

Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

July 2015

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether or not the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) through a process known as SEA screening.

This report provides details of the proposed Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan and explains the legislative background to SEA screening, before providing an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan.

This report meets the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment and the Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations (2004).

2. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment ('SEA Directive') introduces the need to undertake a strategic environmental assessment ('SEA') during the development of some plans and programmes. The main purpose of SEA, according to Article 1 of the SEA Directive, is:

“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

The SEA Directive is transcribed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which establishes the requirement to undertake a sustainability appraisal ('SA') for some documents used for planning purposes. The SA process incorporates the requirement for SEA, but typically has a broader scope and considers the social and economic issues in addition to the environmental effects.

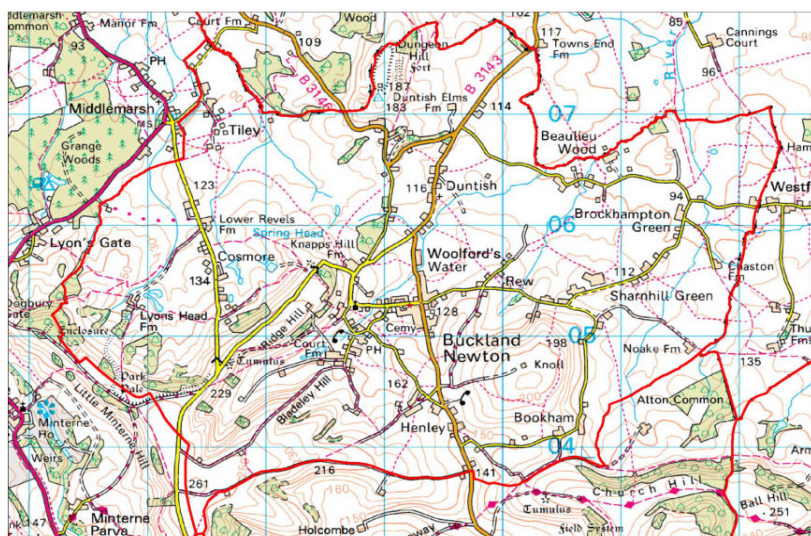
The requirement to undertake an SA of supplementary planning documents (SPD) was removed by the Planning Act 2008. However, the need to establish whether the planning document requires an SEA, through the SEA Directive, remains.

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive explain which plans and programmes require SEA. The Government's Planning Practice Guidance suggests that an SPD will only require an SEA “in exceptional circumstances...if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan”.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 amends the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 to provide clarification on the SEA related documents which must be submitted alongside neighbourhood planning proposals. Regulation 2(4) of the amendment regulations 2015 adds to the list of documents that a neighbourhood planning group must submit to a local planning authority with a proposal for a neighbourhood plan, which is presented in regulation 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. The additional document which must be submitted is either an environmental report, should an SEA be required, or a statement of reasons why an environmental assessment is not required.

3. THE BUCKLAND NEWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

THE EXTENT OF THE BUCKLAND NEWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA



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The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood plan area occupies the whole of the civil parish of Buckland Newton, covering an area of approximately 1,700 hectares. This includes the settlement of Buckland Newton, together with outlying hamlets such as Duntish, Henley, Cosmore, Bookham, Brockhampton Green, Sharnhill Green, Beaulieu Wood, Rew and Tiley. The extent of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area is shown within the red line in the map adjacent to this text.

OBJECTIVES OF THE BUCKLAND NEWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The overall vision of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is to maintain Buckland Newton Parish as a thriving rural community, and to ensure its long term future by working towards meeting the needs of those who live, work in and visit this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

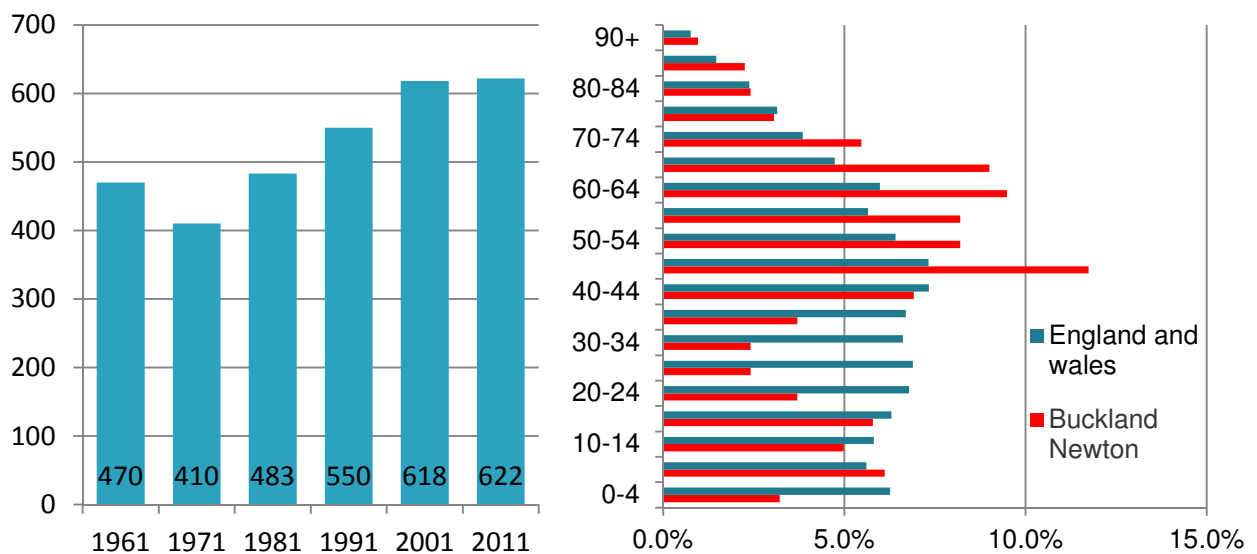
The main objectives of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan are:

- To aim to meet diverse local housing needs taking into account changing demographics and social requirements;
- To keep housing development to a small scale, designed to a high quality which is sustainable and is complementary to neighbouring properties;
- To support existing business, encourage new enterprises and facilities which will enhance commercial effectiveness and employment opportunities;
- To preserve the long term future of the area by retaining and, if possible, enhancing local services and facilities, promoting a safe and healthy community;
- To protect and enhance the natural and built environment of the Parish including its landscape, built heritage, archaeological sites and wildlife habitats; and
- To reduce vulnerability to the impact of severe weather i.e. flooding, etc.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUCKLAND NEWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

Buckland Newton is a rural parish situated in West Dorset, and lies approximately 10 miles equidistant from the county town of Dorchester and the towns of Sherborne and Sturminster Newton. The main road through the area, the B3143, runs north/south through the parish connecting Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton in the north to Dorchester to the south. The C12 runs parallel to the west as a main route between Dorchester and Sherborne.

The 2011 Census showed that the neighbourhood plan area had a population of 622 living in 260 homes, but a total of 287 dwellings including second homes. The main village of Buckland Newton has a parish church, primary school, pub, shop and other facilities.



There are more than 100 businesses and organisations within the parish, mostly small in terms of the number of employees. Many provide local services, such as the shop and pub, to various building trades, gardeners, cleaners, etc. There are a number of industrial units, mainly converted redundant farm buildings, with a variety of light manufacturing and service businesses. Buckland Newton School is a major employer within the parish. Agriculture is still an important part of the local economy, but less so than in the past because of the way farming has changed, leading to a number of farm diversification projects, including equestrian and a variety of other rural activities. Tourism plays a significant role in the area with holiday lets, bed and breakfast establishments, as well as increased trade for other businesses.

The southern edge of the parish lies on the North Dorset Escarpment, rising to over 800 feet above sea level with chalk downland, whilst the rest of the parish lies on clay and greensand in the south of the Blackmore Vale.

Approximately three quarters of the parish lies within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Beauty, the exceptions being a small area to the east of Tiley and a larger area to the north east around Brockhampton Green. The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, with two secondary aims: meeting the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and having regard for the interests of those who live and work there.

Buckland Newton village also has a designated Conservation Area, covering part of the older portion of the village, including the Church and several listed buildings.

SCOPE OF THE BUCKLAND NEWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan group have identified the likely areas which the plan will focus on to achieve the vision and aims and have also identified some possible locations for new development.

The West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan already provides a policy framework which the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan must conform with. The purpose of the policy in the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is to build upon the policy in the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan to ensure that the aims and vision specific to the area are met.

The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan will provide additional policy on housing, employment and business, renewable energy, transport and traffic, community facilities and local green spaces. In addition, land will be allocated for rural housing exception sites and other housing.

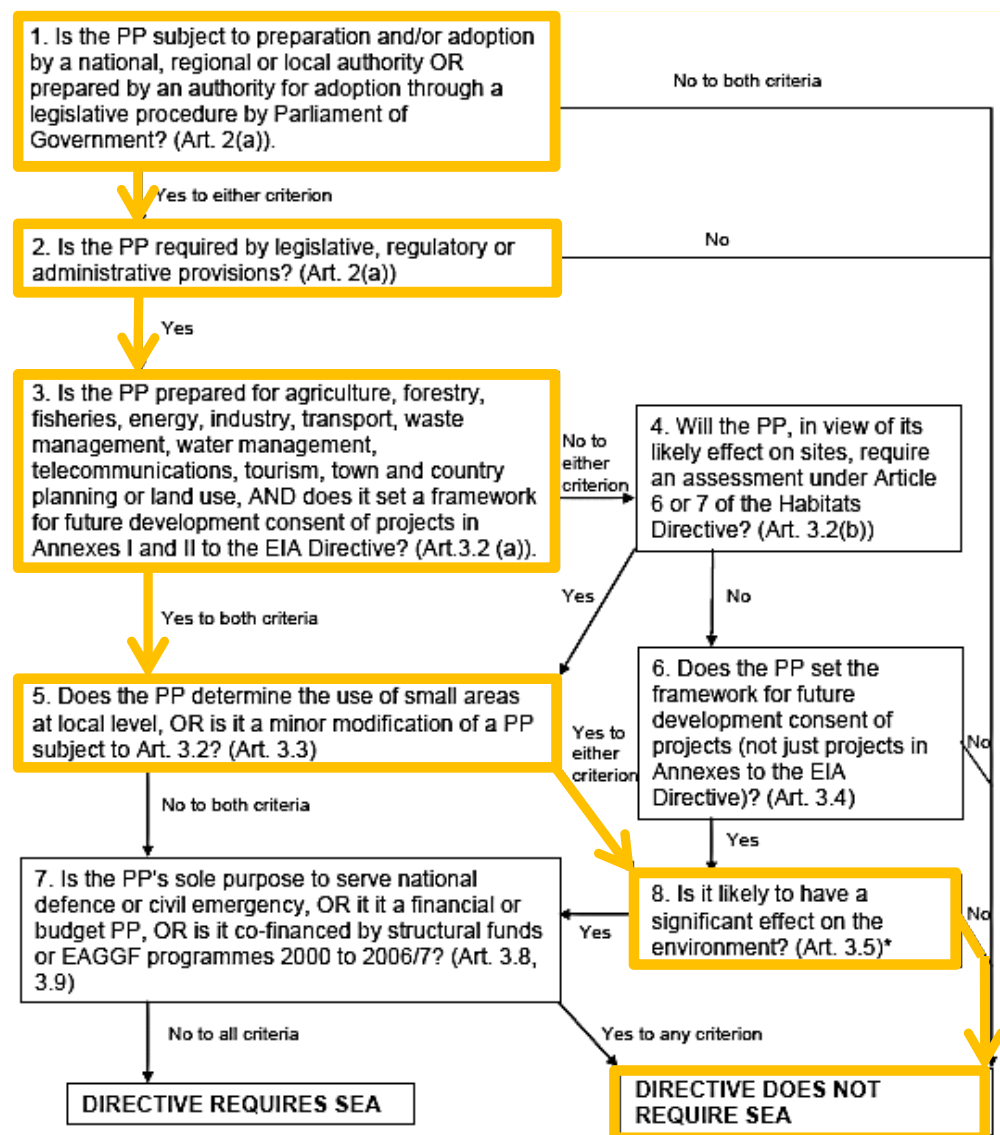
4. SEA SCREENING OF THE BUCKLAND NEWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This Chapter provides an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan.

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive provide the legislative framework for defining the types of plan and programme that require SEA.

The SEA screening process is summarised in diagrammatic form in the flowchart shown in Figure 4.1¹. The screening for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is highlighted in orange and justification for the decisions made at each stage in the SEA screening process is given in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1: A diagram summarising the SEA screening process with the SEA screening for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan outlined in orange.



¹ Diagram taken from the Government guidance on the Strategic Environmental Assessment regulations titled 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive', published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005

Figure 4.2 – a summary of the justification made for the decisions during the SEA screening for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan.

Question in SEA screening flow chart (Figure 4.1)	Response
1. Is the PP 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 of Government?	YES The intention is for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted by West Dorset District Council through a legislative procedure.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	YES The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan would be a Statutory document, prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended.
3. Is the PP 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 consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?	YES The Buckland Newton 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.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2?	YES The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan determines the use of small areas at a local level.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment (Article 3.5)?	NO Justification for this decision is given later in this chapter.

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

The final question in the SEA screening process for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan was question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

In asking this question, the SEA Directive refers to Article 3.5, which states that the relevant criteria in Annex II of the SEA Directive shall be taken into account when determining whether there are likely to be significant effects.

The criteria in Article 3.5 have been taken into consideration when determining whether the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA, as presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: The assessment of the likely significance of effects of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan (Taken from Annex II of the SEA Directive)

Criteria in Annex II of the SEA Directive	Response	Is there a significant effect?
(1) Characteristics of the plan and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size, and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The framework for development within the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is set by the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan, which gives details of the location, size and nature of proposed development in this area. The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan builds upon this framework by providing a framework for affordable housing projects and other housing allocation projects.	No
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted alongside its parent document, the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan. The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan will expand upon the existing policies in the Local Plan, providing supplementary information on a local scale rather than influencing the overall direction of the Local Plan.	No
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Any development which comes forward through the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to the environmental considerations of the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan. These policies have been subject to sustainability appraisal, and are in place to ensure that sustainable development is achieved.	No
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The environment of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area and adjacent land is exceptional in terms of the landscape, wildlife, and built and historic environment. However, there are not considered to be any significant environmental problems which are specific to the area, above and beyond those considered and addressed in the Local Plan parent document. The Buckland Newton	No

	Neighbourhood Plan may include policies which provide additional environmental protection, to ensure that the environmental problems are avoided in future.	
e) 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).	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan.	No
(2) Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
a) The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects.	It is considered highly improbable that the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan will result in significant effects, in light of the nature and scale of the proposals. It is anticipated that the plan will have a duration of 15 years, from 2015 to 2030. Some effects of the plan may be irreversible.	No
b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	The Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan, which lies adjacent and to the southwest of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area, came into practice in early 2015. It is considered unlikely that the degree of development proposed through the Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan, when considered in combination with the proposals likely to come forward through the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan, will introduce significant environmental effects. The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is currently being written. Whilst it has not yet been finalised, the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development which would introduce significant environmental effects in combination with the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan.	No
c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	The transboundary impacts, beyond the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area, are unlikely to be significant in light of the nature and scale of the	No

	proposals.	
d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g due to accidents).	The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to introduce significant risks to human health and the environment, for example due to accidents, in light of the nature and characteristics of the development.	No
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area occupies approximately 1,700ha and a population of 662 people according to the 2011 census. The spatial extent of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area and the magnitude of the population affected are not considered significant for the purposes of SEA.	No
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area and adjacent areas contain a number of environmental designations, reflecting its special natural characteristics and rich cultural heritage. These include landscape designations, such as the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, wildlife designations including the Cerne and Sydling Downs Special Protection Area immediately to the west of the site, and designations which reflect the cultural and heritage value of the area, such as Listed Buildings (grade II), the Buckland Newton Conservation Area and Scheduled Monuments immediately to the south of the site. The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan will conform with the Local Plan, which provides protection to these environmental characteristics to ensure that they are not vulnerable to significant impacts from development.	No
i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage		
ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values		
iii) Intensive land-use	The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent which would result in a significant intensification of local land use. Furthermore, the presence of a development boundary is likely to concentrate development towards built up areas,	No

	reducing the potential for countryside areas to be changed to more intensive land use.	
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>The environmental designations within the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan area include the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) landscape designation and local wildlife designations such as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). The plan area also includes designations which reflect the cultural and heritage value of the area such as Listed Buildings and the Buckland Newton Conservation Areas. The surrounding areas include Scheduled Monuments to the south, and wildlife designations including the Cerne and Sydling Downs Special Protection Area (SPA), which is a wildlife site with European status, to the west of the plan area.</p> <p>Policy ENV 1 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan prevents development which would cause unacceptable impacts upon the Dorset AONB. The Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan includes allocations for development within the Dorset AONB. However, the development must be in conformity with the Local Plan, which forbids development which would adversely impact upon the Dorset AONB. Therefore, significant adverse impacts upon the Dorset AONB are not considered likely.</p> <p>Policy ENV 2 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan prevents development which would cause unacceptable impacts upon wildlife sites, including European sites such as the Cerne and Sydling Downs SPA adjacent and to the west of the site, and local wildlife designations such as SNCI. Furthermore, the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development within a designated wildlife site, and is likely to focus development towards the existing settlements rather than undeveloped countryside habitats.</p> <p>Policy ENV 4 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan prevents development which would cause unacceptable impacts upon designated heritage assets, such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, and Scheduled Monuments.</p>	No

5. CONCLUSION

The SEA screening exercise explained in Chapter 4 concluded that the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental impacts, largely due to the characteristics and local scale of the proposals, and the protection already provided in the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan parent document.

Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency were consulted on the contents of the SEA screening report, in accordance with regulation 9(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. All parties agreed with the conclusion that the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (see Appendix A). Therefore, in conclusion, SEA is not required for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan.

This report provides the statement of reasons for the determination that SEA is not required in accordance with regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004). This document must be submitted alongside neighbourhood planning proposals, as required by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, amended by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

APPENDIX A: CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Mr Oliver Rendle
West Dorset District Council
Planning Policy Division
Stratton House High West Street
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1UZ

Our ref: WX/2006/000265/SE-
03/SC1-L01
Your ref: SEA Buckland Newton
Date: 11 May 2015

Dear Mr Rendle

**Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan
Strategic Environmental Assessment – Screening Opinion**

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the above mentioned Screening Opinion for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan.

We have no objections to the information submitted and are satisfied with the process and conclusions reached that SEA is not required for the plan.

Please note that as of 15 April 2015 that the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) will be the lead for surface water and groundwater flooding matters in the planning process.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

MR MICHAEL HOLM
Planning Advisor - Sustainable Places
Direct dial 01258 483380
Direct e-mail michael.holm@environment-agency.gov.uk

Oliver Rendle

From: Stuart, David <David.Stuart@HistoricEngland.org.uk>
Sent: 21 May 2015 12:59
To: Oliver Rendle
Subject: SEA screening for Buckland Newton NP

Dear Oliver

Thank you for your consultation on the Buckland NP SEA Screening Report.

My apologies for not being able to respond to you before now.

We note that the Plan may contain policies allocating sites for development but that policies in the Local Plan would prevent the allocation of any which cause harm to heritage assets.

On this basis I can therefore confirm that we have no objection to the conclusion that the Plan will not require an SEA.

Kind regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places Adviser South West
Direct Line: 0117 975 0680 | Mobile: 0797 924 0316

Historic England | 29 Queen Square | Bristol | BS1 4ND

From: Oliver Rendle [<mailto:O.Rendle@westdorset-weymouth.gov.uk>]
Sent: 24 April 2015 17:17
To: Stuart, David; John Stobart; 'Holm, Michael'
Cc: john@lydden.org.uk; jo@dorsetplanning.co.uk
Subject: SEA screening for Buckland Newton NP

Dear All,

I am writing to consult you on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening report for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan (attached), in accordance with Article 3.6 of European Directive 2001/42/EC.

Please can you respond by Friday 15th May 2015, to allow for your responses to be taken into account and a decision to be made regarding the need for SEA.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this,

Thanks, Oliver

Oliver Rendle
Environmental Assessment Officer

West Dorset District Council, South Walks House, South Walks Road, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1UZ
Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, North Quay, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 8TA

Tel. 01305 251010 (Extension No. 2557)
Email o.rendle@westdorset-weymouth.gov.uk

Oliver Rendle

From: Stobart, John (NE) <John.Stobart@naturalengland.org.uk>
Sent: 23 June 2015 15:13
To: Oliver Rendle
Cc: R.I.Brown@dorsetcc.gov.uk
Subject: RE: Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan

Oliver

Further to my previous email below I can confirm I have discussed the revised Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan with Richard Brown of the Dorset AONB, who has indicated he is satisfied that the outstanding landscape issues have been resolved. On this basis I can confirm that Natural England is now satisfied that the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan will not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Should you require further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

John Stobart
Planning and Conservation Lead Advisor
Natural England
07825 844475

Please note that my working days are now Monday to Thursday

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From: Stobart, John (NE)
Sent: 02 June 2015 14:44
To: 'John baker'
Cc: Tom Munro; Brown, Richard I. (R.I.Brown@dorsetcc.gov.uk); Oliver Rendle (O.Rendle@westdorset-
weymouth.gov.uk)
Subject: RE: Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan

Dear Mr Baker

Many thanks for your email.

The response sent to WDDC reflected the information we had available at consultation ie a draft plan with scope for a significant number of houses across a large number of houses with no landscape impact information. With this limited level of information available I really can't advise the provisions of the plan won't have a significant environmental impact.

However, I have stated in my letter that we would review our advice on receipt of a suitable landscape impact assessment that considers the impacts of the proposed allocations on the character of the existing settlement and any adverse in combination impacts on the Dorset AONB. We have further recommended that the additional landscape information is prepared in full consultation with the Dorset AONB Team. I am therefore reassured to see the previous advice provided by Richard Brown. In light of the changes to the draft plan I will await a final response by Richard who has had an opportunity to visit the proposed developments sites and would hope that any outstanding issues can be resolved so that the need for an SEA can be avoided.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you would like to chat this through.

Regards
John

John Stobart
Planning and Conservation Lead Advisor
Natural England
07825 844475

Please note that my working days are now Monday to Thursday

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From: John baker [<mailto:john@lydden.org.uk>]
Sent: 26 May 2015 14:34
To: Stobart, John (NE)
Cc: Tom Munro
Subject: Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan

Dear Mr Stobart

Buckland Newton Draft Neighbourhood Plan

It was with surprise and concern that we learnt from West Dorset District Council that Natural England advises that the Plan should be subject to a full SEA, as we had been advised that the low level of development, an average of 2 to 3 homes per year, would not require formal environmental assessment as the plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.

Protecting our rural environment and the AONB has always been our aim, whilst meeting the long term needs and sustainability of our community. In the initial process of selecting potential sites, our Housing Focus Group assessed many sites and rejected the vast majority because of their potential adverse impact on the landscape and environmental diversity.

Planning officers from the District Council have been working with us to ensure chosen sites were not in particularly sensitive locations, and the Council's Conservation Team commented on potential impacts, as well as the AONB Team

We asked the Dorset AONB Team for input at an earlier stage of the development of our plan, and I attach their comments, annotated in red with how we have dealt with any concerns.

We understand your comments were made on the plan including development proposals which have recently been amended or deleted. Therefore we hope that the amendments made in line with the AONB Team's comments have reduced the overall impact of the total proposed development to a level that doesn't require SEA.

The emerging West Dorset Local Plan includes policy that safeguards the AONB and this, together with the Dorset AONB Management Plan, will guide planning officers in their decision making on resultant planning applications. However, we would be grateful if you have any suggestions or examples for an additional policy or policies that would cover your concerns and allay the need for an expensive and time consuming SEA that neither we nor our local district council have the resources to produce.

We have started our statutory 6 week public consultation of the draft plan and would appreciate your earliest response.

Yours sincerely

John Baker
Parish Councillor
Chairman of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group



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Date: 18 May 2015



Oliver Rendle
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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Oliver

Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report

Thank you for consulting Natural England on the SEA Screening Report for the Buckland Newton Valley Neighbouring Plan and apologies for the delay in getting back to you. Your consultation were received on 28 April 2015.

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.

Nationally designated landscapes - Strategic Environmental Assessment required

Buckland Newton lies within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a designation of national importance with the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Any decision on the need for SEA should take full account the Dorset AONB Team's advice and give the necessary weight to the relevant Dorset AONB Management Plan policies.

Natural England is concerned that the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan as outlined includes provision for over 40 new dwellings primarily on green field sites in a modestly sized settlement, resulting in an significant increase in its overall size.

The proposals are not currently supported by a landscape impact assessment and therefore no information is available on the suitability of the proposed allocated sites, or the potential for the proposals in combination to impact on the purposes for which the Dorset AONB is designated. The in combination landscape impacts are particularly relevant as the loss of a significant proportion of the small undeveloped areas within the village may adversely affect the overall character of the settlement. Without this information it cannot be safely concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan would not have a significant environmental effect, in this case an adverse impact on the Dorset AONB. On this basis Natural England advises that the Plan should be subject to a full SEA.

Natural England will reconsider our advice relating to the need for an SEA on receipt of a suitable landscape impact assessment that considers the impacts of the proposed allocations on the character of the existing settlement and any adverse in combination impacts on the Dorset AONB. Natural England recommends that the additional landscape information is prepared in full consultation with the Dorset AONB Team.

Matters relating to Biodiversity

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as statutory designated sites and protected species are concerned, an SEA is not required for the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan. We provide the reasons why we are of this view below.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that the plan is unlikely to harm any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar Site and is not likely to significantly affect the interest features for which they are notified. We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which it is likely to affect to an extent sufficient to require an SEA.

I can also confirm that the plan will not require a separate Habitats Regulation Assessment.

Although the Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to significantly harm biodiversity interests to the extent that the plan would require an SEA, the proposals will result in the loss of a number of greenfield sites within the settlement. The combined loss of these sites may harm local biodiversity interests, for example through the loss of foraging opportunities for bats, badgers, hedgehogs etc. and the loss of nesting opportunities for birds. In order to address these issues Natural England recommends that the Neighbourhood Plan also includes provision for mitigating any losses through measures designed to enhance biodiversity interests elsewhere within the plan area. This might be achieved through the development and implementation of a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan for the village.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter please contact John Stobart on 07825 844475. For any new consultations or issues, please contact consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

John Stobart
Planning and Conservation Lead Advisor
john.stobart@naturalengland.org.uk
07825 844475