEA Screening Process

Question in SEA screening flow chart	Response
<p>1. Is the Plan 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? [Article 2(a)]</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared by Shaftesbury Town Council and made part of the development plan by Dorset Council through a legislative procedure.</p>
<p>2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? [Article 2(a)]</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>There is no requirement to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood Plans are prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).</p>
<p>3. Is the plan 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 consents or projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? [Article 3.2(a)]</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes, and will provide guidance that may influence decisions for future development which fall under Annex II of the EIA Directive as an urban development project.</p>
<p>4. Does the plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Article 3.2? [Article 3.3]</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan, when made, will form part of the development plan for the area which is used to determine the use of small areas at a local level. It has the potential to allocate land for development, or make amendments to existing land use allocations.</p>
<p>8. Is the Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment? [Article 3.5]</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>The special natural characteristics of the area relate primarily to its landscape quality (insofar as it contributes to the setting of the CCNL), nature conservation interest (including nationally designated sites), the many heritage assets, and higher grade agricultural land.</p> <p>The Plan does not propose to extend or allocate further development outside of the settlement boundary. The site allocations are within the built-up area and include criteria that reflects local constraints (such as heritage assets), and would be read alongside the existing development plan policies. The allocations do not</p>

specify the quantum of development per site, providing leeway for this to be determined through the development management process, taking into account any site-specific constraints.

The Neighbourhood Plan proposals are not considered to be likely to have an appreciable effect upon the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, either as a result of increased vehicular emissions on the roads adjacent to the SAC or through potential recreational pressure.

Further detail is provided in Figure 3.3 and Appendix 2.

Figure 3.2 – a summary of the SEA screening process for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan, following the procedure outlined in Figure 3.1.

ASSESSMENT BASIS

The criteria for assessing the likely significance of effects are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive, Schedule 1 of the Regulations and set out below.

Schedule 1 of the Regulations	Assessment
1. The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:	
– the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan will be part of the development plan for the local area, but it does not propose to amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan, and the site allocations either have planning permission, have previously been allocated / part of the Local Plan strategy, or are modest infill sites within the settlement boundary and therefore possible under the existing Local Plan.
– the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The Neighbourhood Plan will need to be taken into account in future development plans for the area, but does not limit future policy direction
– the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	Neighbourhood Plans are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised.
– environmental problems relevant to the plan;	The landscape character assessment of the CCNL was recently updated (2024) and does not highlight any specific issues relating to the edge of Shaftesbury in relation to the nearest character areas. There is one heritage asset on the national at risk register, however its decline is linked primarily to

	<p>its vulnerability to scrub / tree growth.</p> <p>Just outside the Neighbourhood Plan area there is a nationally designated wildlife site in an unfavourable condition, but which is now recovering.</p>
<p>– 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).</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Plans are land use plans and cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of development that is a county matter (mineral extraction and waste development). They are required to take into account European directives, such as the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).</p>
<p>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p>	
<p>– the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,</p>	<p>Based on the current plan's scope the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant on the local environment, and any impact (positive or negative) is likely to be local in its impact. The majority of the policy intentions relate to respecting the town's character and environmental features. No development outside of the settlement boundary is proposed.</p>
<p>– the cumulative nature of the effects,</p>	
<p>– the transboundary nature of the effects,</p>	
<p>– the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),</p>	
<p>– the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Plans cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of development that falls within Annex 1 to Council Directive 85/337/EEC.</p>
<p>– the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, > exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, > intensive land-use, > the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status. 	<p>The special natural characteristics of the area relate primarily to its landscape quality (insofar as it contributes to the setting of the CCNL), nature conservation interest (in particular the nationally designated sites and potential for increased recreation pressure / pollution), the many heritage assets, and higher grade agricultural land.</p> <p>Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan or allocate further housing or employment development outside of the settlement boundary, and the quantum of homes / development to be delivered on the sites that are allocated would be informed by the local constraints as part of the development management process, no significant impacts are</p>

	<p>considered likely.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan proposals are not considered to be likely to have an appreciable effect upon the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC. Shaftesbury is a main town with a range of jobs and facilities, and therefore it is unlikely that the proposed allocations would result in a notable increase in vehicular traffic along the routes that pass alongside the SAC. Similarly there are recreational opportunities within and closer to the town, and therefore the potential increase in recreational pressure within the SAC from the proposed allocations is unlikely to be notable.</p>
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Figure 3.3 – assessment of the likely significance of effects

CONSULTATION

The draft of this report was shared with the three statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) as part of the Regulation 14 consultation, and their responses are summarised below and appended in full.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

No comment to make.

HISTORIC ENGLAND

Highlights the requirement for a rigorous assessment of relevant heritage considerations and an understanding of their significance and sensitivity prior to concluding that a full SEA is not required. In particular, an understanding of the setting of relevant heritage assets is required and those some distance from proposed sites can still be impacted upon. The fact that several sites are proposed for development also introduces the possibility of cumulative impacts.

While there are no immediate or automatic concerns over the proposed site allocations, recommend liaison with the Dorset Council heritage team to help address this issue, and would defer to that team and its discretion in determining the suitability of policies which are eventually submitted to Dorset Council for Examination.

NATURAL ENGLAND

Is of the view that, on the basis of the material supplied, significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely (including significant effects on Habitats sites).

The site allocation south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) is in the River Avon SAC Nutrient Neutrality Catchment but provided the Waste Water Treatment Works serves the development outside of the catchment we have no issues with it.

CONCLUSIONS

The consideration of likely significant environmental effects has shown that there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan.

In response to the potential concerns raised by Historic England, Dorset Council consults internally with its heritage team as part of their Regulation 14 response, and raised no heritage concerns regarding the potential impact of the site allocations on the historic environment.

Further commentary on the sites is provided below:

- Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) – part of the allocated site from the 2003 Local Plan saved policy SB8. This site lies on the eastern fringe of Shaftesbury and there are no designated heritage assets in its vicinity. The nearest such assets are a Grade II Listed Building on Christys Lane to the west (Ampersand House - over 600m distance with much intervening development) and the Grade II Wincombe Park over 1.2km distant to the east. There are no HER records of non-designated assets in the area.
- ATS Euromaster site – which has planning permission for 24 dwellings under P/FUL/2021/01338. This application was supported by the Senior Conservation Officer who identified no harm arising to either the setting of the Conservation Area, nor the settings of listed buildings in the vicinity. It was accepted that a condition requiring a programme of investigative archaeological work to be agreed would be sufficient to safeguard and record any archaeological interest on and around the site.
- Land adjoining Lidl, Christy's Lane – which has planning permission for 41 retirement apartments under P/FUL/2023/05051, granted on appeal. The Inspector concluded that the proposal would preserve the historic environment of Shaftesbury, including the settings and significance of nearby listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and the Shaftesbury Conservation Area. Trial trenching within the site had found a limited amount of archaeological material and the Inspector was satisfied that the proposal would not directly or indirectly impact upon any archaeological interests.
- Barton Hill House and grounds, Barton Hill – is a redevelopment opportunity identified through the Neighbourhood Plan following the decision to close Shaftesbury School's boarding provision. The garden wall and gate piers that run along part of the boundary with Barton Hill are Grade II Listed, as is the largely underground Ice House towards the southern boundary. Shaftesbury Conservation Area is approximately 50m from the western site boundary, with intervening development. There are Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area to the west, and Ampersand House, on the opposite side of the junction with Christys Lane, is Grade II Listed. The wider area is described in the Historic Towns Study as "... land immediately east of the town centre that historically formed part of the manor of Barton, which belonged to Shaftesbury Abbey during the medieval period. It is defined to the east by Christy's Lane and to the south by Salisbury Street. It forms a fringe belt to the east of the town and is distinguished by a number of extensive recreation and commercial facilities, with an inter-war and postwar council estate to the south." This also notes "The mature trees in the grounds of Barton Hill House also make a contribution to the green character of this area." and "There is a single historic building in this character area: Barton Hill House, an 18th century house, rebuilt in the 19th century, which comprises a square block in two storeys with gabled attic windows and a central bay on the ground floor. An ice house in the grounds dates

from the 18th century. The house now functions as a boarding house for Shaftesbury School” “Barton Hill House is brick built with ashlar dressings and a slate roof. There are two sections of historic Greensand rubble walls at Barton Hill House and Coppice Street.” And that “investigations in the grounds of Barton Hill House have revealed evidence of Roman activity and medieval settlement together with some residual Saxon pottery” the latter is thought to be the report listed under the planning permission for the erection of a new dormitory in 2009 (2/2009/0382/PLNG). These factors have been taken into account, and referenced in the policy. There is no set quantum of development proposed as it will be influenced by these constraints, with one option simply being the repurposing of the existing accommodation.

- Post Office / Police Station site – a redevelopment opportunity identified through the Neighbourhood Plan in light of the reduction in services (the ‘front desks’ closed at the Police Station in 2015). The site lies within the Shaftesbury Conservation Area, and there are Grade II Listed Buildings to the south, north-west and north, including the garden wall to the Cedars. The buildings within the site are not Listed, but the Post Office is noted as a key building in the Historic Towns Study, described as “perhaps the most visible and notable modern building” (there is no current Conservation Area Appraisal). These factors have been taken into account, and referenced in the policy. In commenting on a recent application for the rear extension of adjoining Grade II The Cedars (P/FUL/2024/05707), the Council’s Conservation Officer noted “The Cedars is a late C18 or early C19 Grade II listed building, with front elevations of the local ashlar greensand stones. Much of the significance of the listed building has been lost with subsequent uses, especially its internal features and rear elevations. ... What remains of the significance of the building is mainly its “L” shape plan form legible from the street along with its front elevations.” There is no set quantum of development proposed as it will be influenced by these constraints, with the retention and repurposing of Post Office building sought.

In response to the River Avon SAC Nutrient Neutrality Catchment issue raised by Natural England, the nearest Waste Water Treatment Work that would serve development is at Almondsbury to the south of the town (https://www.southwest-environmental.co.uk/further%20info/in%20depth/wessex_water_sewage_treatment_works_location_maps.html). Adjoining sites to the north side connect into the existing network that flows westward along Wincombe Lane or south-west through Nettlecombe, away from the catchment. There are no such works to the west of the town that would provide an alternative option falling within the Avon catchment.

In light of this, at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan’s progress, it is concluded that the SEA Directive does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan, and a full Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan will not be required.

APPENDIX 1 – SCREENING DETERMINATION (JULY 2019)



Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Determination Statement

27 June 2019

This statement has been produced to comply with Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations implement European Directive 2001/42/EC. This requires that the effect on the environment of certain plans and programmes should be assessed, including plans prepared for town and country planning or land use. An exception is made for plans that determine the use of a small area at a local level if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan was submitted in February 2019 (see Appendix A). On 25 February 2019 the Screening Report was made available to the statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency). Dorset Council received responses from all of the statutory consultation bodies by 3 April 2019 (see Appendices B, C and D).

In assessing whether an SEA is required, NDDC considers the following to be a summary of the key issues:

1. The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) was adopted in January 2016. A Sustainability Appraisal was produced alongside it, which included a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
2. Policy 2 ('Core Spatial Strategy') of LPP1 states: "*Blandford (Forum and St Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton are identified as the main towns in North Dorset. They will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development.*"
3. Policy 6 ('Housing Distribution') of LPP1 states that at least 1,140 homes will be delivered at Shaftesbury during the period 2011-2031. This equates to approximately 20% of the overall strategic need for the District over the 20-year period. This level of growth reflects Shaftesbury's role as one of the District's four main towns.
4. Proposals for growth in the Neighbourhood Plan as indicated by the 'draft neighbourhood plan policy intentions' in the Screening Report will be of a limited scale. It therefore does not exceed growth envisaged by LPP1 which positions Shaftesbury as one of North Dorset's 'Four Main Towns'. Page 8 of the screening report states: "We are not looking to change the settlement boundary, or identify further land for housing."

5. The Screening Report identifies a comprehensive range of spatial constraints in and around Shaftesbury. These include landscape, bio- and geo-diversity assets, heritage assets, agricultural land value, pollution risks, minerals and waste proposals, and flood risk and water quality.
6. In coming to its conclusion, the Screening Report uses the 'Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Effect on the Environment', as set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. This is set out on pages 16 and 17.
7. Page 16 of the Screening Report states: *"The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan will be part of the development plan for the local area, but it does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development or amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan."*
8. Page 17 of the Screening Report states: *"The majority of the policy intentions relate to respecting the town's character and environmental features. The only additional development outside of the settlement boundary that may be enabled through the draft plan would small scale affordable housing sites adjoining the settlement boundary."* However, since the Screening Report was published, an early draft of the neighbourhood plan (June 2019) has confirmed that is no longer intended to have a specific policy on affordable housing.
9. Page 17 of the Screening Report goes on to state: *"Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate further housing or employment development or amend the settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan, no significant impacts are considered likely. If a policy is included allowing for small scale affordable housing sites adjoining the settlement boundary it may be appropriate for the selection criteria to include consideration of the environmental characteristics of the area."* Again, as with point 8 above, an early draft of the neighbourhood plan (June 2019) confirms that there is no longer an intention to have a specific policy on affordable housing.
10. In its conclusions on page 17, the Screening Report states that: *"there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan. In light of this, at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan's progress, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that the SEA Directive does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan."*
11. Natural England stated in their response that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan and that they concur with the conclusions of the Screening Report. (see Appendix B)
12. Historic England stated in their response that they tend to focus on whether a Plan allocates sites for development. As the Shaftesbury Plan has not such intentions, they confirm that in their view an SEA is not required. (see Appendix C).
13. The Environment Agency responded to say that they agreed with the conclusion that the plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment (see Appendix D).

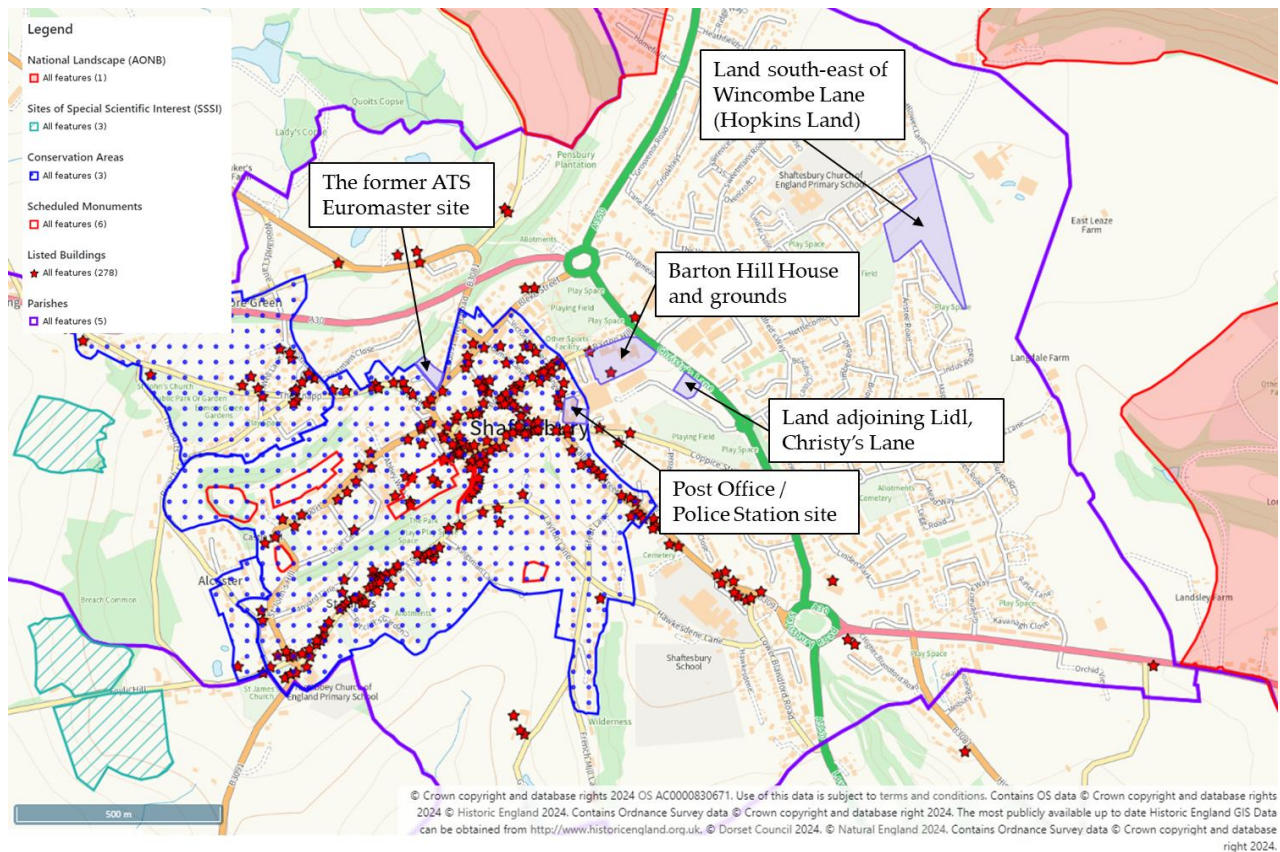
Conclusion

Having considered the contents of the Screening Report, the responses from the consultation bodies, and taking into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to the regulations, **Dorset Council has determined that an SEA of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan is not required.**

APPENDIX 2 – SITE ALLOCATION DETAILS

Site allocations referenced under revised POLICY SFHE1:

- Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land)
- The former ATS Euromaster site
- Land adjoining Lidl, Christy's Lane
- Barton Hill House and grounds
- Post Office / Police Station site



Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land)

This site extends to approximately 2.8ha in total. The site is not subject to any designations, and lies approximately 260m to the SW of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. It is one of the strategic growth areas set out in the Local Plan, and Dorset Council has assessed it as having scope for about 60 more dwellings, alongside any remaining community infrastructure requirements for this area.

Whilst the site was part of the much larger allocation in the 2003 Local Plan saved Policies SB8-10, for the avoidance of doubt this remaining area is allocated for mixed-use development through this Neighbourhood Plan. Local Plan Policy SB9 refers to including a road network which links the A30, Mampitts Lane and Wincombe Lane – this parcel of land is critical to provide the last component of this road, as well as improving footpath and cycleway connections.

The policy proposes that the eastern edge of the development should be landscaped, taking into account its interface with the countryside and safeguarded bypass route, with green pedestrian / cycle corridors linking through the site to connect with the recreation / play areas to the south and west.

Draft Policy wording:

POLICY SFHE1a

Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) is allocated for mixed use development to include predominantly housing, with potential for some smallscale employment / community uses and open space.

The design and layout of the development should ensure the provision of a link road link from the northern end of Maple Road to Wincombe Lane, together with footpath and cycleway connections.

This should be designed to be legible, with street tree planting and appropriately placed and design landmark buildings.

Green corridors with footpath / cycleway corridors should be included to provide safe and attractive connections to the adjoining play / recreation areas to the south and west, and to access the countryside to the north-east. They should link through and work with the SuDS corridor to the east.

Detailed design should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.

The former ATS Euromaster site, New Road

This site extends to approximately 0.25ha in total. The site is not subject to any designations, but does adjoin the Conservation Area, a TPO and is in proximity to a number of Listed Buildings.

Planning permission was granted for 24 dwellings on this site in March 2023 (P/FUL/2021/01338), following an earlier approval for 18 dwellings in 2022 (allowed at appeal). The Conservation Officer supported the application, citing no harm to any of the designated heritage assets identified, including the setting of the Conservation Area.

The latest permission is likely to be built out in the near future, but in the interim, it has been allocated for housing in **Policy SFHE1** to confirm that its development would be appropriate.

Land adjoining Lidl, Christy's Lane

This site extends to approximately 0.25ha in total. The site is not subject to any designations, but there is a TPO on 9 trees on the site frontage. The site lies within the defined town centre area, with vehicular access from Christy's Lane. It is therefore appropriate for a range of uses provided that these help maintain a strong and vibrant retail presence within the town centre area.

A planning application for 41 retirement apartments was submitted by Churchill Retirement Living in September 2023 (P/FUL/2023/05051) and granted on appeal in June 2024. The Inspector confirmed that:

- the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area, including protected trees;
- a three-storey building within the site would not affect how the historic environment, including the settings and significance of listed buildings and significance of non-designated heritage assets therein.

The approved plans for retirement apartments should indirectly support the town centre (through increasing the local population using the shops and services), although the adjoining roads, car park and petrol station are not particularly good neighbours. The noise impact assessment proposed a 2m acoustic fence to the south-east and south-west sides of the site, and

acoustic double glazing and alternative means of ventilation (so that the windows do not need to be opened) to ensure that noise within habitable rooms as a result of the road traffic is kept to an acceptable level, and this was subject to a condition.

Whilst planning consent for the retirement homes has been granted, should this not happen an alternative approach would be to provide commercial/community uses on the ground floor appropriate to a town centre (or alternatively town centre parking), with the potential for flats / apartments above to ensure the efficient use of the site.

Draft Policy wording:

POLICY SFHE1b

Land adjoining Lidl is allocated for either retirement apartments, or as a mixed use development to include town centre uses, which may include residential uses predominantly on the upper floors.

The design and layout of the development should ensure the retention of the avenue of beech trees along Christy's Lane, and residential amenity of occupants, without compromising the detailed design that should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.

Provision should also be made for a footpath / cycleway link through to Tesco's car park (allowing connections to the Town Centre), with best endeavours to secure its delivery.

Barton Hill House and grounds

Barton Hill House, the boarding complex of Shaftesbury School, closed in 2023 due to the falling demand for student accommodation. The property was leased from Dorset Council, who have yet to make a decision on its future.

The total area of the site is 1.2ha. Vehicular access into the grounds is from Barton Hill, with parking provision existing on-site.

The original Barton Hill House dates back to the Victorian period, and although extended is of some local historic interest (and has now been proposed to be locally listed through the Neighbourhood Plan). It is therefore expected that this important building should be retained and re-used. The more recent student accommodation blocks are of little architectural merit, but consideration should be given to their embodied energy and materials in any redevelopment.

There are a number of constraints that will limit the scope for further development within the grounds. The garden wall and gate piers that run along part of the boundary with Barton Hill are Grade II Listed, as is the largely underground Ice House towards the southern boundary. There is also an area Tree Preservation Order dating back to the 1980s, giving protection to the many mature trees within the grounds. On this basis no requirement for a minimum number of dwellings is proposed, as whilst the re-use of the existing buildings would deliver housing (and avoid harm), the extent of any further development will depend on a more detailed assessment of all of these factors.

Draft Policy wording:

POLICY SFHE1c

Barton Hill House and Grounds are allocated for residential use. The original Victorian building should be retained, and any new buildings should respect its status and heritage, and also respect the setting of the Listed wall and Ice House within the grounds.

An arboricultural assessment should be undertaken to ascertain the importance of the many mature trees within the grounds, and the design should ensure that those most important to the character of the area and boundary landscaping are retained.

An archaeological assessment shall be required in accordance with Policy SFDH2.

Detailed design should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.

Post Office / Police Station site

With the closure of public ‘front desks’ at the police station (in 2015), and underutilised elements of the Post Office site, there is scope for some degree of redevelopment within this part of the town centre, which could bring forward a small amount of housing as part of a mixed use scheme. At the current time whilst the landowner’s intent is uncertain, the Neighbourhood Plan has allocated this site in order to highlight its potential for development, which could include housing.

The total area of the site is about 0.4ha. The site lies within the Conservation Area, and the Post Office building is locally listed, and as such should be retained (although alterations sensitive to its historic importance may be possible), rather than redeveloped. However the yard area to the rear and potentially underused upper floors may present an opportunity for further development. The Police Station is typical of its time (1960s), set well back from the street, of little architectural merit and doesn’t make effective use of the site. Whilst it would be possible to consider the two sites separately, it makes sense to consider whether they could be more effectively re-developed as a whole, and how any new buildings can present a positive frontage onto to both Coppice Street and Angel Lane. Both Angel Lane and the lower end of Coppice Street have predominantly greensand buildings (mainly designed for residential use) that reinforce the special character of this area.

On this basis no requirement for a minimum number of dwellings is proposed, as whilst the re-use of the existing buildings would deliver housing (and avoid harm), the extent of any further development within the site will depend on a more detailed assessment of the heritage impacts.

Draft Policy wording:

POLICY SFHE1d

The Police Station and Post Office sites are allocated for town centre uses, and may include residential uses predominantly on the upper floors. Whilst the sites may be developed separately, consideration should be given to ensuring the efficient use of the site as a whole.

The Post Office building should be retained, and any new buildings should respect its landmark status and present a positive frontage onto Coppice Street / Angel Lane.

Detailed design should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.

APPENDIX 3 – STATUTORY CONSULTEE RESPONSES

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

From: [name / email redacted]

Sent: 20 January 2025 11:58

To: Shaftesbury Town Council Office <office@shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review Pre-Submission Consultation

Dear Shaftesbury Town Council,

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the Neighbourhood Plan Review.

We have reviewed the Modifications Statement and have no comment to make.

Regards

[name redacted]

Planning Advisor, Wessex Sustainable Places

Environment Agency | Rivers House, East Quay, Bridgwater, TA6 4YS

HISTORIC ENGLAND

From: [name / email redacted]

Sent: 31 January 2025 12:11

To: Shaftesbury Town Council Office <office@shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk>

Cc: [name / email of Dorset Council Conservation Officer redacted]

Subject: Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review Pre-Submission Consultation

Dear Council Office Team

Thank you for your Regulation 14 and SEA Screening consultations on the review of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan.

Please accept our apologies for responding in this email format. Unfortunately the format of the online response form was not conducive to the nature of comment we wish to make in our role as a statutory consultee.

In responding to such consultations our attention focuses on where Neighbourhood Plans propose to allocate sites for development as these policies tend to have the greatest potential to cause impact on the historic environment.

We note that the review version of the Plan now proposes to formally allocate sites for development under policies SFHE1, and SFHE1a, b, c & d. In proposing such policies it is important that the Plan and its evidence base demonstrate that they can be delivered in conformity with overarching national and local policy for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

We note from the SEA Screening Opinion that the belief exists that a full SEA will not be required as the sites are within the settlement boundary, worded in such a way as to

protect relevant assets – heritage and other – and that any impacts will be local in nature and significance.

However, such a conclusion must be based on a rigorous assessment of relevant heritage considerations and an understanding of their significance and sensitivity. The purpose of a full SEA is to provide such evidence in accordance with approved methodology, and in the absence of its application we are not confident that a conclusion that a full SEA is not required can be arrived at. In particular, an understanding of the setting of relevant heritage assets is required and those some distance from proposed sites can still be impacted upon.

Experience and test cases have shown that only modest impact on a nationally significant heritage asset need occur for this to be reasonably interpreted as a significant environmental impact. The fact that several sites are proposed for development also introduces the possibility of cumulative impact meeting or exceeding this threshold.

While we therefore have no immediate or automatic concerns over the proposed site allocations and recognise that some, inter alia, are in brownfield locations, involve the retention of heritage assets, and draw upon previous consents, we do not agree with the conclusion that a full SEA is not required.

To assist in the necessary assessment we would recommend the use of our guidance on SEAs, Site Allocations (applicable to Neighbourhood Plans as well as Local Plans), Setting, and Heritage Significance respectively. This can all be found on our website via the following links:

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

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

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

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa2-managing-significance-in-decision-taking/>

Your community may have been in liaison with the Dorset Council heritage team in the preparation of its Plan and evidence base but if not we would recommend doing so to help address those issues we have identified above. Ultimately we would be happy to defer to that team and its discretion in determining the suitability of policies which are eventually submitted to Dorset Council for Examination.

Otherwise, we congratulate your community on its commitment to maintaining an extant and relevant Neighbourhood Plan, and for the ongoing suite of policies designed to identify, protect and enhance the Plan area's distinctive historic character.

Kind regards

[name redacted] | Historic Places Adviser

Historic England | South West

1st Floor Fermentation North | Finzels Reach | Hawkins Lane | Bristol | BS1 6WQ

Direct Line: [details redacted]

<https://historicengland.org.uk/southwest>



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NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 10 January 2025

Our ref: 495746

Your ref: N/A



[Click here to enter address](#)

BY EMAIL ONLY

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T [REDACTED]

Dear Council Office Team

Planning Consultation: Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan - Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 09 December 2024 which was received by Natural England on 12 December 2024

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
- significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Catchment

We note that the land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) is allocated for mixed use development with potential for some small scale employment / community uses and open space. This site is in the River Avon SAC Nutrient Neutrality Catchment but provided the Waste Water Treatment Works serves the development outside of the catchment we have no issues with it. This should be noted in the Habitat Regulations Assessment and applies to any other sites in Shaftesbury that are within the River Avon SAC Nutrient Neutrality Catchment.

¹ Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

[name redacted]

Higher Officer, Sustainable Development
Wessex Area Team
Natural England