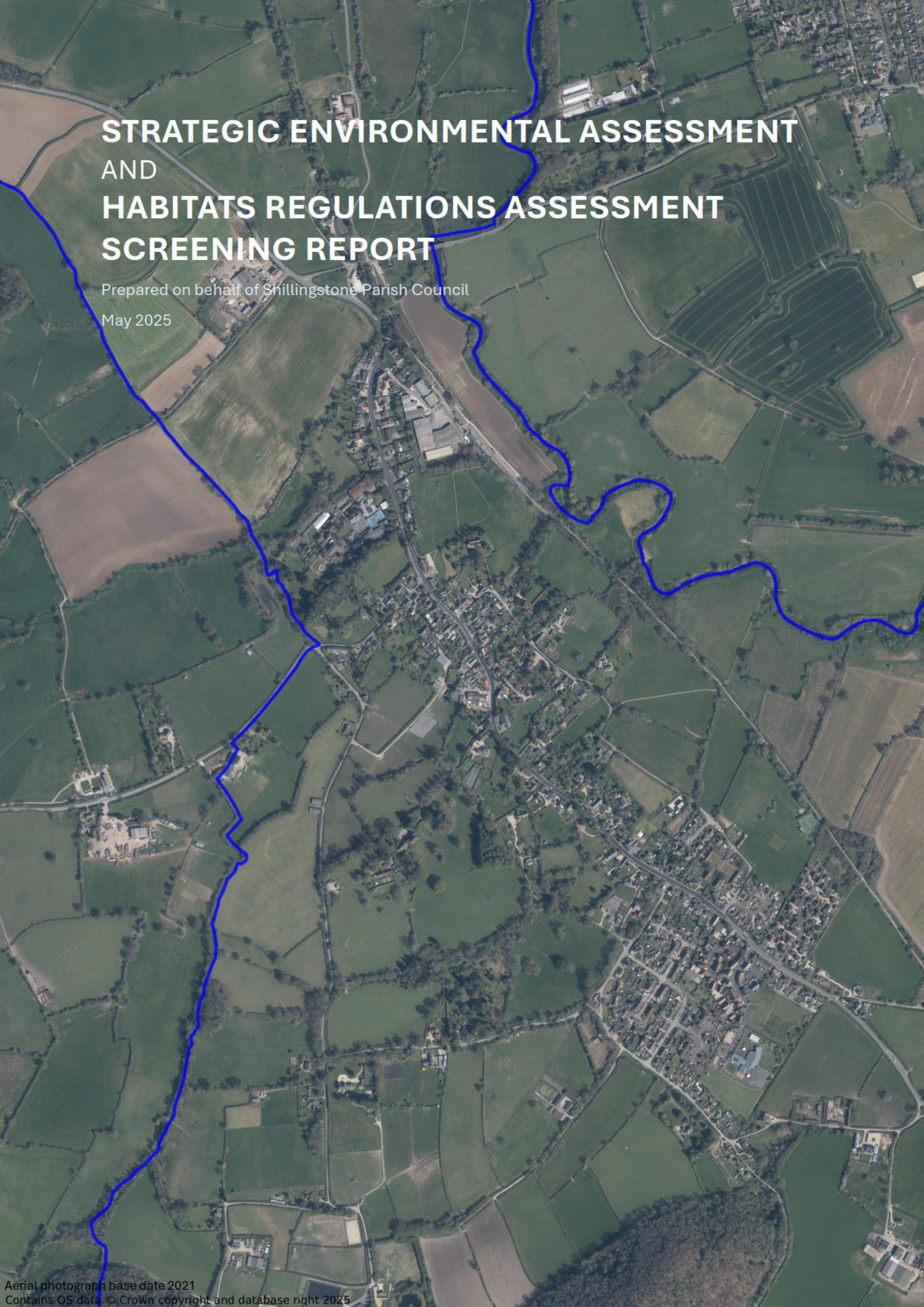
STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
AND
HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT
SCREENING REPORT

Prepared on behalf of Shillingstone Parish Council

May 2025



Aerial photograph base date 2021
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SHILLINGSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW
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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Review is likely to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) in order to comply with the legal requirements relating to the environment.

BACKGROUND

The main purpose a Strategic Environmental Assessment 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"[1].

National Planning Policy Guidance[2] summarises the requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment 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."

Regulation 15(1)(e) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012[3] (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, regulation 17 of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations[4] and regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017[5] together require the Parish Council to submit such information as the competent authority (i.e. Dorset Council) may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment, or to enable it to determine whether such as assessment is required (or can in effect be screened out).

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

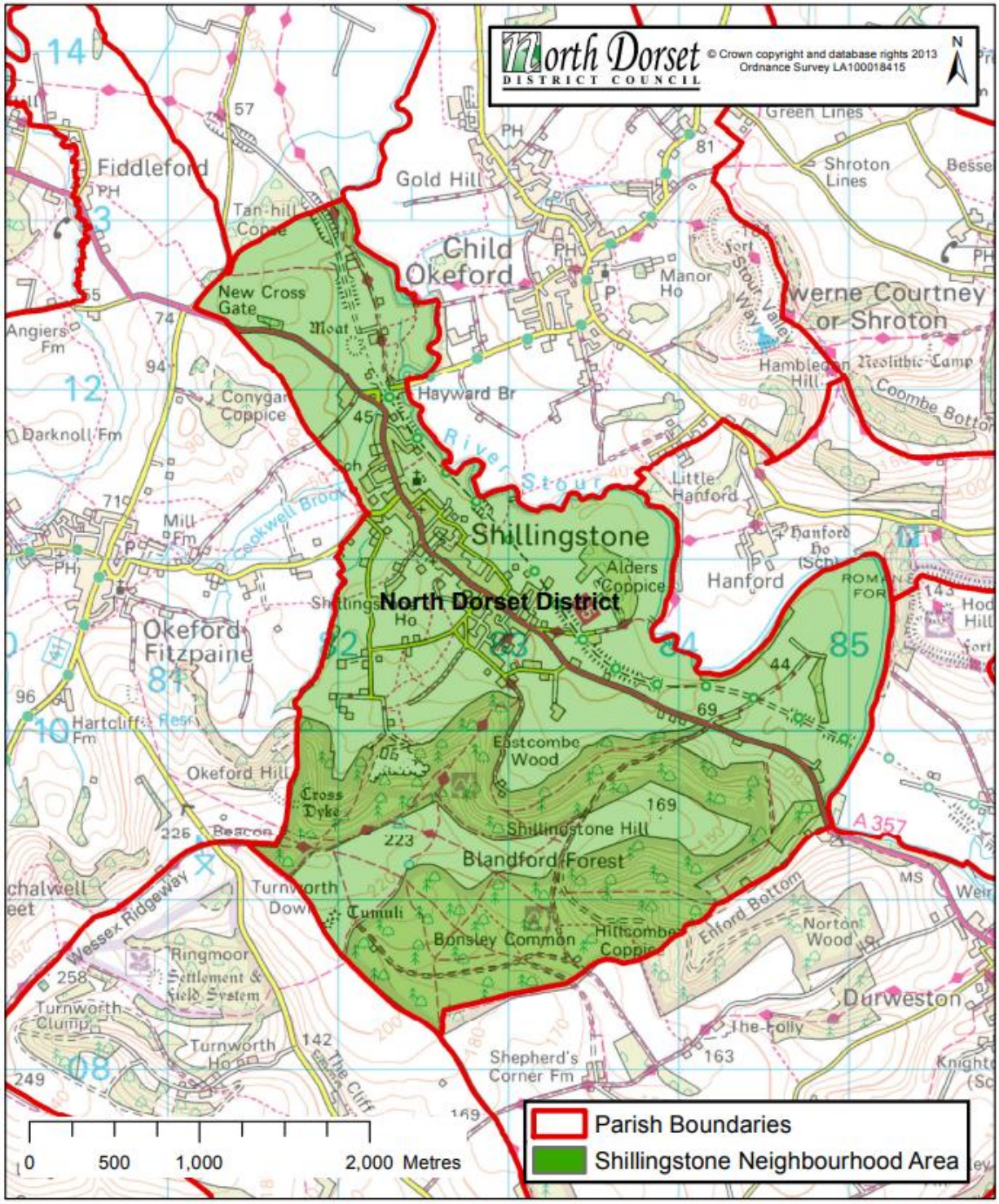
Following consultation with the statutory bodies (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) the screening determination is normally made by the Local Planning Authority in agreement with the qualifying body for the Neighbourhood Plan, given their respective responsibilities for preparing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

[1] As intended by Article 1 of the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, later transcribed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
[2] NPPG Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 11-027- 20190722 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal
[3] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/regulation/15
[4] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/regulation/17
[5] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/regulation/106

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan area was designated by North Dorset District Council in September 2013. It follows the parish boundaries, as shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan area



Name of the neighbourhood area	**Shillingstone Neighbourhood Area**
Designation date	**16 September 2013**
Organisation who made the application	**Shillingstone Parish Council**

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (MADE) AND PREVIOUS SCREENING

The made Neighbourhood Plan was originally subject to a screening report and subsequent determination in August 2015 and March 2016 respectively[6]. These concluded that neither a Strategic Environmental Assessment nor Habitat Regulations Assessment were required. The main conclusions as set out in the Screening Determination Statement are reproduced in Appendix 1.

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

THE LOCAL PLAN CONTEXT

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

The core spatial identifies Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton as the key strategic settlements in the former North Dorset area where the vast majority of the growth is expected to be focused. These towns are considered to be the most sustainable locations where homes, jobs and facilities are easily accessible. Shillingstone sits within the group of 18 villages plus Stalbridge where housing development is more strictly controlled, and expected to be at a level to meet the local needs of those villages and surrounding rural areas.

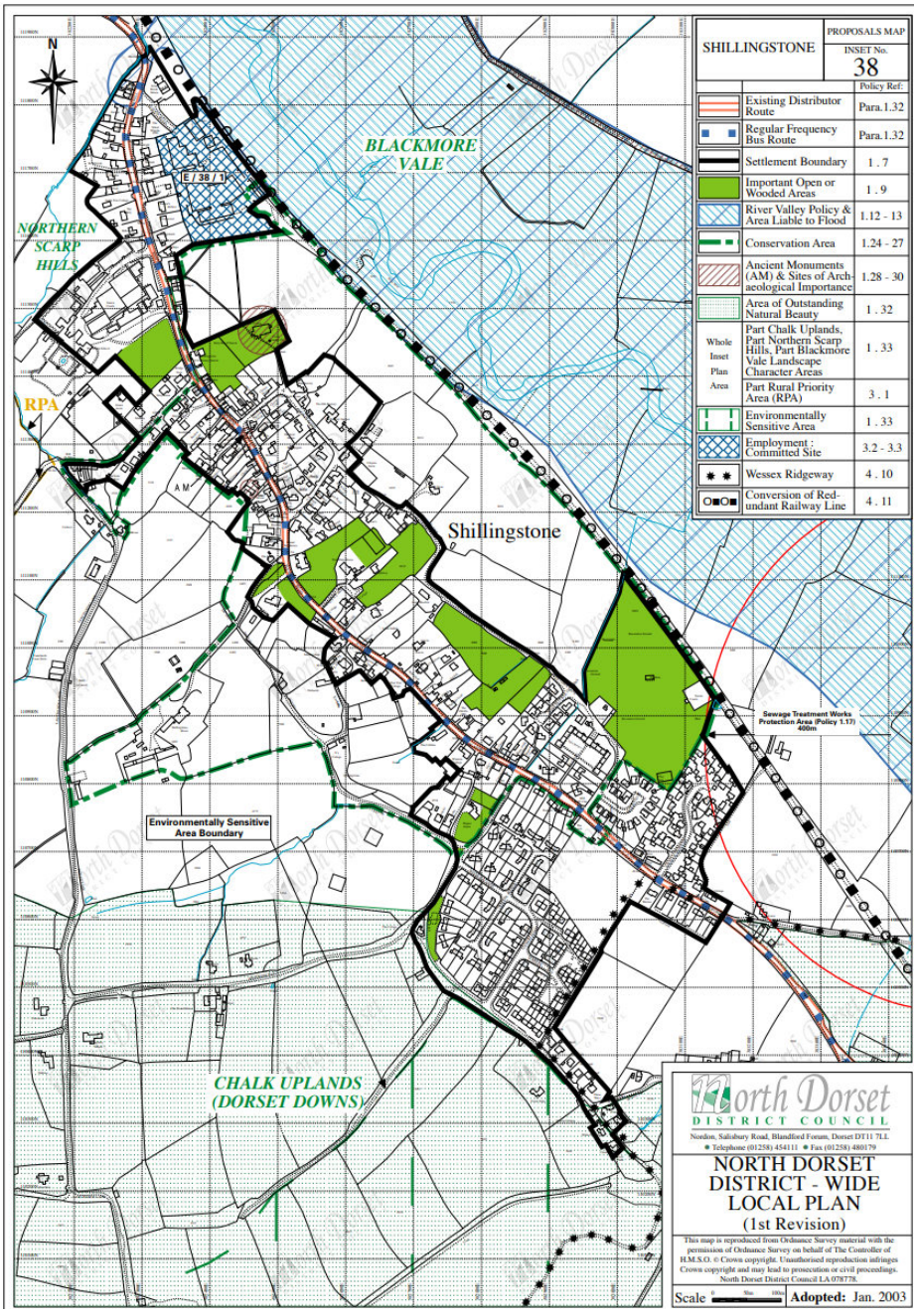


Figure 1.2: the Inset Map for Shillingstone

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 currently anticipated to be finalized by the end of May 2027, and therefore has very limited weight at this time.

[6] https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/shillingstone-neighbourhood-plan

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 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The plan has now been reviewed and the main changes proposed by the working group are to be considered by the Parish Council in April 2025. The draft modifications statement has therefore been used to inform the following overview.

VISION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The Neighbourhood Plan explains that the main reason for preparing the plan was to protect and enhance the character of Shillingstone and guide any future development so that it is sympathetic to the character of the area. It therefore focuses on:

- Local character (specifically the importance of our local green spaces, our rural lanes and tracks, the character and design of development, and the impact of increasing traffic along the A357 in how that road functions and divides the village)
- Important community facilities (such as the village hall, shop and pub)
- Locations for new development.

The plan period (2017 – 2031), and above objectives remain unchanged. The supporting text now notes that is likely to be subject to a further review (when the plan period will be rolled forward) starting by 2029. At that point the Local Plan for the area will have been updated (the new Dorset Local Plan is anticipated to be adopted by the end of 2027).

REVISED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

The made plan included 13 policies in total. Two policies (site allocation policies 9 and 12) will be removed as they no longer serve any obvious purpose, as the development of these sites has now finished. Eight policies are being updated, as summarised below. No changes are proposed to site allocation policies 7, 8 and 13 which are still capable of delivery within the plan period and where no issues have been raised in relation to the policy wording.

Policy	Change summary
1. Local Green Spaces	Burton Orchard and the adjoining play area have been included as Local Green Spaces. These are owned by the Parish Council, and managed for the benefit of the community, and are considered to fulfil the criteria for Local Green Spaces set out in the national planning policy. For consistency these should be treated the same as the Recreation Ground, which is a Local Green Space.
2. Our roads, lanes and tracks	The policy has been renamed and expanded to highlight local issues relating to matters impacting on the safe use of the roads and tracks around the parish, particularly in relation to traffic management, including parking provision and the inclusion of street trees. This helps the plan align more with national planning policy's support for "using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places". A new table and map are included in the supporting text to highlight the main issues and possible solutions.
3. The character and design of new development	The policy has been expanded to include reference to and support for design measures to reduce carbon use and waste and improve biodiversity, water efficiency, in light of Dorset Council's declared nature and climate change emergency. The supporting text explains that such measures are best considered as part of the early design process, in order that they can be

	successfully integrated into the build, and need not harm the area's local identity and distinctive character, and includes a number of positive examples.
4. Important community facilities	The new Co-op local convenience store has been added to the list of community facilities to be protected under this policy. The supporting text has been updated with regard to the Old Ox, noting its registration as an Asset of Community Value in 2022, and the recent decision (against policy) to reduce the grounds associated with the Old Ox, despite the lack of impartial evidence that this would not adversely impact on its ongoing viability. The policy has been amended to give clearer direction should a similar situation arise in the future, by adding in a requirement for clear, independently verified evidence that such a loss should not compromise that facility's ongoing viability.
5. Development within the settlement boundary	The introductory section has been updated to reflect the changes in housing, employment and community facilities that have occurred since the plan was first prepared. The review of the neighbourhood plan has tested whether the indicative housing target should be updated based on more recent information, taking account of the higher housing targets based on the more recently published national policy and standard methods. This concluded that the target should be revised from 40 to in the region of 54 homes (for the same plan period) – an uplift of 35%. A housing land supply table has also been included, recording the completions since the start of the plan period, the extant planning consents and remaining allocations, identifying a supply of about 77 homes. On this basis, the policy has been updated to clarify that the release of unallocated greenfield sites for open market housing outside of the village settlement boundary is not necessary at this time, but recognizes that this will be necessary when the plan period is extended and can therefore be guided by the next review of the plan.
6. Housing types and sizes	The policy has been amended to provide guidance on house sizes in relation to local needs in relation to open market housing, so that the mix better reflects the greater need for 2 and some 3 bedroom properties, suitable for young working individuals and families or suitable for older residents wishing to downsize. Any new applications to build 4+ bedroom properties should be justified by evidence to support the local need for their construction. The policy has also been updated to seek to prevent landowners avoiding affordable housing commitments by bringing land parcels through in separate applications thus creating sites of under 0.5ha.
10. Hine Town Lane North of the Old Ox (HTL-N)	A number of minor changes have been included to highlight the need for affordable and smaller dwelling types, and to provide guidance on building heights (in particular the use of 1 - 1.5 storeys (equivalent) homes to safeguard the rural character of views from Hine Town Lane and protect the privacy and amenity of residents whose properties back onto the site). The policy also clarifies the need for the landscaping to include areas of permanent green space through the development in order to reinforce the rural character of the village. Issues relating to the disposal of surface water are also made clearer, as the current SFRA maps wrongly record the local network of culverts, pipes and ditches, and inadequacies in the system have led to localized flooding.
11. Land at the Old Ox (OX)	This policy has been updated to reflect the most recent approval for further housing to the rear of the Old Ox, which if implements would mean that the proposed holiday accommodation (intended to support the ongoing viability of the pub) is no longer possible. As a result, the focus on the policy is to ensure the retention of the remaining undeveloped area for parking and pub garden / open space (in line with the current plans), which are considered essential to ensure that the pub has a reasonable prospect of remaining viable.

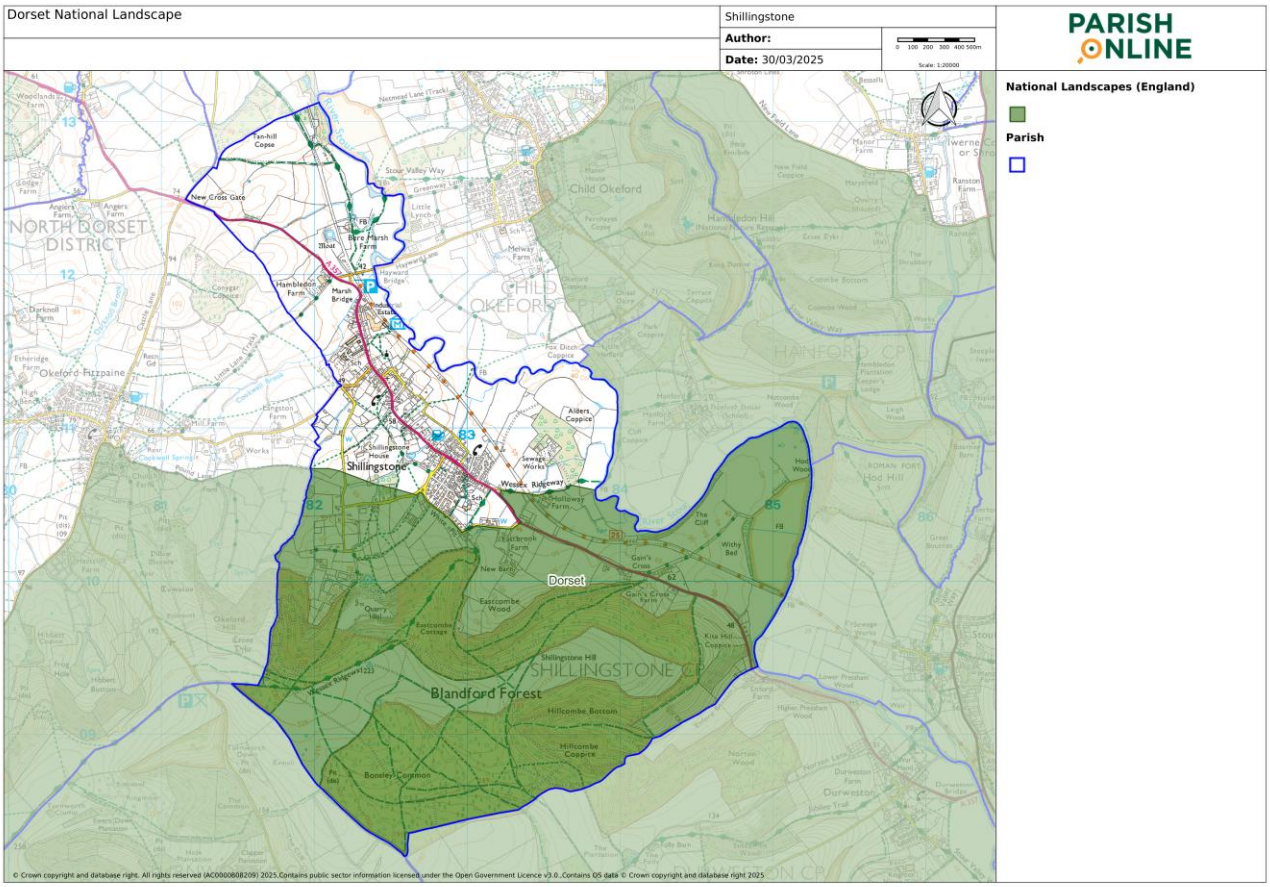
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

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

The southern part of the parish around Shillingstone Hill lies within the Dorset National Landscape which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is a nationally protected landscape, and there is a duty placed on the planning authority to protect and enhance the special character of this area. Whilst the village and related site allocations are outside of the designation, the setting of the AONB can also have an impact on its character and therefore needs to be taken into account.

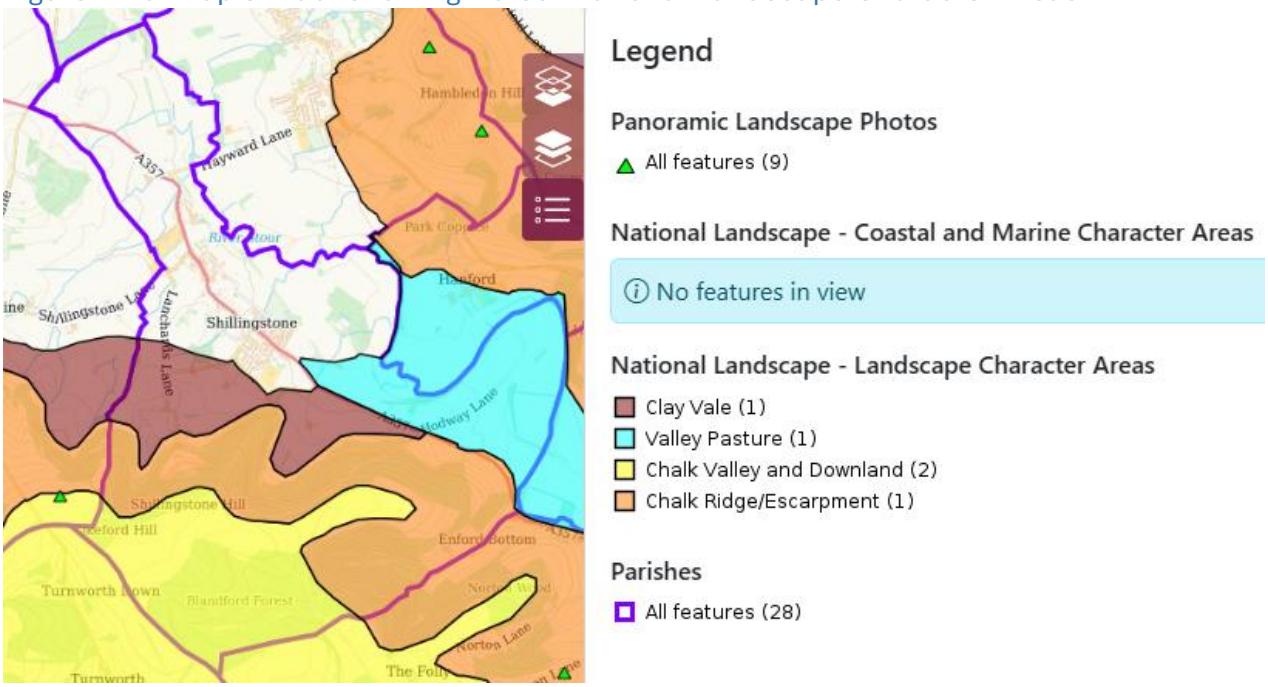
Figure 2.1: Map extract showing Dorset National Landscape in relation to the parish.



The Dorset National Landscape Partnership is expected to complete a review of the 2019-2024 AONB Management Plan by the end of 2025. In the interim, the 2019-2024 policy framework has been carried forward in entirety. This does not specifically reference the Shillingstone area, but includes as an objective the need for plan and manage the setting of the AONB "in a manner that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of the AONB. Views into and out of the AONB and non-visual effects, such as noise and wider environmental impacts, will be appropriately assessed."

The landscape types and character areas for the Dorset National Landscape have been assessed[7], with those areas within the Neighbourhood Plan area comprising Clay Vale, Valley Pasture, Chalk Ridge / Escarpment and Chalk Valley and Downland.

Figure 2.1b: Map extract showing Dorset National Landscape Character Areas.



Noted influences on landscape relating to the clay vale and valley pasture area, which are closest to the built-up area of the parish, include:

- Some pressure for further expansion of settlements with new development altering the traditional form and character of small villages and scattered farmsteads, or having a negative visual impact on the open and undeveloped character of the floodplain;
- Increasing traffic levels have brought pressures for development and loss of tranquillity, and pressure to upgrade roads through additional kerbing and signage;
- Agricultural intensification resulting in the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential or industrial uses and the establishment of secondary enterprises;
- Impacts arising from equine-related activities are becoming more widespread.

The wider Dorset landscape character assessment of the area[8] does not highlight any specific issues relating to Shillingstone in relation to the relevant character areas.

BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY ASSETS

Within the parish there is a nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (Shillingstone Quarry), designated for its geological interest. This is reported as being in favourable condition when last assessed in 2021[9].

Just outside the parish to the north-east is the Hod and Hambledon Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is lowland calcareous grassland on the slopes of the ramparts of an ancient fort. When last assessed (2007-10) this was reported as being in favourable condition, subject to appropriate ongoing management.

[7] See https://dorset-nl.org.uk/resources/landscape-character-assessment/
[8] See https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/the-dorset-landscape/landscape-character-assessment-map
[9] See https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx for SSSI reports

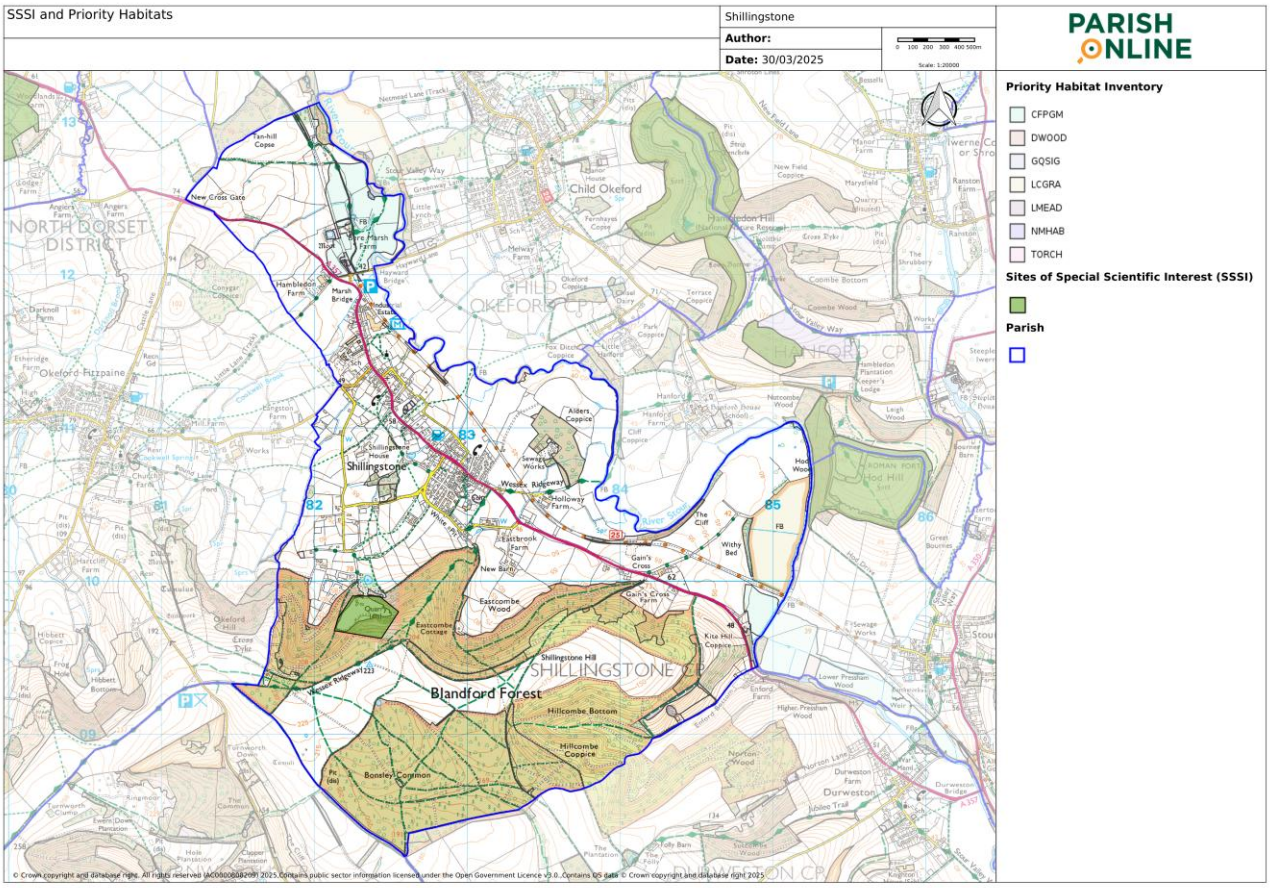
About a kilometre north-west of the parish is the Piddles Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is a broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland and when last assessed (2012-13) was in an unfavourable but recovering condition noting evidence of damage from deer (rather than relating to planning matters).

Other notable (BAP priority) habitats in the area include:

- deciduous and ancient woodland (including Eastcombe Wood and Hillcombe Coppice around Shillingstone Hill, and Alders Coppice north of the sewage works)
- areas of lowland calcareous grassland (Enford Bottom)
- lowland wet grassland within the floodplain
- traditional orchards (including the site next to the primary school and adjoining Lawsbrook off Brodham Way, and land at the White House off Candy's Lane)

The closest sites of international wildlife importance are Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC, approximately 6km to the north-east (approximately 10km by road), and Rooksmoor SAC approximately 7½km to the west (approximately 10km by road). The site improvement plans for both these sites[10] highlight potential pressures in relation to nitrogen deposition that could be related to traffic.

Figure 2.2: Map extract showing wildlife sites in relation to the parish



HERITAGE ASSETS

There are 22 Listed buildings or structure, all of which are Grade II with the exception of the Church of the Holy Rood (which is Grade I), and all of which are within the village and Conservation Area

[10] file:///C:/Users/jo/Downloads/SIP150417FINALv1.0%20Fontmell%20&%20Melbury%20Downs.pdf and file:///C:/Users/jo/Downloads/SIP141113FINALv1.0%20Rooksmoor%20SAC.pdf

boundary. Most are buildings (houses or cottages), but the village cross and K6 telephone kiosk are also listed. None of these are on the national 'at risk' register.

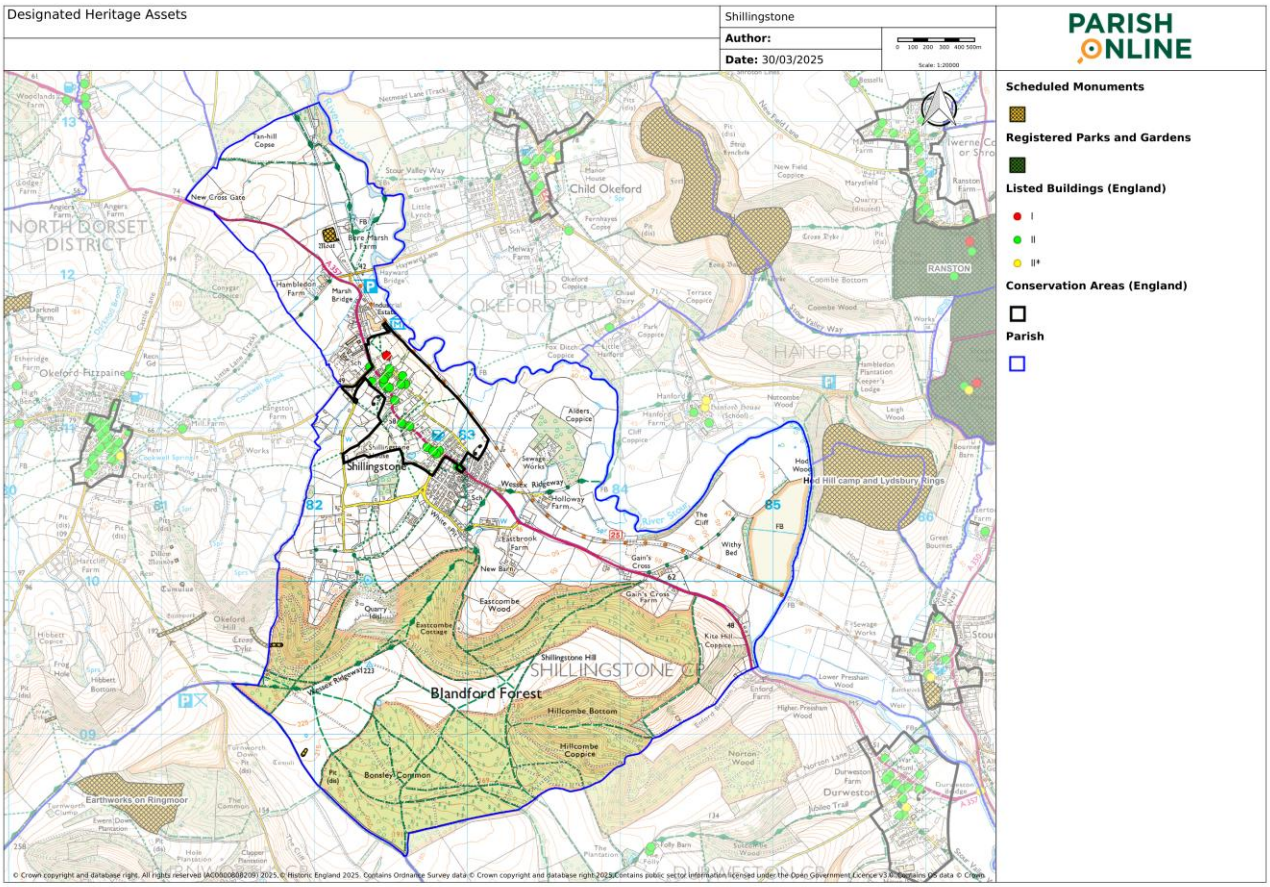
There are no registered historic parks or gardens in or close to the area.

There are four scheduled monuments in the area. These are:

- the medieval cross base 150m south of Holy Rood Church (Monument Number: 27343), within the village itself
- the moated site 130m west of Bere Marsh Farm (Monument Number: 31074) about 400m north of the village
- the cross dyke on Okeford Hill (Monument Number: 31066) which falls partly in the adjoining area, and
- two bowl barrows west of Bonsley Common (Monument Number: 27354) on the very edge of the parish

Just over 1km outside the neighbourhood plan area, Hambledon Hill is described as one of the best preserved and most notable Iron Age hill forts in Great Britain, and one of the best preserved Neolithic landscapes in Europe. Hod Hill, and adjoining hill fort, is similarly scheduled as an ancient monument, and continues the history of occupation up to the Roman Conquest.

Figure 2.3: Map extract showing designated heritage assets in relation to the parish



There are a significant number of non-scheduled monuments in the parish[11]. Most of them are associated with the medieval village structure, including allotments and orchards. Further out from the village there are chalk pits and lime kilns recorded on the slopes around Shillingstone Hill, and there is also evidence in this area of a Romano-British settlement and historic and prehistoric field systems. The more recent find of a Roman Villa in 2004, uncovered during development of

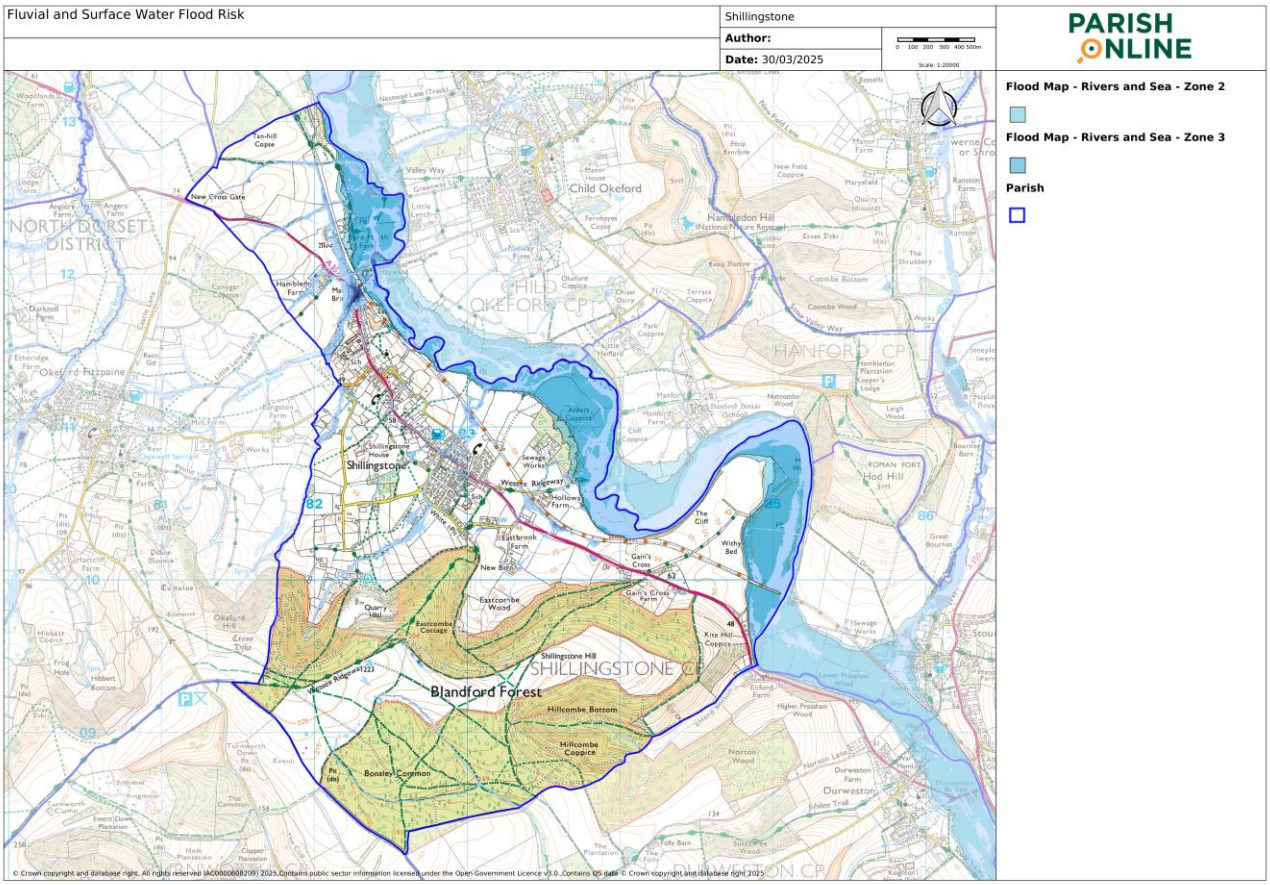
[11] See https://gi.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorsetexplorer/u/QXzdkuVd_jel

Augustan Avenue & Roman Way in 2004, is recorded as an event in the Dorset Historic Environment Record.

FLOOD RISK AND WATER QUALITY

The River Stour flows through the parish (marking the north-east border for much of its length) and there is flood plain to either side (flood zones 2 and 3). This is kept within the area north of the trailway with the exception of the area around Marsh Bridge, where the Flood Zone 2 extends up the Cookwell Brook (a tributary of the Stour). In addition there are areas subject to surface water flood risk, notably from off Shillingstone Hill and through the village (around Pepper Hill and across and along the main road and recreation ground). Surface water run-off from Okeford Hill tends to join with Cookwell Brook. The area round Hambledon Farm is also potentially affected by surface water flooding.

Figure 2.4: Map showing fluvial and surface water flood risk areas in relation to the parish



Much of the village is also susceptible to groundwater flooding, given its geology and typical water table levels, as recorded on the Dorset Strategic Flood Risk Assessment maps[12].

The Stour catchment in this area is considered to have a moderate ecological status[13]. This is primarily as a result of sewage discharge and poor livestock management practices contributing to elevated phosphate, macrophytes and phytobenthos levels.

[12] See https://gi.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorsetexplorer/u/TqSbrzxgEqTtw
[13] See https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB108043016051

AGRICULTURAL LAND VALUE

The best and most versatile farmland is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. The farmland around Shillingstone is a mix of agricultural grades, including a significant area of Grade 2 (very good) category land, adjoining an area poor quality (Grade 4) alongside the river. The remaining area is Grade 3 (moderate) quality (and has not been further assessed).

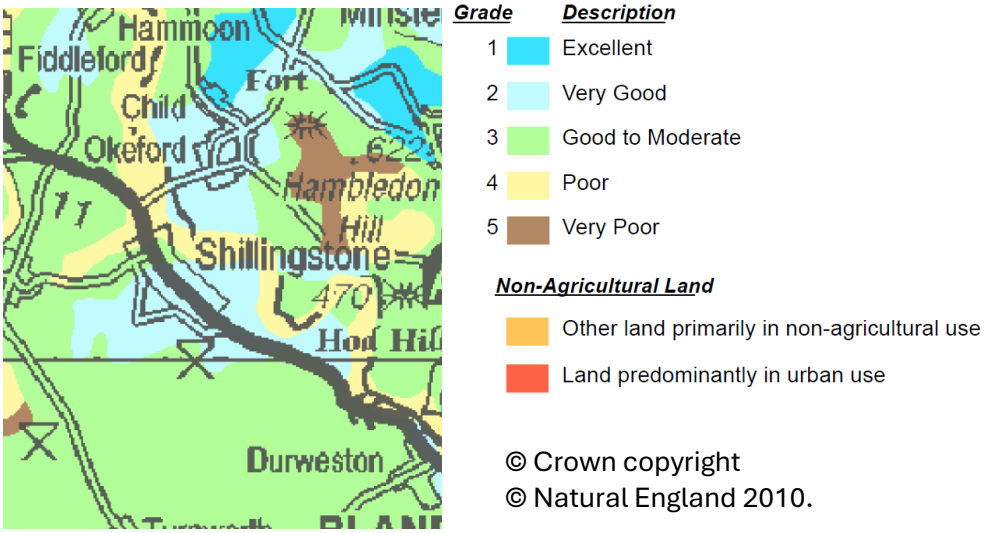


Figure 2.5: Map extract from South West Region 1:250 000* Series Agricultural Land Classification, produced by SWRGIU 05/08/2010 Map Reference 10-111f.

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POLLUTION RISKS

There is a sewage treatment works to the north of the trailway close to Holloway Farm. Gains Cross Farm is an historic landfill sites in the southern half of the parish.

A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone has been designated that includes the southern half of the parish, relating primarily to nitrate from agricultural land polluting the water environment (and drinking water sources). The entire area falls within a Drinking Water Safeguard zone (related to surface water).

There are no Air Quality Management Areas in the area.

MINERALS AND WASTE PROPOSALS

There are no existing or proposed mineral sites within the neighbourhood plan area. Areas relating to the river corridor are shown as a minerals safeguarding area. This is understood to be where sand and gravel deposits are likely to be present, and would trigger consultation with regard to the potential for prior extraction. The existing sewage treatment works is identified as a waste facility for safeguarding, to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on the current or future operation of that facility.

3 THE SCREENING PROCESS

PROCESS

Figure 3.1: Diagram summarising the SEA Screening Process

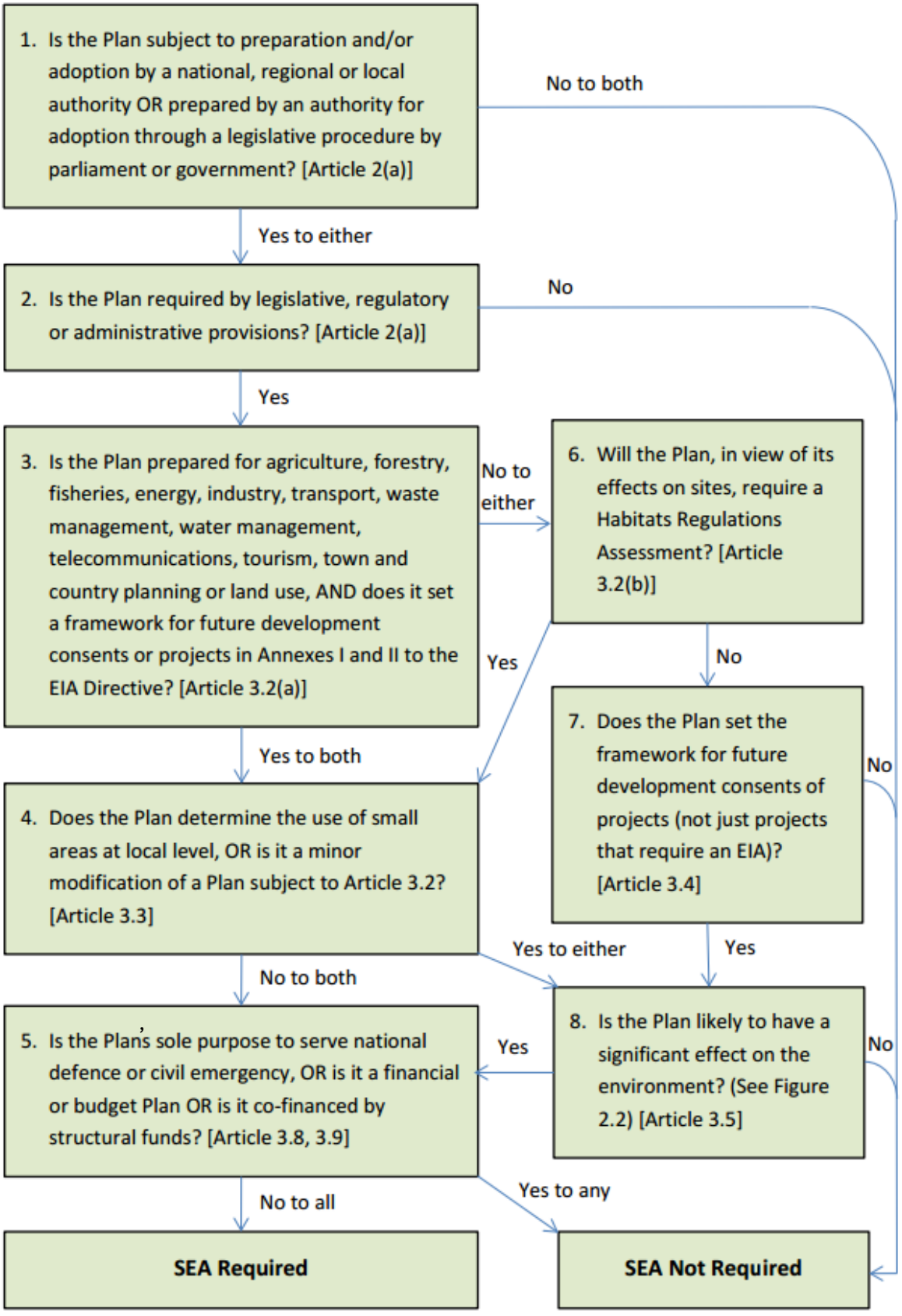


Figure 3.2 – a summary of the SEA screening process for the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan, following the procedure outlined in Figure 3.1.

Question in SEA screening flow chart	Response
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)]	YES The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared by Shillingstone Parish Council and made part of the development plan by Dorset Council through a legislative procedure.
2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? [Article 2(a)]	NO There is no requirement to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood Plans are prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
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)]	YES 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.
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]	YES 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.
8. Is the Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment? [Article 3.5]	NO The special natural characteristics of the area relate primarily to its landscape quality (with reference to the Dorset National Landscape), flood risk, heritage assets, and areas of higher grade agricultural land. The modifications to the Plan do not propose to extend or allocate further development outside of the settlement boundary. The site allocations are within the built-up area or utilising previously developed land associated with a farmyard, and include criteria that reflects local constraints (such as heritage assets), and would be read alongside the existing development plan policies. The Neighbourhood Plan proposals are not considered to be likely to have an appreciable

	effect upon either the Rooksmoor or Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, given the distance and likely increase in vehicular emissions on the roads adjacent to the SAC or through potential recreational pressures. Further detail is provided in Figure 3.3 and Appendix 2.

ASSESSMENT BASIS

The criteria for assessing the likely significance of effects are set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations and discussed below.

Figure 3.3 – assessment of the likely significance of effects

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 Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan will be part of the development plan for the local area, but the proposed modifications do not amend the settlement boundary, or proposed further development on the site allocations.
– 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 assessments in relation to the Dorset AONB highlight the potential for pressure for further expansion of settlements with new development altering the traditional form and character of small villages and scattered farmsteads, or having a negative visual impact on the open and undeveloped character of the floodplain, as well as traffic-related impacts, agricultural intensification and equine-related activities, all leading to a degree of landscape change. There are no nationally designated wildlife sites within the area which are recorded as being in an unfavourable condition, and whilst Piddles Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest was last recorded as being in an unfavourable but recovering condition, the reasons for this were not related to

	planning matters. The are no heritage assets on the national at risk register. The area is prone to flood risk from a range of sources.
– 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).	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).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
– the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects, – the cumulative nature of the effects, – the transboundary nature of the effects, – the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	Based on the proposed modifications to the current plan's scope, the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan are considered unlikely to be significant on the local environment, and any impact (positive or negative) is likely to be local in its impact. The uplift in the housing target (14 homes) is not considered significant when considered in light of the wider environmental problems, and the fact that this does not require the allocation of further sites given the current levels of completions and infill / windfall development.
– the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	Neighbourhood Plans cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of development that falls within Annex 1 to Council Directive 85/337/EEC.
– the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: > 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.	The special natural characteristics of the area relate primarily to its landscape quality (with reference to the Dorset National Landscape), flood risk, heritage assets, and areas of higher grade agricultural land. Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to amend the settlement boundary or allocate further housing or employment sites, and the uplift in the housing target (14 homes) is not considered significant, as does not require the allocation of further sites given the current levels of completions and infill / windfall development, no significant impacts are considered likely. The Neighbourhood Plan proposals are also not considered to be likely to have an appreciable effect upon the Rooksmoor SAC or the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC. Both sites are some

	10km distance by road and it is unlikely that the proposed allocations would result in a notable increase in vehicular traffic along the routes that pass alongside these wildlife sites.

CONCLUSIONS

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

This has been confirmed by the statutory consultees (see responses to the draft screening contained in Appendix 2).

In light of this, it is concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required for the Neighbourhood Plan, and nor would a full Habitats Regulations Assessment be required.

These findings may be re-considered at future stages if the scope of the plan alters significantly.

APPENDIX 1 – SCREENING DETERMINATION (MARCH 2016)

North Dorset DISTRICT COUNCIL

Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement of Reasons

This statement has been produced to comply with Regulation 9(3) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

A neighbourhood plan is required to meet a number of basic conditions, one of which being it must not breach and be otherwise compatible with EU and Human Rights obligations. This requires neighbourhood plans to fully consider the requirements of the SEA regulations[1] which transpose the EU's SEA directive[2] into law and which requires those making plans that could impact on the environment to consider whether they are likely to have a significant effect or not.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the draft Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan was submitted in August 2015 to North Dorset District Council, the 'responsible authority', to determine whether or not the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.

The District Council considers that the process followed to produce the Screening Report complies with Regulation 9(2)(a) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, thereby taking into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. On 17th August 2015 this Assessment was made available to the statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency), as is required under Regulation 9(2)(b).

The Screening Report finds that the draft Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and consequently that a strategic environmental assessment is not required.

The initial view of North Dorset District Council was that an SEA would likely be required in respect of the impact of the plan on the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, in light of the final responses from the statutory consultation bodies (see Appendix) and the preparation of the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Heritage Assessment January 2016 as evidence that addresses initial concerns of Historic England, the District Council is now satisfied that an SEA is not required in this instance.

The District Council therefore now agrees with the conclusion of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report that there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the draft Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan. North Dorset District Council therefore considers that the draft Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan does not require an SEA for the following reasons:

[1] Known fully as The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004
[2] Known fully as Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment

- The focus and scope of the draft Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan is modest in scale.
- The only likely adverse environmental impact is the potential loss of 0.7 ha if Grade 2 agricultural land, which is not considered to be significant.
- Whilst development is proposed within the draft neighbourhood plan, any effects are considered unlikely to be significant on the environment and any impact is likely to be localised.
- Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency are satisfied that an SEA is not required. In particular North Dorset District Council notes that the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Heritage Assessment – January 2016 has addressed Historic England's concerns

NOTE: The statement is based on the information provided. If the contents of the plan are revised and/or there is a material change in the environmental characteristics in the locality (e.g. the designation of any additional nature conservation or other environmental sites), then the comments contained in this statement would need to be reconsidered in order to take account of the changes.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Schedule 2, paragraph 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 sets out the prescribed basic condition that the making of a neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).

The Shillingstone Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the draft Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan identifies European sites within a 20 km search area. The District Council has consulted Natural England as to the requirement for a habitats regulation assessment.

Natural England's response is:

'In advising your authority on the requirements relating to Habitats Regulations Assessment, I can confirm that based on the information provided:

- *the proposals are not necessary for the management of the European site*
- *that the proposals are unlikely to have a significant effect on any European site, and can therefore be screened out from any requirement for further assessment.'*

John Stobart
Planning and Conservation Lead Advisor
Natural England
22-03-16

Anne Goldsmith
Planning Policy Officer
30-3-16

To view appendices please refer to https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/shillingstone-neighbourhood-plan

APPENDIX 2 – CONSULTEE RESPONSES (APRIL / MAY 2025)

Date: 15 April 2025
Our ref: 508222
Your ref: N/A

[redacted]

BY EMAIL ONLY

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

[redacted]

Dear Jo Witherden,

Shillingstone Parish Council - Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Review - Consultant working on behalf of Parish Council SEA & HRA screening request consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 01 April 2025 and was received by Natural England on 01 April 2025

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 sites[1], 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.

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

[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".

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

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Higher Officer
Sustainable Development
Wessex Team

From: Sustainable Places, WX [redacted]
Sent: 02 May 2025 15:58
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Review SEA and HRA screening request

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the Strategic Environmental Assessment screening for the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan.

We agree with the conclusions in the SEA and HRA Screening Report which considers that there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan. We therefore agree that a SEA is not required.

Nevertheless, we still encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment at the earliest stages. 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 environmental into your plan. This is available at: https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/consider-environment-neighbourhood-plans/

Regards

[redacted]
Planning Advisor, Wessex Sustainable Places
Environment Agency | Rivers House, East Quay, Bridgwater, TA6 4YS

From: [redacted]
Sent: 14 May 2025 11:25
To: [redacted]
Cc:
Subject: Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Review SEA and HRA screening request

Dear Jo

Many thanks for getting back to me with additional information which provides helpful clarification of the points raised by me.

I can now confirm that we have no objection to the view that a full SEA is not required for the proposed modified Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan.

I can also confirm that, based on the modifications statement, there are unlikely to be any detailed issues upon which we would wish to comment in future consultations.

Kind regards

[redacted] | Historic Places Adviser

[redacted]

Historic England | South West
1st Floor Fermentation North | Finzels Reach | Hawkins Lane | Bristol | BS1 6WQ
Direct Line: [redacted]
https://historicengland.org.uk/southwest

Historic England

Ensuring our heritage lives on and is loved for longer.
historicengland.org.uk