

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

Prepared on behalf of Shillingstone Parish Council

SHILLINGSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
AUGUST 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to ensure that the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan has complied with the requirements set out in European legislation relating to the environment. There are three directives that are of particular relevance to neighbourhood plans:

- Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive). This seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes.
- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (often referred to as the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives respectively). These aim to protect and improve Europe’s most important habitats and species.

Other European directives, such as the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) or the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) may apply in particular circumstances.

The SEA Directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), which introduced the requirement to complete the sustainability appraisal of local development plan documents. However, there is no requirement for neighbourhood plans to have a sustainability appraisal¹.

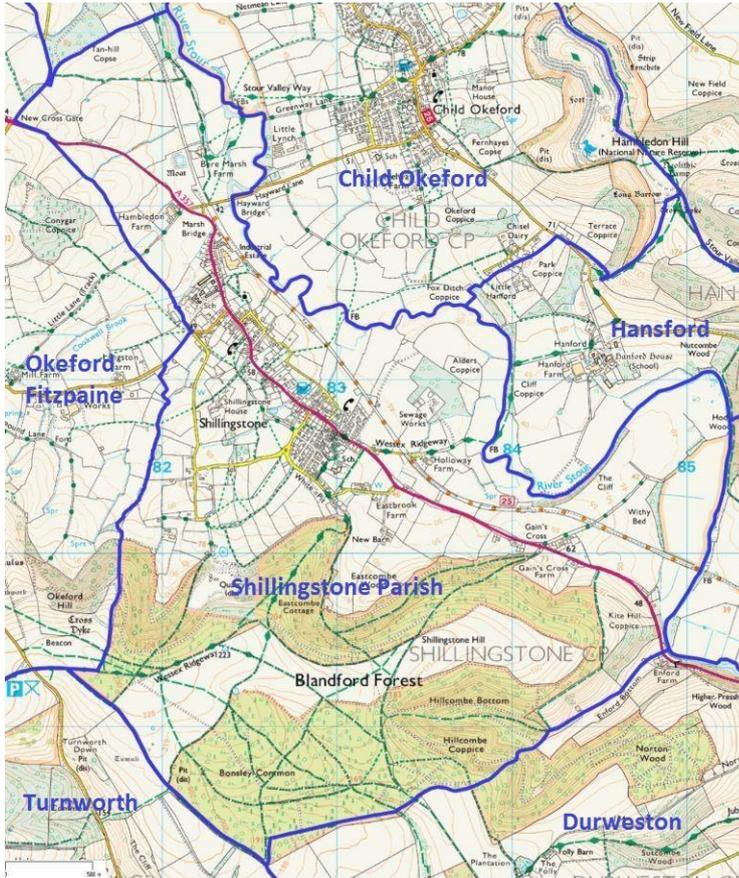
This screening report also provides evidence as to whether the plan “contributes to the achievement of sustainable development” as required to be tested under Schedule 4B section 8(2)b of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

SHILLINGSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

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

¹ Confirmed in NPPG Paragraph: 072 Reference ID: 41-072-20140306

Figure 1.1: the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan area



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FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Prior to draft the plan it the working group for the Parish Council discussed the likely focus for the neighbourhood plan. It was clear that the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan would not cover all the issues typically covered by a local plan, as it would be read alongside the local plan.

The main reason for preparing the plan was to protect and enhance the character of Shillingstone. To achieve this, it should provide the framework to consider development needed to stay a thriving rural community, where people live, work, take their children to school, go for walks in the countryside, and where there are events and places for people to meet and socialise. However it was considered equally important that the place retains the character of a rural Dorset village, nestled in the river valley running between Shillingstone and Hambleton Hills.

ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT NEEDED

A range of information was considered in assessing the likely local need for development. The submission draft proposed a minimum rural housing figure of 230 new dwellings between 2011 and 2026 for rural areas outside the four main towns. In May 2015 in response to issues raised during the Examination Hearing, the District Council issued a proposed revised approach to the rural area (mid hearing document MHD007) and is currently consultation on these changes as main modifications. The changes proposed retain the settlement boundaries around Stalbridge and the 18 more

sustainable villages (including Shillingstone), and that between them these provide 41 dwellings per annum for the period up to 2031. This was based on a no net migration scenario, and if apportioned between the settlements equates to 2½ dwellings per annum for Shillingstone.

Looking at past levels of housing growth, the average annual housing completion figure for Shillingstone (1994/2014) has been 4.9 per annum. However, this includes a spike of development (58 dwellings) completed between 2005 and 2008 connected to the Augustan Avenue Estate/Hambledon View development. This spike could reasonably be assumed to be an abnormal and 'one-off' level of development for a village of Shillingstone's size and character. It would therefore be reasonable to exclude this 'spike' in housing completions in estimating future housing need as it does not represent the typical trend. Outside of the period, the average has been 2.4 dwellings per annum.

The Housing Register (June 2015) had 22 applications registering an interest in Shillingstone, of which 6 are existing residents of Shillingstone, and 16 wish to move to the village. None of these were in gold band (highest need). The responses to the survey of local residents indicated that the most people felt that about 2 dwellings a year are needed in the area. The survey identified a possible need for 7 social rented / shared equity affordable homes "in the next few years", 4 private rented and 20 homes to buy, as well as a considerable interest in self-build plots.

Having considered the available information on need, and local opinion as expressed in an earlier consultation, the provision of sufficient land for 2.4 dwellings per annum is considered to provide sufficient flexibility to meet local housing needs over the plan period. There are already some sites within the settlement boundary that have planning consent. These form part of the potential housing supply:

- DJM Cookswell: outline consent for up to 9 dwellings (ref 2/2013/1231/PLNG)
- Townsend Farm: outline consent for 2 dwellings (ref 2/2014/1008/OUT)
- Westleigh Blandford Road: consent for 4 dwellings (ref 2/2013/1325/PLNG)

There was no evidence to suggest there is any significant demand for new employment land in the parish, and this is reinforced by the District Council's Employment Land Review.

DECIDING ON THE SCOPE OF THE PLAN

As such, it was decided that the scope of the plan would be focused on:

- Identifying important local green spaces and views that are locally important and should be protected.
- Identifying the important community facilities that should be retained where possible
- Ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for new development, at a level which meets likely local need for housing and employment. The level of growth estimated to be required [in the region of 40 new dwellings] should include potential for both open market housing and affordable housing within or close to the village.

- Guiding the design / layout standards for new development (generic and site specific), based on an appraisal of local character and issues highlighted by local residents.

DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

The neighbourhood plan (pre-submission draft) therefore includes policies on the following subjects / areas:

Local green spaces To protect their undeveloped character.

This included a review of the Important Open and Wooded Areas. Such a review was recommended at the examination of the adopted Local Plan 2003, and the emerging Local Plan advises that this is done through Neighbourhood Plans.

Rural lanes and tracks To protect the rural character of the lanes and tracks around the village and into the countryside.

The character and design of new development To ensure development proposals contribute positively to Shillingstone's local identity and distinctive character, or (if outside the settlement boundary) be appropriate to a more rural setting.

All three of the above policy areas (local green spaces, rural lanes and tracks, and character and design of new development) build upon the more generic design principles in the Development Management policies of the emerging Local Plan, and identifies the locally valued features within the Conservation Area

Housing types and sizes To ensure the size of housing provided on sites should be guided by the characteristics of the plot and surrounding area, and the provision of sufficient storage, parking and outside amenity space.

This policy strengthens the weight to be accorded to these aspects of development management policy (on parking and design) addressed in the Local Plan.

Important community facilities To support the retention of existing community facilities, and new facilities where appropriate.

This policy supplements the Local Plan policies which looks to retain and improve existing facilities where required, by making clear those facilities particularly valued by the local community

Development within the settlement boundary The area within the settlement boundary will be the main area of search for development to meet the need for new homes, businesses or community uses.

The modification to the emerging local plan identifies the village of Shillingstone alongside Stalbridge and 17 other villages in North Dorset as a "focus for growth to meet local needs" outside of the four main towns. The Local Plan advises that neighbourhood plans can be used to review the settlement boundary. The settlement boundary has therefore been reviewed in light of the character of the settlement and potential sites identified that can help meet the identified local needs.

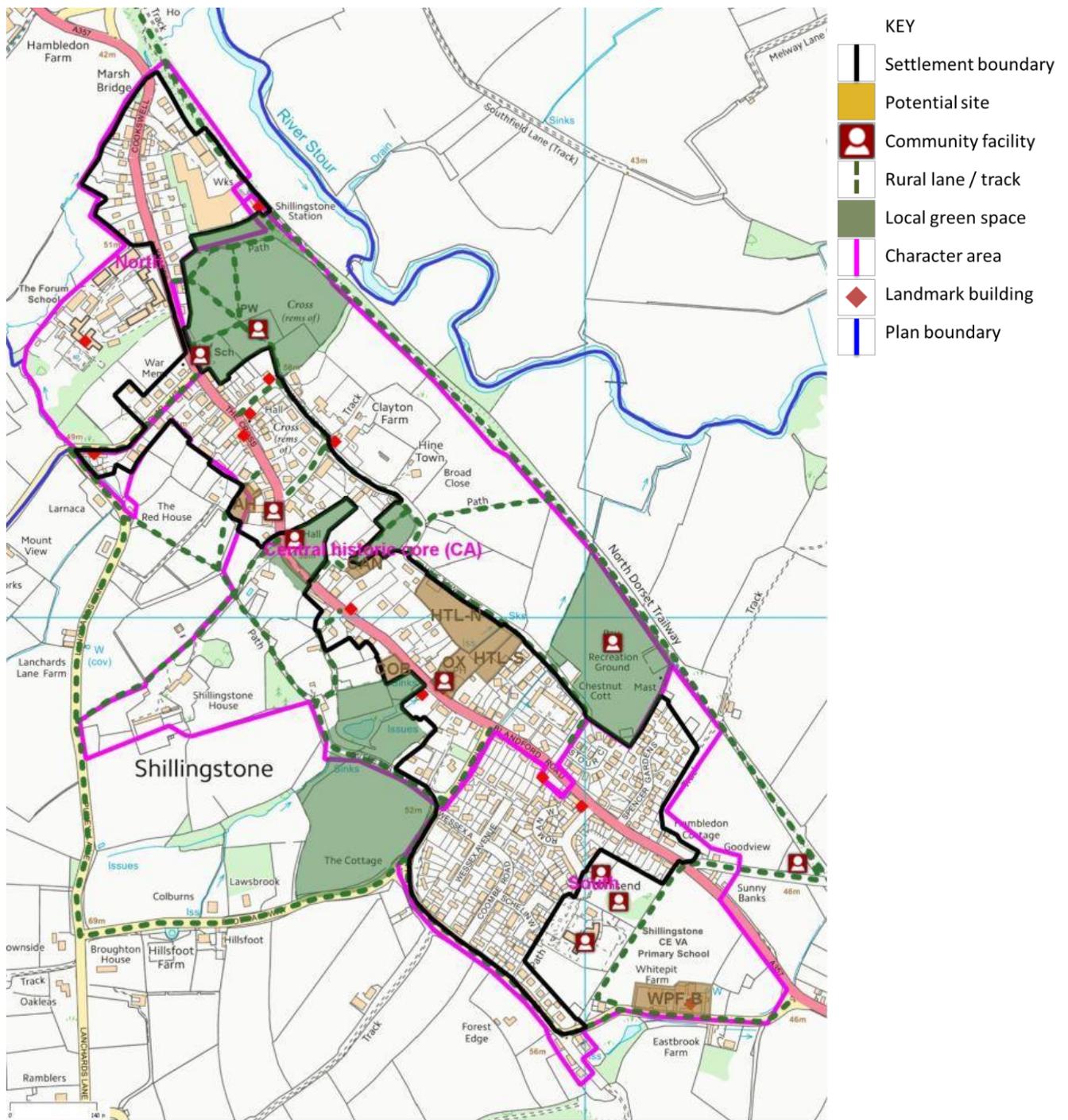
Possible development sites Policy considerations for seven sites identified as having development potential:

- Antell's Haulage Yard
- Land off Candy's Lane
- Land adjoining the Cobbles
- Hine Town Lane North of the Old Ox

- Land at the Old Ox
- Hine Town Lane South of the Old Ox
- Whitepit Farm buildings

The site-specific policies drafted include measures to mitigate against any potential harm. The estimated maximum number of homes that would be provided by these potential sites is 45 homes, and includes potential for some live-work and small-scale employment units, which together with existing consents provides sufficient flexibility to meet the identified local need.

The approximate locations of the green spaces, rural lanes and tracks, community facilities, landmark buildings, potential development sites and settlement boundary are shown in the following map.



2 THE SEA SCREENING PROCESS

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive provide the legislative framework for deciding whether a plan or programme requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment, which is summarised in diagrammatic form in Figure 2.1. The broad basis for the decision for development plans is whether significant environmental impacts are likely.

Before making a final decision, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency will be consulted on this screening assessment. The responses included in this screening opinion (and any necessary changes made) prior to submission, and the final decision will be made available to the public.

SEA SCREENING OF THE SHILLINGSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The SEA screening process, which is summarised in the flowchart shown in Appendix 1, was followed and the decisions are recorded for each stage in the following table (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 – a summary of the SEA screening process for the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan, following the procedure outlined in Appendix 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 Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan would be prepared by Shillingstone Parish Council and adopted by North Dorset District Council through a legislative procedure.
2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? [Article 2(a)]	YES The Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan would be a Statutory document, prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
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 Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes, and may allocate land for future development which falls 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	YES The Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan would determine the use of small areas at

to Article 3.2? [Article 3.3]	a local level.
8. Is the Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment? [Article 3.5]	NO Justification for this decision is given later in this chapter.

The significance of the effect of a Neighbourhood Plan on the environment does depend on the proposals within the plan, and the environmental sensitivity of the area.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

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 Shillingstone.



Date Created: 16-3-2015 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 383180 / 111316 | Scale: 1:25000 | © Contains Ordnance Survey Data : Crown copyright and database right 2015 © English Heritage © Environment Agency 2015

LANDSCAPE QUALITY

The southern part of the parish around Shillingstone Hill lies within the Dorset 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. The village is largely outside of the AONB designation, but the setting of the AONB (and therefore the surrounding area) can also have an impact on its character and therefore needs to be taken into account.

The landscape character of this area ranges from chalk valley and downland in the south (including the summit of Shillingstone Hill), chalk ridge / escarpment on the northern slopes, descending to rolling vales and valley pasture (the latter primarily to the north side of the railway). These character types are described in detail in the 2008 [Landscape Character Area Assessment](#)².

- **chalk valley and downland** (part of the Upper North Winterborne Valley, wholly within the AONB) – the area around Shillingstone is towards the northern upper reaches of the valley where the landform rises towards the chalk escarpment the landscape becomes more intimate and tranquil. The settlements are outside of this area, along the valley floor.
- **chalk ridge / escarpment** (part of the North Dorset Chalk Escarpment, wholly within the AONB) – noted as a dramatic and imposing landscape which dominates and provides a backdrop to the Blackmore Vale below. It has a steep, twisting and incised landform with extensive views. There are no settlements on the escarpment itself apart from a few isolated farms.
- **rolling vales** (part of the South Blackmore Rolling Vales, partly within the AONB) – noted as undulating and rolling farmland hills, with irregular shaped fields bounded by thick hedgerows, twisting hedge lined lanes with narrow verges. There are numerous scattered farmsteads. Settlements are either at the foot of the escarpment on the spring line (such as Shillingstone) or on elevated slopes overlooking the Vale. Some small scale deciduous copses and woodlands, and isolated ‘stag headed’ oaks. Locally distinctive building materials, mainly stone and brick, adds to the character of the area. A number of *veteran trees* are noted in this landscape area.
- **valley pasture** (part of the Upper Stour Valley, partly within the AONB) – a varied but generally flat, pastoral river valley landscape, intensively farmed with little marginal vegetation on the edges of the river channel apart from the occasional groups of trees or small copses of Willows and Alders. Locally distinctive materials such as redbrick tiles and thatch in the few small settlements in the area, and country houses in mature grounds, are notable features in this part of the valley, as are the old lime works and the quarry at Shillingstone Hill. The lanes in the valley are often narrow, twisting and hedge lined.

² Local Development Framework Landscape Character Area Assessment, North Dorset District Council, March 2008 https://www.dorsetforyou.com/media/147860/Landscape-Character-Area-Assessment/pdf/DFY_landscape_character_assessment_evidence_base.pdf

BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY ASSETS

Within the parish there is one nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (Shillingstone Quarry), designated for its geological interest.

Just outside the parish to the north-east is the Hod and Hambledon Hill nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is lowland calcareous grassland on the slopes of the ramparts of an ancient fort. When last assessed the main threat identified was in relation to invasion by scrub/trees and undesirable weeds resulting from poor management.

About a kilometre north-west of the parish is the Piddles Wood nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is a broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland and when last assessed was in an unfavourable condition but recovering despite some obvious deer pressure.

There are sites of local nature conservation importance (SNCIs) within the parish, although none within or immediately adjoining the village.

Notable 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 SNCI)
- 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)

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 boundary. Most are buildings (houses or cottages), but the village cross and K6 telephone kiosk are also listed.

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.

There are a significant number of non-scheduled monuments in the parish. Most of them are associated with the medieval village structure, including allotments and orchards. Further out from the village chalk pits and lime kilns are 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 latter mainly in the adjoining parish around Turnworth Down).

AGRICULTURAL LAND VALUE

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.

MINERALS SAFEGUARDING ZONES

There are no mineral safeguarding areas identified in the neighbourhood plan area.

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

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 railway 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.

A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone has been designated that includes the southern half of the parish (such zones now cover about 70% of land in England). These zones were set up under Council Directive 91/676/EEC and have been established in areas where nitrate from agricultural land is causing, or could cause, pollution of the water environment (and drinking water sources). Measures include a requirement for farmers to limit their applications of livestock manures and, in some circumstances, to observe closed periods for the application of organic manure to agricultural land.

There is a sewage treatment works to the north of the railway close to Holloway Farm. Gains Cross Farm is a historic landfill sites in the southern half of the parish. Coneygar Coppice is a historic landfill site, just outside the area to the north-west, from which a bio-degradable waste treatment facility is now run. There are no recorded incidents of pollution in the area, although there was a recorded incident of oil / fuel pollution to the River Stour in 2009 occurring just outside the parish boundary. There are no Air Quality Management Areas in the district. There are no entries in the Public Register of Particulars in Relation to Contaminated Land in North Dorset.

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

In order to determine whether the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, the likely environmental effects of the proposals in

the draft plan were first assessed using a sustainability checklist. The sustainability checklist was based on the sustainability framework developed through the scoping exercise for the Sustainability Appraisal for the emerging North Dorset Local Plan. These sustainability objectives were developed to focus upon the relevant sustainability issues in North Dorset, by considering the environmental baseline, relevant plans and policies at local, national, and international scale, and environmental problems within the plan area. Given the potential environmental issues identified they are considered relevant to the neighbourhood plan area, providing a useful way of assessing the possible sustainability implications of the draft Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan.

The sustainability objectives consider wider social and economic issues, in addition to the environmental considerations which are required through the SEA Directive. However the sustainability objectives that fall outside the environmental issues listed in Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive have been retained as they help show how the plan contributes to sustainable development (as required under Schedule 4B section 8(2)b of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

Figure 2.2: The assessment of likely environmental (or sustainability) impact of Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan against North Dorset Local Plan sustainability objectives.

Key:  adverse impact likely  significant adverse impact likely
 negligible impact likely
 positive impact likely  significant positive impact likely

North Dorset Local Plan sustainability objectives		Impact	Justification
Social progress that recognises the needs of everyone	Provide housing including affordable housing that meets the needs of the community	 	The plan provides sufficient land to meet the projected local housing needs, including a degree of flexibility in the choice of sites. The delivery of affordable housing on these will be dependent on site viability, but there is potential for further sites to come forward separately as rural exception sites.
	Create balanced communities where housing, employment and community facilities are delivered to meet needs, improving access to essential services		The plan provides sufficient land to meet the projected housing needs, and looks to retain and where appropriate improve the community facilities that are considered essential by local residents. There is no evidence to suggest there is any significant demand for new employment land in the parish, although the provision of live-work units and small scale workshops would be possible on some of the identified sites.

North Dorset Local Plan sustainability objectives		Impact	Justification
	Improve the health and wellbeing of the population through reducing poverty and encouraging healthy lifestyles	😊	The retention of recreation spaces and community facilities, and the location of new development close to these facilities, should all help meet this objective
	Reduce barriers to individuals participating fully in their community promoting a strong, vibrant and inclusive way of life	😊	The plan looks to retain and where appropriate improve the community facilities that are considered essential by local residents.
	Improve quality of life through well designed inclusive developments	😊	The design standards, based on the positive aspects of local character, should support inclusive designs.
Effective protection of the environment	Reduce the impact of climate change, including flood risk and make best use of the opportunities that arise	😊	No development is proposed in areas at risk of flooding. Where appropriate the need for a flood risk assessment is identified.
	Protect and where opportunities arise, enhance habitats and biodiversity	😊	No development is proposed in areas of known high biodiversity value. The designation of local green spaces has taken into account the biodiversity benefits of wildlife corridors through the built up areas of the village. As with all planning applications, a biodiversity appraisal and mitigation plan will be required on greenfield sites greater than 0.1ha, or where there are known protected species or important habitats/habitat features.
	Improve the quality of the built environment, protecting the district's heritage assets and distinct townscape	😊	The development proposals are well related to the existing built up areas of the village. The design standards are based on an appraisal of the positive elements of local character, and take into account the historic importance of the Listed buildings and Conservation Area.
	Recognise the importance of the district's distinct rural landscapes beyond just the aesthetic value	😊	No significant development is proposed in the Dorset AONB or the more rural, undeveloped parts of the parish. The designation of local green spaces

North Dorset Local Plan sustainability objectives	Impact	Justification	
		has taken into account the contribution these make to the rural character of the area.	
Prudent use of natural resources	Reduce impacts on the environment	☺	There are no notable impacts that require mitigation, and policies include mitigation where appropriate.
	Reduce pressure on the district's natural resources, reducing waste and promoting the wise use, reuse and recycling of land and resources	☹	The geology of the lower valley floor outside the immediate floodplain means that the soils are generally of very good agricultural quality (Grade 2), and therefore this resource could be lost to development. The only area of farmland identified as a potential development site (Hine Town Lane - North) is approximately 0.7ha in size, and therefore the potential loss is not considered significant.
	Promote energy and resource efficiency, encouraging clean energy production	☺	The plan relies on the strategic policies of the local plan and national policy for this objective
Maintenance of sustainable levels of economic growth and employment	Improve the competitiveness of the district's economy through provision of the necessary infrastructure for a more sustainable economy	☺	The plan relies on the strategic policies of the local plan and national policy for this objective
	Enable local needs to be met locally, encouraging more sustainable forms of travel	☺	There is no evidence to suggest there is any significant demand for new employment land in the parish, although the provision of live-work units and small scale workshops would be possible on some of the identified sites.
	Encourage innovation, improve productivity, regenerate towns and villages creating a business environment in which new businesses start and existing businesses grow	☺	There is no evidence to suggest there is any significant demand for new employment land in the parish, although the provision of live-work units and small scale workshops would be possible on some of the identified sites.
	Improve skills and incomes	☺	There is no evidence to suggest there is

North Dorset Local Plan sustainability objectives	Impact	Justification
of the lowest paid and provide satisfying work opportunities for all so that people can realise their full potential		any significant demand for new employment land in the parish, although the provision of live-work units and small scale workshops would be possible on some of the identified sites.

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. Based on the sustainability checklist (Figure 2.2):

<p>1. The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 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 degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy; – the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development; – environmental problems relevant to the plan; – 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>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects, – the cumulative nature of the effects, – the transboundary nature of the effects, – the risks to human health or the 	<p>The focus and scope of the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan is modest in scale and will be in general conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (which as a whole promotes sustainable development) and the strategic policies of the North Dorset Local Plan.</p> <p>It cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of development that is a county matter (mineral extraction and waste development), nationally significant infrastructure or development that falls within Annex 1 to Council Directive 85/337/EEC.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised.</p> <p>The environmental problems relevant to the plan area relate primarily to the risk of flooding, potential impact on Dorset AONB, heritage assets, good quality agricultural land and biodiversity interests. The only likely adverse impact identified was the potential loss of 0.7ha of Grade 2 farmland, which is not considered to be significant.</p> <p>Development is proposed within the Neighbourhood Plan and therefore some element of environmental change will take place. However the likely</p>
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<p>environment (e.g. due to accidents),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected), – the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <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>effects (including cumulative effects) of proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant on the local environment. Furthermore there are no significant proposals within or adjoining the neighbourhood area contained within the North Dorset Local Plan, which may lead to this decision changing when assessed cumulatively. Any impact is likely to be local in its impact, within the parish, and not impact on any significant centres of population.</p>
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FINDINGS

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. In light of this, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that the SEA Directive does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan.

The assessment also provides evidence that the plan “contributes to the achievement of sustainable development” as required to be tested under Schedule 4B section 8(2)b of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3 THE HRA SCREENING PROCESS

The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites.

The HRA looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. European wildlife sites are:

- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

In addition to SPAs and SACs sites Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although they are not covered by the Habitats regulations, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites should be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites. European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.

European wildlife sites and therefore internationally designated wildlife sites, are offered the highest level of protection under European legislation. This legislation sets

out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan for internationally designated sites. The first stage of this process is a “screening” exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the Plan to have an impact on the site.

The closest European sites are Rooksmoor SAC and Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, both about 7km from the area as the crow flies. Other sites in the 20km search area (all of which are over 14km away) are the Dorset Heathlands SPA, the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site, the Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland SAC, the Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC and the Holnest SAC. Given the distance from any European site, advice is sought from Natural England as to whether the plan will require a separate Habitats Regulation Assessment.

APPENDIX 1: A DIAGRAM SUMMARISING THE SEA SCREENING PROCESS.

