

Holwell Neighbourhood Plan (Review Version)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (including Habitat Regulations Assessment) Screening Report

December 2020
(with post-consultation updates February 2021)

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1. INTRODUCTION

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

This report provides an outline of the policies proposed for the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan (Review Version) and explains the legislative background to SEA screening, before providing an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Holwell 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).

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) to provide clarification on the SEA related documents which must be submitted alongside neighbourhood planning proposals (including modifications to a Neighbourhood Plan). These state that a either an environmental report, should an SEA be required, or a statement of reasons why an environmental assessment is not required.

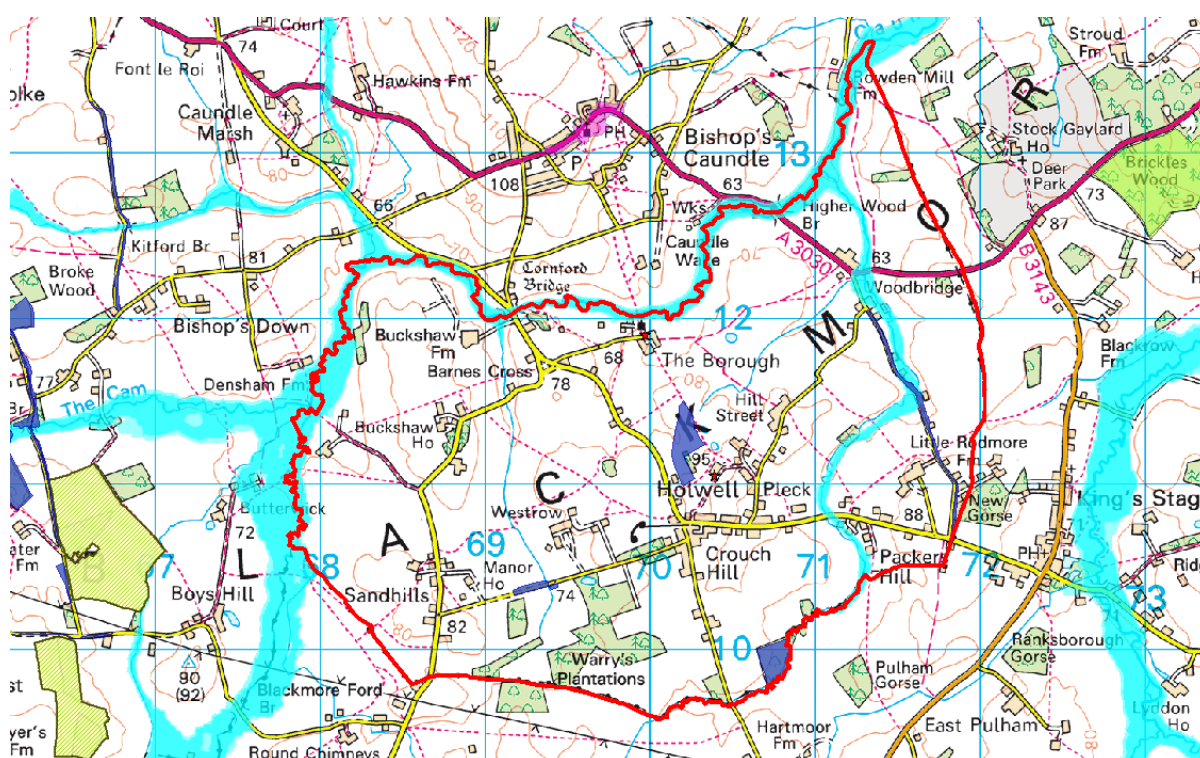
2. THE HOLWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOLWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Holwell Neighbourhood plan area occupies the whole of the civil parish of Holwell, covering an area of approximately 977 hectares (Figure 3.1) and a population of approximately 350¹.

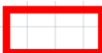
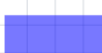
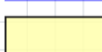
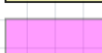
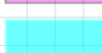
The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area and surrounding areas include a number of environmental designations, particularly relating to wildlife, heritage assets, and flooding, indicating the importance and sensitivity of the plan area from an environmental perspective (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Environmental designations within the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area



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Legend

	Holwell Neighbourhood Plan boundary
	Site of Nature Conservation Interest
	Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest
	Conservation Area
	High Flood Risk zone

¹ According to the 2018 mid-year estimates released by the Office for National Statistics

The wildlife designations within the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area include Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) which are local wildlife designations (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: The Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) within the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area

Name of SNCI	Area	Description
Peaceful Lane	2.7ha	Road verge and hedgebank with neutral grassland flora.
Hill Street Farm	4.9ha	Semi-improved neutral grassland.
Holwell Drove	0.9ha	Wide verges with a good neutral grassland flora, plus a small pond.
Holwell Gorse	3.8ha	Secondary woodland with a limited but interesting flora.

The areas surrounding the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Area include the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are national wildlife designations, which are presented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: The Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the areas surrounding the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area.

Name of SSSI	Approx. Area	Approx. Distance from NP area	Reason for designation
Blackmore Vale Commons And Moors SSSI	275ha	260m to the east	Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI supports a diverse mosaic of semi-natural habitats, including unimproved grasslands, ancient semi-natural woodland and wood pasture, scrub, and an extensive network of hedges, with small wetlands, ponds and waterways.
Holnest SSSI	54ha	745m to the west	The SSSI is a nationally important site because it supports a large population of great crested newts (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>) on the south-western edge of their range. The SSSI consists of two areas, which include breeding ponds and terrestrial habitat that is used by the newts for resting, foraging and hibernation.

In addition, the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), which is an international wildlife designation, in the areas surrounding the site are presented in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: The Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in the areas surrounding the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area.

Name of SAC	Approx. Area	Approx. Distance from NP area	Reason for designation
Rooksmoor SAC	62ha	1450m to the east	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. Euphydrias (<i>Eurodryas</i> , <i>Hypodryas</i>) aurinia for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
Holnest SAC	54ha	745m to the west	Holnest encompasses around 20 ponds set in a matrix of terrestrial habitats, comprising areas of semi-improved grassland, scrub, associated semi-natural habitats and woodland bounded by fences and hedgerows. The ponds exhibit a range of sizes, profiles and origins, and include some recently-created ornamental ponds as well as traditional farm ponds. A large population of Great crested newts (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>) is present, with over 200 individuals having been recorded at one pond in spring 2003. The woodland areas provide ideal hibernation habitat.

The heritage assets in the plan area include the Grade I listed Church of St Laurence, and the Grade II* listed Buckshaw House, Manor House, Naish Farmhouse, Pillar Box at Barnes Cross, and The Rectory. The Scheduled Monument titled "Hillfort and later strip lynchets on Dungeon Hill, 500m north of Castle Hill Cottages" is approximately 220m to the south of the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Area.

A high risk flood zone, associated with the local river system, occupies the northern and western boundaries of the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Area and traverses the eastern section of the site in a north to south orientation.

These are the main environmental considerations within the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Area which will need to be given consideration during the Plan's preparation. Other significant considerations not mentioned above should be referenced in detailed responses from the statutory consultees as part of the SEA screening consultation. In addition, other local factors and constraints will also need to be considered.

THE OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE HOLWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The made Holwell Neighbourhood Plan intends to give residents the opportunity to influence the future of the area by having a say into future development, regeneration and conservation.

It includes 11 policies covering the following matters:

- Policy H1: Amount and Location of New Housing

- Policy H2: Preventing Backland Development
- Policy H3 : Affordable Housing Prioritised For Local People
- Policy EB1: Locations for Employment and Business
- Policy EB2 : CAMPING AND CARAVANNING SITES
- Policy C1: Important Community Facilities
- Policy C2: Public Rights of Way
- Policy E1: Locally Important Views
- Policy E2: Locally Important Woodlands, Wildlife and Landscape Features
- Policy E3 : Buildings and Structures of Local Importance
- Policy E4: Design

It was examined by Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ in November 2018 who concluded that, subject to the modifications that he recommended (and were undertaken) the plan met the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements.

NATURE OF THE HOLWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW

The main changes being proposed to the plan are:

(1) updates to the introductory pages to include information on the outcome of the previous examination, and the making of the plan

(2) a new section inserted in the introduction to explain the process for reviewing the plan

(3) updates to the section on housing to reflect the withdrawal of the bus service, planning applications that have been approved since the plan was examined, the current number of households on the affordable housing register and the emerging housing target for the area in the new Local Plan

(4) Policy H1 has been amended to remove the Westbourne plot (now under construction) from the list of available sites

(5) Policy H3 has been amended to reference the occupation of the 14 affordable homes on the Crouch Lane site, for clarity

(6) the section on community facilities has been updated to reference the new recreation field at the Village hall, and to also acknowledge the impact of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic that has adversely impacted on the use of the hall and nursery.

(7) changes are also proposed to the policies map to reflect the above.

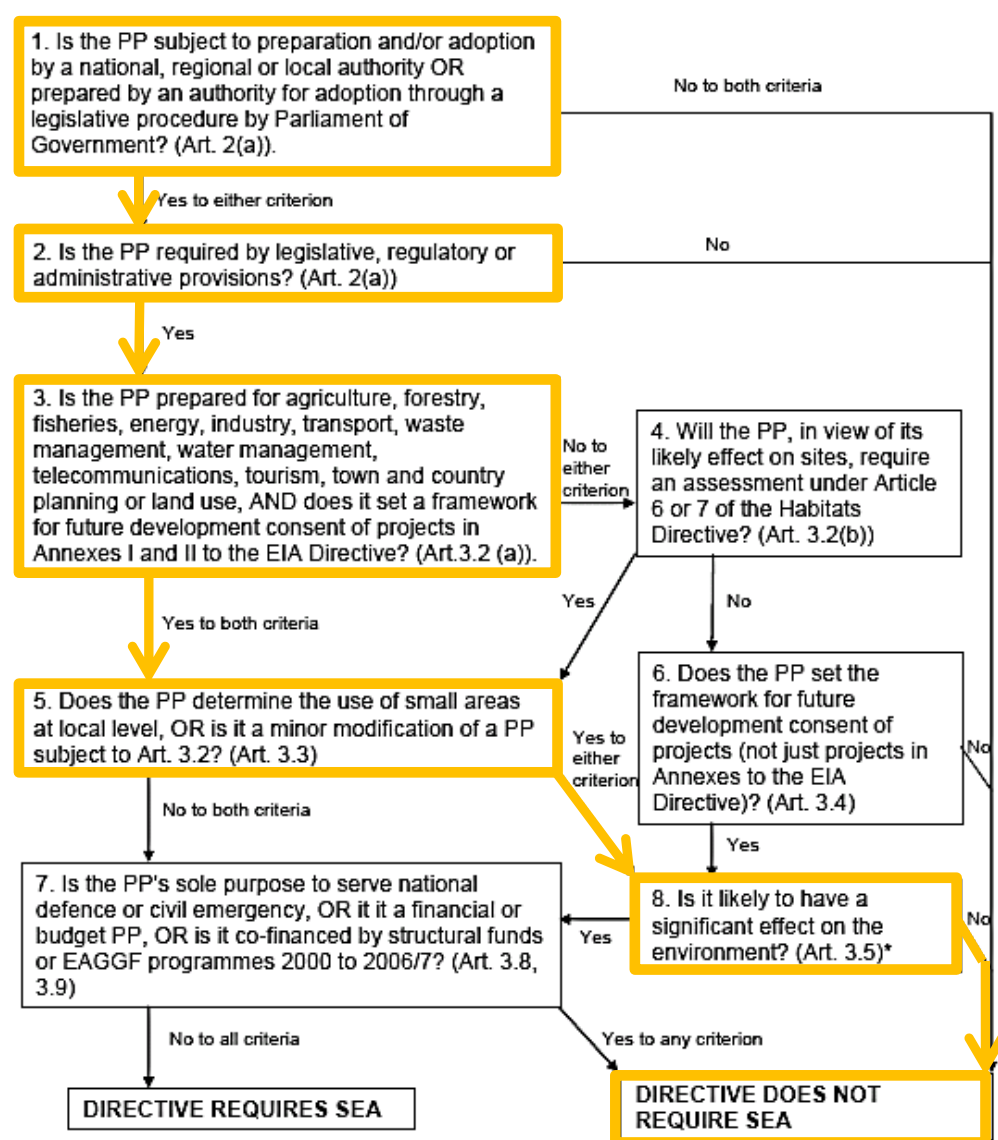
3. SEA SCREENING OF THE HOLWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This Chapter provides an account of the SEA screening exercise for the Holwell 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 4.1². The screening for the Holwell 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 Holwell Neighbourhood Plan outlined in orange.



² 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 Holwell 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 Holwell Neighbourhood Plan to be 'made' part of the development plan by West Dorset District Council, a local authority, through a legislative procedure.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	YES The Holwell 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 Holwell Neighbourhood Plan is a document prepared for town and country planning purposes, and may indicate where future development which falls under Annex II of the EIA Directive which includes urban development projects under paragraph 10(b).
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 Holwell 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 HOLWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

The final question in the SEA screening process presented in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for the Holwell 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. Therefore, the criteria in Article 3.5 have been taken into consideration when determining whether the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA, as presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: The assessment of the likely significance of effects of the Holwell 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 Holwell Neighbourhood Plan, along with the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan ('Local Plan') will provide the overarching policy for the location, size and nature of development projects in this area. The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will provide details of development projects within this area, allocating land for 3 dwellings (and identifying a preferred location for a rural exception site for affordable housing for local people, if a need arose (taking into account the 14 affordable homes under construction at Crouch Lane).	No
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will be 'made' part of the development plan alongside the Local Plan. The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will expand upon the policies in the Local Plan, providing for development at the local scale.	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 Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to the environmental considerations of the Local Plan. The aim of both plans is to achieve sustainable development.	No
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The environmental problems within the Holwell Neighbourhood plan area are not considered exclusive to the area, and are similar to those considered and addressed in the Local Plan.	No
e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan.	No

community legislation on the environment (e.g plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).		
(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.	The plan period will remain the same, covering the period to 2031 (aligning with the adopted Local plan). Whilst some effects of the plan may be irreversible, it is not considered probable that the plan will have significant effect since it is only likely to bring forward in the region of 3 - 7 additional dwellings, above those which already have consent, or could come forward through the adopted Local Plan policies or permitted development rights (such as for barn conversions).	No
b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	In the Holwell area, the Local Plan permits small scale development that requires a rural location rather than major development. There are no major development proposals within the adjoining parishes. It is considered unlikely that the amount of development proposed through the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan, when considered in combination with the Local Plan, will introduce significant environmental effects.	No
c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	The transboundary impacts, beyond the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area, are unlikely to be significant in light of the nature and scale of the proposals.	No
d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g due to accidents).	The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to introduce significant risks to human health and the environment, for example due to accidents, in light of the scale and type the development.	No
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be	The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area occupies approximately 977ha and a population of approximately 350 people according to the 2018 mid year estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics. The spatial extent of the	No

affected).	Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area and the magnitude of the population affected are not considered of a significant scale for the purposes of SEA.	
<p>f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p>	<p>The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area and its surroundings contain environmental designations which reflect its special natural characteristics and rich cultural heritage.</p> <p>The plan area includes Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) which are local wildlife designations which include roadside verges, semi-improved grassland and secondary woodland. The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan has the strategic objective of protecting and enhancing the natural environment, and in consideration of the scale of the development which is likely to be brought forward through the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan and the characteristics of the SNCI, it is considered unlikely that the plan will result in significant impacts upon these local wildlife sites. The greatest threats to the national and European wildlife designations in the surrounding areas are additional recreational pressure, land management and change in land use (Holnest SSSI and SAC), and air pollution (Rooksmoor SAC). It is considered unlikely that the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will significantly increase recreational pressure, compromise air quality issues or affect land management practices, once again due to the strategic objectives of the plan and the scale of the development which it is likely to bring forward, and the proximity of these wildlife sites from the development.</p> <p>The cultural and heritage designations within the plan area include Listed Buildings, with the surrounding areas containing a Scheduled Monument to the south and a Conservation Area to the north. The strategic objectives of the plan include protecting and enhancing built environment of the Parish including its built heritage and archaeological sites, and keeping housing development to an agreed scale, of good quality and design, making use of materials that are appropriate, sustainable and complementary</p>	No

		to neighbouring properties. Furthermore, the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will be in general conformity with policy ENV 4 of the Local Plan, which ensures that new development does not result in unacceptable impacts upon heritage assets. Therefore, it is considered that the development which is likely to come forward through the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will not result in significant impacts upon heritage features.	
ii)	Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values	The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in the exceedance of environmental quality standards, such as those relating to air, water and soil quality, due to the nature and scale of the development proposed.	No
iii)	Intensive land-use	The Holwell Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent which would result in a significant intensification of land use in light of the scale of development.	No
g)	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>The environmental designations within the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area and it's surrounding areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Area of Conservation; • Site of Special Scientific Interest; • Site of Nature Conservation Interest; • Scheduled Monuments; • Conservation Area; and • Listed Buildings. <p>Policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan prevents development which would cause unacceptable impacts upon wildlife sites, including the Special Area of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest wildlife designations across West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland, including those within or close to the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area. The development which comes forward through the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be of a small scale and focussed towards the existing settlement rather than designated wildlife sites or undeveloped countryside habitats.</p> <p>Policy ENV 4 of the Local Plan prevents development which would cause unacceptable</p>	No

	<p>impacts upon designated heritage assets, such as the Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Monuments across West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland, including the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area. The relatively small amount of development which is likely to come forward through the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan will be focusing development towards the existing developed areas, rather than the Scheduled Monuments to the south of the plan area. However, directing development toward the existing developed areas may result in development occurring in proximity to Listed Buildings. Although the scale of the proposed development, alongside the protection provided by policy ENV4, will act to minimise the impact on listed buildings, the potential for an impact will need to be given careful consideration as the Plan proceeds.</p>	
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4. CONSULTATION

The draft screening opinion was sent Dorset Council, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England, on 14 December 2021 as part of the 7 week consultation on the pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan.

The purpose of the consultation on the screening report was to seek confirmation from the statutory environmental consultees of the conclusion that the full SEA process is not necessary to support the production of the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan.

As part of the consultation, Natural England was also specifically asked to re-confirm their opinion that had previously been given on the Habitats Regulations (i.e. that the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore further assessment under the Habitats Regulations is not required (ref their correspondence 333165)).

Responses were received from Historic England (email dated 1 February 2021) and Natural England (email dated 26 January 2021), and also from Dorset Council shortly after the close of the consultation (email dated 4 February 2021).

All three responses agreed with the conclusions of the screening report, and are shown below. The only change suggested was in regard to the date shown (which has been duly amended)

HISTORIC ENGLAND

From: Stuart, David <David.Stuart@HistoricEngland.org.uk>
Sent: 11 November 2020 10:55
To: Jo Witherden
Cc: 'Oliver Rendle'; James Weir
Subject: Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Review - SEA and HRA screening

Dear Jo

Thank you for your consultation on the need for a new formal SEA Screening exercise associated with the updated Holwell Neighbourhood Plan which is emerging.

We will defer to Dorset Council as to whether a more formal SEA Screening Opinion is necessary but on the basis of the summary update you have provided I can confirm that we would have no objection to any view that a formal SEA is not required.

Given that the changes you have drawn attention to essentially relate to the removal of previous provisions from the Plan rather than additions I can also confirm that on the basis that these are the only material changes likely to be proposed there are unlikely to be any issues associated with the Plan upon which we wish to comment.

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
<https://historicengland.org.uk/southwest>



NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 26 January 2021
Our ref: 339831
Your ref: Holwell Neighbourhood Plan – SEA / HRA Screening



Ms Jo Witherden
Dorset Planning Consultant Ltd
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BY EMAIL ONLY
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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Witherden

Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Review – SEA & HRA Screening

Thank you for your consultation request on the above dated and received by Natural England on 14th December 2020.

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.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

We concur with the conclusions of the SEA screening report.

Natural England's stance in relation to the need for HRA remains unchanged. ie further consideration under the Habitats Regulations is not required.

Neighbourhood Plan

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Sharon Jenkins
Operations Delivery
Consultations Team
Natural England

DORSET COUNCIL

Holwell Neighbourhood Plan Review - SEA Screening Consultation

Comment

Given the involvement of the Dorset Council Environmental Assessment Officer with the SEA we have no comments except that the date on the front is incorrect (December 2021 rather than December 2020). This is important as this has been screened prior to the UK leaving the EU and it correctly refers to the SEA Directive. From January 2021 onwards (so including December 2021), we need to refer to the regulations and not have regard to the Directives, so this may need to be changed so that it does not cause confusion at examination.

5. CONCLUSION

Having considered the environmental designations and constraints outlined in this screening report, it is considered that the scale of development being considered in the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan (Review Version), in combination with that already benefiting from planning permission and proposals coming through other neighbourhood plans, is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.