

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRE-SUBMISSION STAGE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Prepared on behalf of Broadwindsor Group Parish Council

BROADWINDSOR AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MARCH 2018

This non-technical summary explains the scope and main findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Broadwindsor Area Neighbourhood Plan, at its pre-submission draft plan stage.

The assessment has been undertaken to comply with the SEA Regulations. It is subject to consultation with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, the public and any other interested parties. It considers the likely effects of the plan on the environment, and its evaluation includes an assessment of reasonable alternatives. It also considers appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures.

As a first step, various plans and programmes were reviewed and information collected on the environmental characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The review included an appraisal of the National Planning Policy Framework, the adopted West Dorset Local Plan, and key documents that informed the scope of the Local Plan's own sustainability appraisal. The views of the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England were also sought on the proposed scope of the SEA.

The key environmental issues that may be relevant for the SEA were identified as:

- **Biodiversity, geology, flora and fauna** - the potential for development to harm significant ecological interests is limited as development is unlikely to harm nationally or internationally designated sites. However all sites have potential for biodiversity interest that could be harmed by development and as such their ecological interest and possible presence of protected species should be considered, and opportunities to enhance biodiversity could be identified.
- **Landscape** – Much of the area is part of the Dorset AONB, a nationally important landscape. Major development is likely to be harmful, and all sites have potential to harm features of local landscape character. The scale of development proposed and sensitivity of the landscape to change will need to be taken into account in any site selection process, and policies identifying and protecting key landscape features may be something that can be usefully identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Cultural heritage** – there is potential for development to harm the significance of heritage assets, particularly Listed Buildings which may adjoin a development site, the setting of the scheduled monuments and the Broadwindsor Conservation Area. There are also opportunities to improve the Conservation Area through improvements to the streetscape and appropriate design guidance. The Conservation Team at the District Council and the Historic Environment team at the County Council should be involved in the site selection process, and policies identifying and protecting undesignated heritage assets may be something that can be usefully included in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Soil, Water, Air, Material Assets and Climatic Factors** – there are flooding issues within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, largely related to the network of streams and local soils and topography, and the avoidance of flood risk should therefore be a key consideration. The presence of any contamination from historic sites use within the vicinity of the site should also be checked with the appropriate authorities. The grade of agricultural land should also be considered on sites where

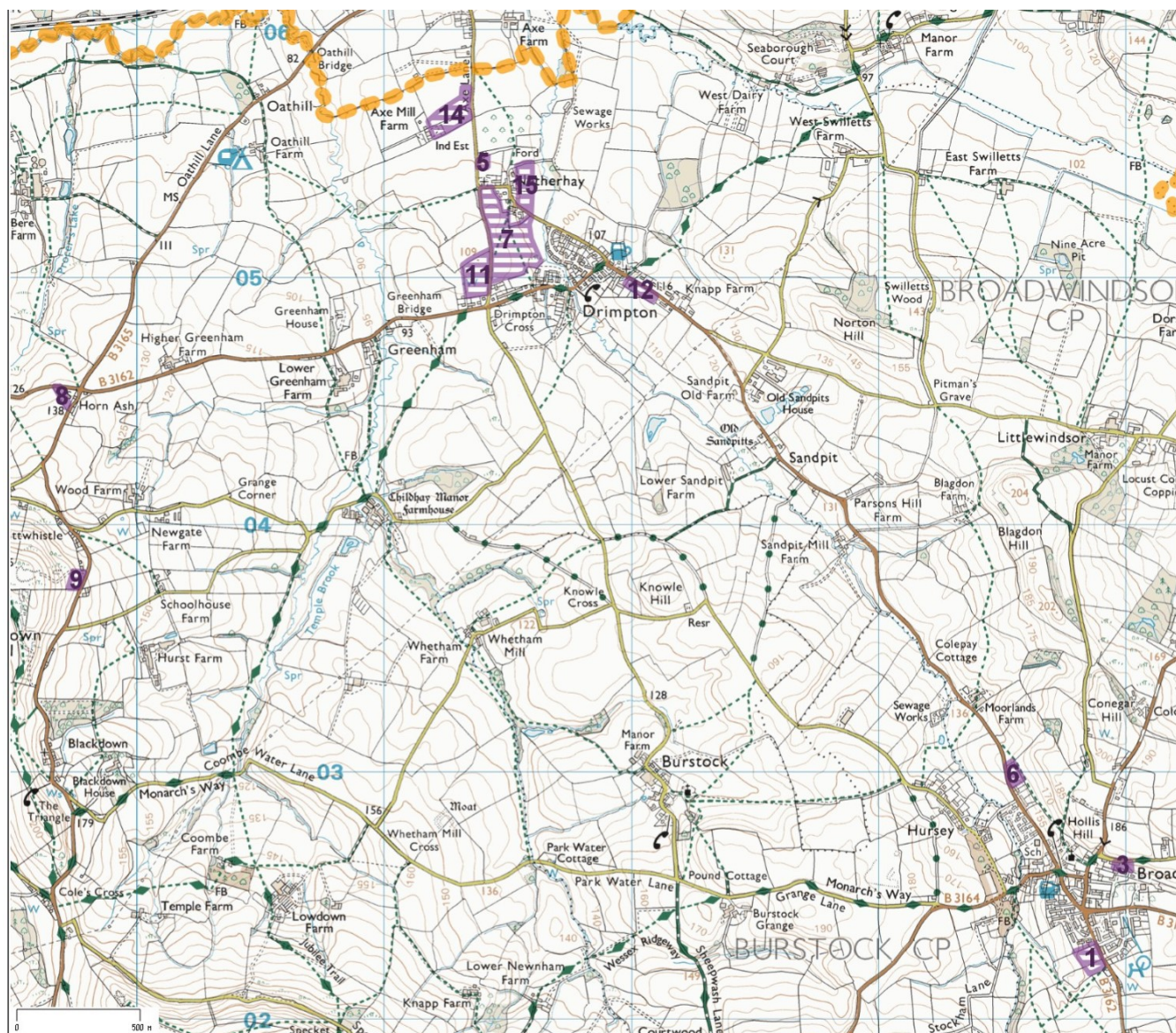
there may be a significant loss of productive farmland. The possible sterilisation of minerals resources should also be checked with the appropriate authorities.

→ **Population and Human Health** - there is a need to provide sufficient opportunities to meet local needs for housing, employment and community facilities in locations that are safe and accessible.

These issues formed the basis of the sustainability objectives.

A 'call for sites' was run in April 2017. Some 15 sites were submitted as part of this process, amounted to about 17 hectares (42 acres) of land. Members of the neighbourhood plan working group, together with their planning advisor, visited all of the sites, and took notes of possible issues. Technical expertise was also sought from the District and County Councils and the AONB team. Four sites were assessed as highly unlikely to meet the tests set out in national and local planning guidance due to their isolated nature and likely degree of landscape impact, and the landowners withdrew these sites from consideration.

Reasonable Alternatives Assessed (Possible Site Allocations)



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The assessment of the various site options showed the potential benefits and harm in respect of each options, and topics where further assessment would be required to understand the likely nature of any impact. Potential significant adverse impacts at this stage relate to the loss of a sizeable area of Grade 2 farmland through the development of site 7 (Land east of Netherhay Lane, between Drimpton and Netherhay) and site 14 (Land at Axe Mill Industrial Estate, Netherhay). Sites 9 (Land south of the Mill House, Kittwhistle) and 15 (Land at Beck's Field, Netherhay) also perform poorly with a number of topic areas where possible harm has been identified, compared to limited benefits, which suggests that these may be less suitable for allocation compared to some of the available alternatives. The assessments were subject to consultation in November 2017, and the feedback considered and acted upon.

The next stage was to assessing the draft Neighbourhood Plan policies, including the more generic policies, policies safeguarding particular features and policies allocating land for development. Ecology surveys were undertaken on most of the sites proposed for inclusion in the draft plan, and the site assessments updated in light of this additional evidence, the refinement of the proposed site areas and policy criteria, and the feedback received as part of the earlier consultation. The following table summarises the main findings in terms of likely environmental impacts.

Sustainability Assessment – Pre-submission Plan Policies

SEA objective	Biodiversity, fauna & flora	Landscape	Cultural heritage	Soil, water & air pollution	Agriculture and minerals	Flood Risk	Meeting local needs	Safe and accessible
Policy BGNP1. Local Landscape Features	✓	✓✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✗
Policy BGNP2. Dark Skies	✓	✓✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Policy BGNP3. Local Green Spaces	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
Policy BGNP4. Green Way / Common Water Ln	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓
Policy BGNP5. Important Gaps	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Policy BGNP6. Built character	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Policy BGNP7. Important community facilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓
Policy BGNP8. Meeting housing needs	*	*	*	*	*	*	✓✓	*
Policy BGNP9. Meeting employment needs	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓✓	-
Policy BGNP10. Land south of Fullers	-	✗	-	-	✗	-	✓✓	-
Policy BGNP11. Land at Manor Farm	-	-	✗	-	-	-	✓	👤
Policy BGNP12. Land North of Hillside	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	👤
Policy BGNP13. Small-scale exception sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Policy BGNP14. Land East of Netherhay Lane	-	-	-	-	✗	-	✓✓	-
Policy BGNP15. Land East of Manor Farm	👤	✗	-	-	-	-	✓✓	-
Policy BGNP16. Land at Brent Paddock	✗	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✗
Policy BGNP17. Land at Axe Mill, Netherhay	-	✗	-	-	✗✗	-	✓✓	-
Policy BGNP18. Rural Conversions	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✗
* assessed under related policies on the location of new development								

The main potential adverse impact identified is in relation to the potential loss of productive farmland, primarily through the proposal for an employment site at Axe Mill in the western part of the Neighbourhood Plan area, but also to a lesser degree through some of the housing site allocations. Given that other policies with the Local Plan could further increase the loss of productive agricultural land, it would be appropriate to monitor this specific issue and may be appropriate to include an additional policy in the Neighbourhood Plan to reduce incremental losses (for example, by requiring

special justification for the permanent loss of large amounts of productive agricultural land, other than that allocated through the Neighbourhood Plan).

Overall most of the policies should secure significant positive benefits particularly in terms of securing opportunities for further housing to meet local needs (including a significant proportion of affordable homes), in a manner that should respect and reinforce the areas' local landscape character, biodiversity and heritage. The assessment process has helped identify the need to highlight and mitigate against potential adverse impacts, and although the site allocations may cause some cumulative landscape harm, this is not considered to be significant and will be mitigated to some extent by the policies protecting specific areas and requiring good design appropriate to the character of the area. The alternative options for development do not perform better in terms of their overall sustainability or reduced landscape harm, and therefore there is no reason for these to be included in preference to the chosen options.

Comments are welcome on this report, as part of the consultation on the pre-submission draft neighbourhood plan.