

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.

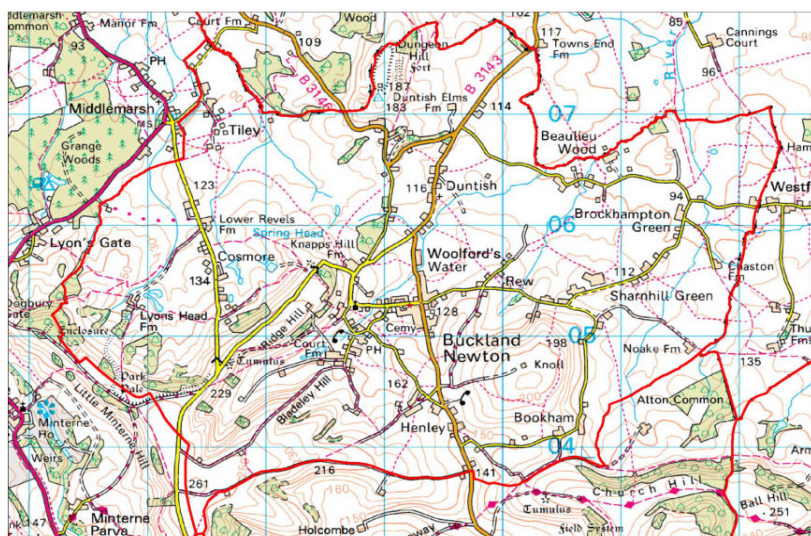
The requirement to undertake an SA of supplementary planning documents (SPD) was removed by the Planning Act 2008. However, the need to establish whether the planning document requires an SEA, through the SEA Directive, remains.

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.

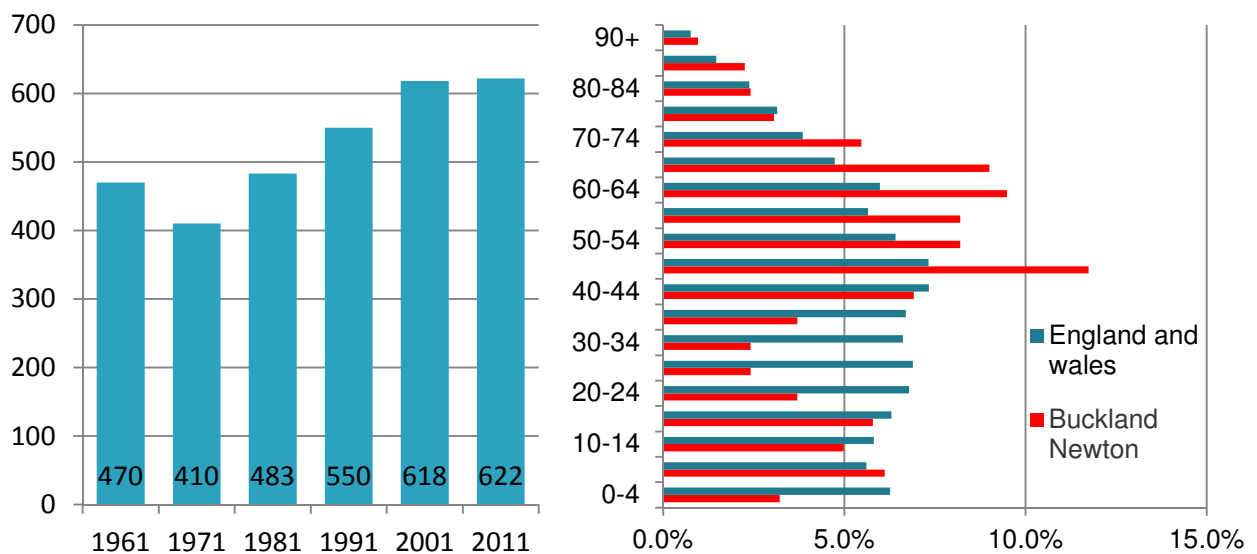
The main objectives of the Buckland Newton Neighbourhood Plan are:

- 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.

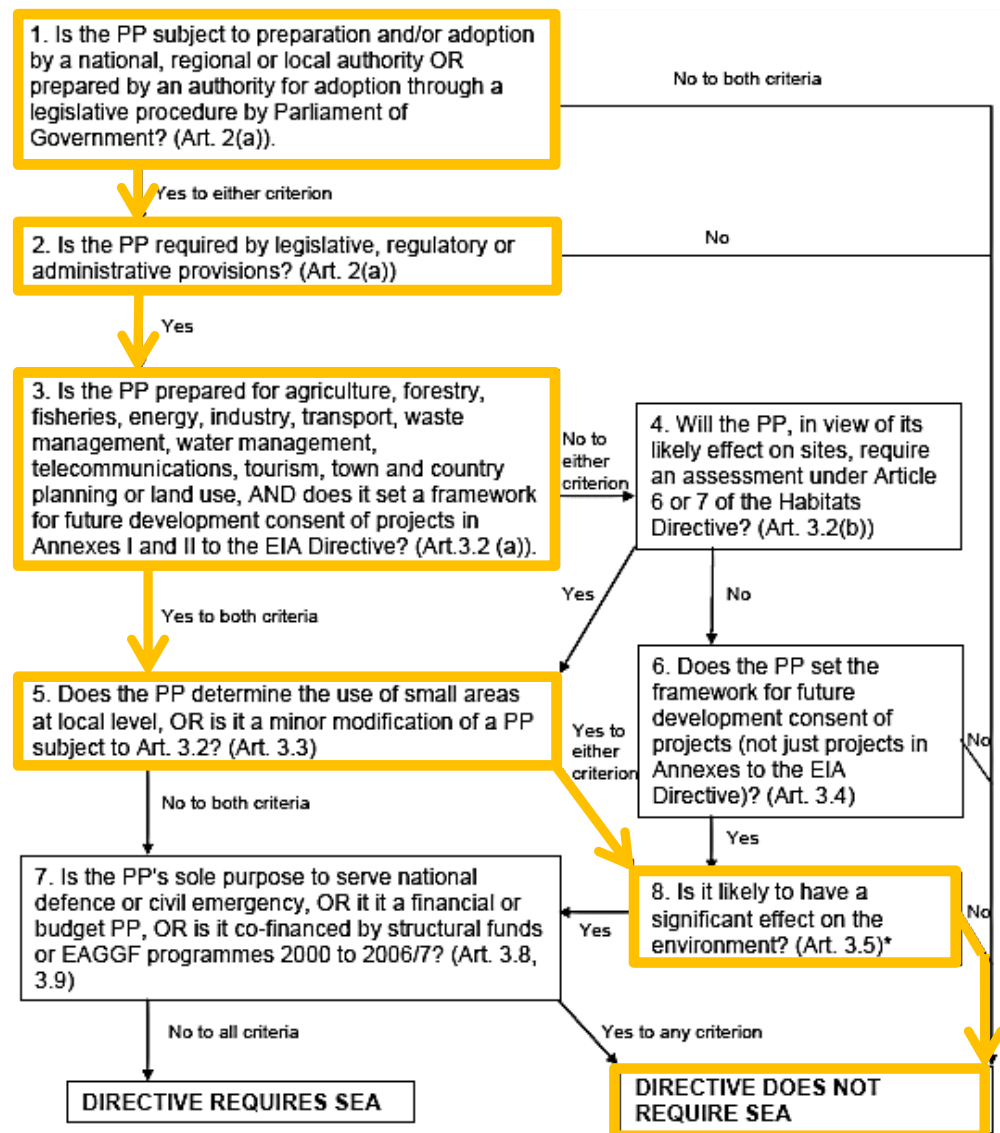
4. SEA SCREENING OF THE BUCKLAND NEWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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. 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.