

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Prepared on behalf of Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

UPPER MARSHWOOD VALE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MAY 2019

This non-technical summary explains the scope and main findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the pre-submission draft of the Upper Marshwood Vale Neighbourhood Plan. The assessment has been undertaken to comply with the SEA Regulations. 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. It is subject to consultation with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, the public and any other interested parties.

The Neighbourhood Plan area



Upper Marshwood Vale CP



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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 (with a response received from Natural England).

As a result of this work the following conclusions were reached:

Biodiversity, geology, flora and fauna – *although the potential for development to harm significant ecological interests is limited as development is unlikely to harm nationally or internationally designated sites, 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 (such as through establishing wildlife corridors connecting habitats) 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, and the setting of the scheduled monuments. The site selection process should consider the potential harm to these assets and how this can be avoided. Policies identifying and protecting undesignated heritage assets may be something that can be usefully included in the Neighbourhood Plan.*

Soil, water, air and climatic factors – *there are no major flooding issues within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, but the avoidance of flood risk (including from surface water flooding) should still be taken into consideration. Similarly although unlikely the possible sterilisation of minerals resources, presence of contaminated land, and the loss of high quality agricultural land should also be checked.*

Material assets, population and human health – *given the limited community facilities, the current level of out-commuting, dependency on home-working and the ageing population, consideration should also be given to the potential to reduce reliance on the private car and provide opportunities for affordable housing, work, and community facilities in easy walking distance of the main settlements if this is possible.*

The objectives for this environmental assessment were then defined as follows:

Biodiversity, fauna and flora	Ensure no ecological interests would be harmed, and where opportunities arise, enhance habitats and biodiversity
Landscape	Ensure development respects and reinforces the area's rural landscapes and character
Cultural heritage	Protect the area's heritage assets, and where opportunities arise, enhance the historic character of the area
Soil, water and air pollution	Ensure development does not result in an unacceptable risk of pollution
Soils and minerals	Ensure development does not result in sterilisation of minerals resources or high quality agricultural land
Climate change	Reduce flood risk
Meeting local needs	Provide housing, employment and community facilities to help meet local needs
Safe and accessible	Ensure safe access and a pedestrian-friendly environment

The next step was to undertake a high-level assessment of the plan's vision and goals against these environmental assessment objectives, and then (is appropriate) the policies themselves, together with any reasonable alternative options.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan's objectives and related contents is summarised as follows:

Vision / Goals	Relevant contents included in the pre-submission draft plan
To allow some housing growth at a rate that reflects local needs and the rural nature of the	The review of housing data would suggest a possible target of about 2 dwellings per annum, primarily for affordable housing and smaller (and more affordable) open market housing types including self-build plots.

<p>area. Where possible, this should provide for younger people with children, as well as older people needing to downsize</p>	<p>Policy UMV4 allocates the Colmer Stud Farm site for mixed use including up to four dwellings Policy UMV5 allocates the Three Counties Nurseries Site for up to five live-work units Policy UMV6 allows the re-use of existing buildings to create one or more new dwellings subject to certain criteria</p>
<p>To support home working, rural workshops and small-scale tourism to strengthen the local economy and provide further job opportunities</p>	<p>Assessed need is low and likely to be speculative, with a strong emphasis on home-working. Policy UMV5 allocates the Three Counties Nurseries Site for up to five live-work units Policy UMV7 supports the use of existing lawful dwellings and associated outbuildings to facilitate home working, and the provision of new, small-scale workshop / office units subject to certain criteria</p>
<p>To support a range of community facilities that can be sustained given the sparsity of the local population. The initial focus for this will be on supporting a new local shop in Marshwood. Practical solutions that could improve the local school and church (in terms of better parking and outdoor play facilities) are also considered.</p>	<p>Assessed need prioritises a replacement village shop in Marshwood, together with parking to serve existing facilities (school and church). Although improved parking for the facilities in Stoke Abbott is also an issue, no sites have been identified that could address this need. Policy UMV1 identifies the key community facilities to be protected and allowed to modernise and adapt to meet future needs Policy UMV2 seeks to protect access to the countryside via public rights of way and the main publicly accessible green spaces Policy UMV4 allocates the Colmer Stud Farm site for mixed use, including a village shop with community meeting room and adjacent green space, community parking (for use in association with the shop, school and church)</p>
<p>To protect the landscape and features which contribute to the area’s unique character, the enjoyment of the area in terms of countryside access and views, the general tranquillity of the area and its dark skies.</p>	<p>As this is broadly covered by the Local Plan the focus here is on highlighting more local features that perhaps would otherwise be overlooked in planning decisions. Policy UMV3 identifies 16 different local landscape characteristics that should be respected and enhanced, listing features. It also supports proposals that remove features that are detrimental to local landscape character, such as intrusive large pylons and large-scale modern agricultural buildings.</p>

The assessment of the high-level vision and goals suggested that the plan would be unlikely to lead to any significant adverse environmental impacts, but that due to uncertainties, an assessment of all of the Neighbourhood Plan policies should follow.

Each of the policies (plus an alternative option of allocating land adjoining Gramarye Lodge in lieu of the Colmer Stud Farm Site under policy UMV4) was then assessed. The following table shows the main findings, with the impacts graded as follows:

Key:

✓✓	significant positive impact likely
✓	positive impact likely
-	neutral impact likely
x	adverse impact likely
x x	significant adverse impact likely
✋	impact uncertain but unlikely to be adversely significant
✋✋	impact uncertain but potentially adversely significant

Environmental assessment objective	Biodiversity, fauna & flora	Landscape	Cultural heritage	Pollution	Soil & minerals resources	Climate change (flood risk)	Meeting local needs	Safe & accessible
Neighbourhood Plan policy								
UMV1 - Community facilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓
UMV2 - Recreational access	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓
UMV3 - Local landscape character	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	x
UMV4 - Colmer Stud Farm site	-	x	x	-	x	-	✓✓	-
UMV5 - Three Counties Nursery	-	-	✓	☞	x	-	✓✓	x
UMV6 - Residential conversions	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	x
UMV7 - Small-scale employment	☞	☞	☞	-	☞	☞	✓	x
<i>Reasonable alternatives considered:</i>								
[alt UMV4] - Gramarye Lodge	-	x	xx	-	x	-	✓✓	x

The above analysis (and more detailed information available in the main report) indicates the following key conclusions:

- overall, any adverse impacts are not likely to be significant,
- the most positive impacts scored were against the objective of meeting local needs, and it is unlikely that these would be achieved in the context of the Local Plan policies alone,
- the main adverse impact is in relation to safe and accessible development, due to the rural and sparsely population nature of the Neighbourhood Plan area,
- although there is likely to be an overall adverse impact in relation to loss of productive farmland, the scale (cumulatively) is still unlikely to be significant given the limited size of the site allocations,
- the alternative site to Colmer Stud (land adjoining Gramarye Lodge) should not be preferred (as this could lead to a more significant heritage impact depending on the scale of development required) – and no other reasonable alternatives were identified,
- there are mitigation measures included within the policies to reduce adverse impacts, and
- any residual adverse impacts are likely to be outweighed by the positive environmental impacts of the plan.

In undertaking the assessment it was recognised that evidence is constantly updated, and that detailed assessment of impact (particularly in relation to landscape and visual impact) was not practical. However given the scale of development proposed and likely environmental impacts these difficulties were not considered to be of significant concern.

Given that it is unlikely that the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan would lead to any significant adverse effects, no specific post-adoption monitoring is suggested.