

DORSET LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

STURMINSTER MARSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

September 2025

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY SITES - OVERVIEW

The Parish Council and community were surprised to see the scale of growth proposed for our village. This scale of development would increase the population to a total of more than 6,500 residents, which in terms of the settlement hierarchy would be in the same category of some of the smaller Tier 2 towns, yet without any clear consideration of the implications of this. Without clear forward planning, this level of development would simply add to the unsustainable, dormitory nature of the village, and destroy its rural character.

Most of these sites appear to be put forward despite previous evidence base documents (SHLAA, Green Belt Review, Neighbourhood Plan evidence) identify them as unsuitable. None of the sites scored positively overall in the Dorset Local Plan SEA.

The Parish Council is not against growth and the potential release of the Green Belt to support this, but at a scale appropriate to the area. It has previously supported limited housing at Arch Ground (LA/SMAR/003 and LA/SMAR/011) and Springfield Farm (LA/SMAR/004 and LA/SMAR/009) in its response to the 2021 Local Plan consultation, subject to certain considerations. There has also been some community support for further small-scale development at the northern end of Dullar Lane (LA/SMAR/005) although this was felt to be less sustainable because of the road connection and distance from key facilities. Subject to resolving the issues identified, and ensuring that improvements to the supporting infrastructure is funded and delivered in a timely manner, there would be no objection to the inclusion of these sites.

The Parish Council is pleased to see that the proposed redevelopment of the Golf Course no longer features as a possible option. This is an important recreational site in the Green Belt, and the site is not suited for development.

Issues relevant to all of the sites put forward include:

- rural, village character and Green Belt
- infrastructure capacity
- capacity issues on the local road network
- flood risk / drainage

Rural, village character and Green Belt

Throughout the Neighbourhood Plan consultations, the retention of the rural character of the area was a matter of key importance. Whilst some sites could be considered natural rounding-off in keeping with the village, the village character would be lost if the village were to grow to the equivalent of a small town.

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl, one of the core purposes of Green Belt land includes safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. When the Green Belt was first drawn up around the conurbation, it was considered both necessary and appropriate for it to extend around and past the village. Much of the land in this area is relatively open in character and encroachment into these areas would clearly undermine the purpose of including this land in the Green Belt.

Infrastructure capacity

Depending on the scale of growth, the increase in the local population will impact on how local services function effectively. There is no detail provided on the trigger points for when local

facilities will need to expand and potentially relocate to larger sites should the village grow significantly. This is particularly relevant in relation to the local schools and childcare provision, access to healthcare, and utilities including sewerage capacity.

The scale of housing growth, if the majority of the sites were taken forward, would in effect transform the village into a town, but a town without the typical 'town centre' with the level of services and facilities that you would expect to find, and related degree of self-containment and sustainability.

Local highway network

The main access routes into the village of Sturminster Marshall are directly off the A350, either using Station Road or Newton Road. The village roads and Mill Lane, towards narrow, Listed White Mill Bridge and on to the B3082 (Blandford/Wimborne Road, promoted as part of the national cycle network), are used as a "rat run" during peak traffic periods due to drivers trying to avoid delays on the A350 and A31. Due to the haphazard nature of on-street parking, some areas such as near the shops and school and in older parts of the village where homes were built without parking and limited pavements, can also be problematic.

The capacity of the highways network has been noted as an issue for many years, and is flagged in the notes relating to all of the sites. National Highways has indicated that the A31 section of road should function as part of the preferred strategic route from the M4 to the Dorset coast¹, which is likely to increase its level of use. The proposed scale of development at Blandford will inevitably increase traffic on the A350 as new residents commute to jobs in the conurbation. Drivers seeking to get onto the A31 from the village are frequently queuing for long periods, and there can also be queuing on the A350 as drivers wait for a gap before turning into the village, and are then more inclined to take risks. The strategy study specifically notes the need to make roads easier to cross on the A350 between Warminster and Sturminster Marshall.

The draft Local Transport Plan does not include any clear assessment of the traffic implications of the potential opportunity sites, or address how this additional traffic may be accommodated on the roads in the area. The only area-specific improvements highlighted in Annex H of the LTP (in relation to our village) are to improve connectivity and access to the Stour Valley trail (which runs to the north side of the village – the LTP is not proposing the extension of the North Dorset Trailway), and working with National Highways to deliver the capacity improvements to the A31. There is nothing specific proposed in relation to the A350.

At present, the proposals would appear to conflict with the aims and objectives of the draft Local Transport Plan as they will increase reliance on the private car.

Flood risk / drainage

Sturminster Marshall is built on natural springs and large parts of the village are in the flood plain. Groundwater flooding risk is widespread in and around Sturminster Marshall. There is little published data on groundwater levels and the intermittent springs which complicates the understanding of flood risk. Sections of the local highway network are also prone to flooding, which impacts on emergency access and the local economy.

Almost every site is in an area considered to be potentially susceptible to groundwater flood risk. This limits the ability to provide workable natural solutions relying on infiltration for dealing with rainfall.

¹ <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/qvqj0eda/m4-to-dorset-coast-strategic-study-v3.pdf>

ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SITES

LA/SMAR/001,003,011: East of Station Road

Dorset Council estimated capacity 225 dwellings

What are the main considerations for this site?

- ✓ a. Specific design requirements
- ✓ b. Natural environment and ecology
 - c. Landscape and visual
 - d. Heritage
- ✓ e. Flood risk
- ✓ f. Amenity, health, education
- ✓ g. Transport (access and movement)
- ✓ h. Green Belt (if applicable)
- i. Other issues

This group of sites has been assessed through the SEA as liable to cause significant adverse impacts on biodiversity and heritage, and some degree of adverse impact on soil quality, air quality, climate change, landscape and the economy. There are no significant positive impacts identified.

The eastern area of the site (001) is considered unsuitable for development in the 2024 SHLAA, noting that it is constrained by flood risk. It is therefore surprising that this is not reflected in the SEA appraisal. The site is predominantly fishing lakes and has a significant number of mature trees. All of these factors would severely constrain its potential for development. The only realistic use would be in relation to the provision of recreation opportunities (as part of a SANG and compensation for Green Belt release) and biodiversity enhancement. It is unlikely to provide any additional flood relief opportunities given the site is down-stream from the settlement and is already saturated for much of the year.

The western area of the site (003 and 011) was considered suitable for development in the 2024 SHLAA, although again noting that both sites were potentially affected by flooding from surface water and groundwater emergence. It remains unclear how the flood risk could be effectively mitigated, given groundwater levels. The historic flood maps indicate additional flooding incidences extending further into the site than that identified by the surface water flood risk maps. Such mitigation also needs to consider safe access / egress given that Station Road is also at risk of surface water flooding.

The Industrial Estate lies to the north, and may restrict more sensitive residential uses along this edge. There are mature trees on the site boundaries which are important for both landscape character and biodiversity as wildlife corridors.

Should the flood risk constraints be resolved, then this site is better related to the village than the alternative options, and could deliver potential benefits through providing an alternative access from the A350 to the Industrial Estate, that would reduce congestion in Station Road and create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians and other non-motorised traffic using that route. The railway corridor also runs along the northern edge and would need to be delivered as part of any development package, linking on to Corfe Mullen.

The site may also provide a more appropriate location for the school should this need to be expanded (as the school site is constrained), and for further community facilities / local services.

See overview regarding wider transport issues.

Given the above, the site capacity estimate is considered to be overly ambitious, and if provided as dwellinghouses would result in a development that is out of keeping with the character of the village.

Development of LA/SMAR/003 and 011 did engender a reasonable degree of community support in the Neighbourhood Plan Options consultation of 2021, but based on a lower quantum of development and the resolution of the issues outlined above.

LA/SMAR/004: Land Adjacent to the A350

Dorset Council estimated capacity 35 dwellings

This site is considered alongside LA/SMAR/009 given their similarity in character, constraints and co-location.

What are the main considerations for this site?

- ✓ a. Specific design requirements
- b. Natural environment and ecology
- c. Landscape and visual
- d. Heritage
- ✓ e. Flood risk
- f. Amenity, health, education
- ✓ g. Transport (access and movement)
- ✓ h. Green Belt (if applicable)
- i. Other issues

This group of sites (LA/SMAR/004 and LA/SMAR/009) has been assessed through the SEA as liable to cause significant adverse impacts on water quality, flooding and heritage, and some degree of adverse impact on biodiversity, soil quality, air quality, climate change, landscape and the economy. There are no significant positive impacts identified.

The north-western area of both sites (amounting to approximately half of the total site area) is highly constrained by flood risk from various sources. It remains unclear how the flood risk could be effectively mitigated. Such mitigation also needs to consider safe access / egress given that Newton Road is also at risk of flooding – suggesting that a direct access onto the A350 would be needed. The only realistic use for these areas would be in relation to the provision of recreation opportunities (as part of a SANG and compensation for Green Belt release) and biodiversity enhancement.

Should the flood risk constraints be resolved, then this site is better related to the village than the alternative options to the south side of the A350, and could provide potential benefits through linking onto the trailway and facilitating a pavement along this stretch of the A350 to link to the existing pavement further to the south (and provide additional traffic calming). Improvements to the trailway corridor and its continuation to link through to Blandford Forum would need to be delivered as part of any development package.

See overview regarding wider transport issues.

Development of LA/SMAR/004 did engender a reasonable degree of community support in the Neighbourhood Plan Options consultation of 2021, subject to the resolution of the issues outlined above. Concerns relating to access to SHLAA 009 could be resolved by planning the two sites together with a new vehicular access onto the A350 serving both areas.

LA/SMAR/005,006,007: Land at Sturminster Marshall

Dorset Council estimated capacity 1000 dwellings

What are the main considerations for this site?

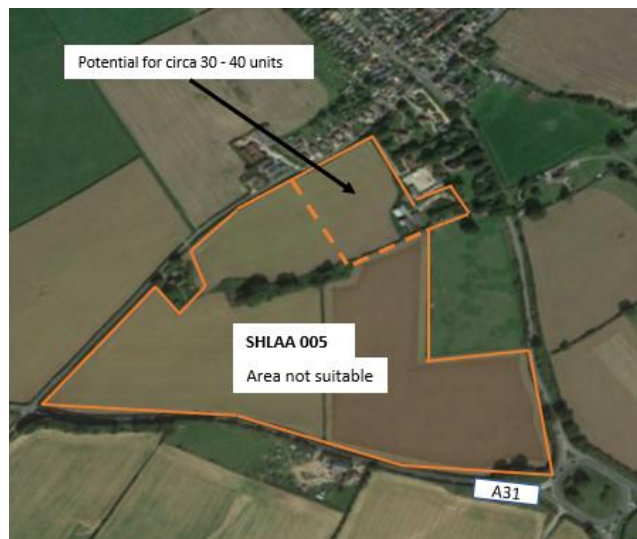
- ✓ a. Specific design requirements
- b. Natural environment and ecology
- ✓ c. Landscape and visual
- ✓ d. Heritage
- ✓ e. Flood risk
- ✓ f. Amenity, health, education
- ✓ g. Transport (access and movement)
- ✓ h. Green Belt (if applicable)
- ✓ i. Other issues

This group of sites has been assessed through the SEA as liable to cause significant adverse impacts on soil quality and heritage, and some degree of adverse impact on biodiversity, air quality, climate change, landscape and the economy. There are no significant positive impacts identified.

These sites were also assessed as unsuitable as part of the SHLAA process, noting flood risk and landscape and visual impacts as site-specific issues.

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan these sites were also independently checked by AECOM.

- Site 005 was considered likely to give rise to significant landscape impacts, with the exception of a limited area adjoining the development that would represent a logical 'rounding off' of the settlement.
- Site 006 was considered likely to give rise to significant landscape impacts, and was not well-connected to the built up area and unlikely to be an acceptable option for Green Belt release.
- Site 007 was considered likely to give rise to a much greater level of harm to the Green Belt, would also significantly elongate the village and reduce the gap between settlements to the south and the outer reaches of Bournemouth.



Overall, the sites are poorly related to the village. Typical walking distance to the school and pre-school from the site centre of each land parcel would be in the region of 1km, which is unlikely to encourage active travel modes for such trips. Those sites to the south side of the A350 (Sites 006 and 007) would require vulnerable pedestrians to cross the busy A350.

See overview regarding wider transport issues.

The sites were not generally supported by the community in the Neighbourhood Plan Options consultation of 2021, with the exception of the potential for 30-40 homes in the area between Bailie House and the current extent of built development along Dullar Lane, as indicated, which is closest to the village. Dullar Lane is used by local residents and commuters as a cut-through to the A31, including those looking to avoid queuing along the A350 when the roundabout becomes congested. Should development take place in this area, this would need to include measures to resolve the lack of footway on Dullar Lane, and need for a safe crossing point of the A350 (which does not rely on waiting for a gap in the traffic), in order that residents would be incentivised to walk or cycle into the village rather than travel by car.

Site 006, to the west side of Dullar Lane, is particularly sensitive in heritage terms, given its close relationship with the Grade II* Listed Charborough Park. The walled perimeter of the park abuts the A31, leading on to Lion Gate which is clearly visible in views, and the land to the north slopes up, providing a strong rural context to the park's setting and the Listed Lion Gate. Given the topography and open character of the landscape, it is difficult to envisage how this impact could be mitigated and significant harm to this heritage asset avoided. We would also question whether the whole of this site is available as a local landowner of part of the site has stated that they have not put it forward.

Site 007 is locally known to be subject to soil instability, with tractors having sunk in and become stuck in the westernmost area, which is why that side of the field has been retained as pasture as opposed to being cropped in recent years.

A significant proportion of this site is indicated as Grade 2 on the Agricultural Land Classification maps, and all of the area falls with the highest category of the predictive BMV land assessment (having a "High likelihood of BMV land (>60% area bmv)").

The Parish Council has also been made aware of the plans by West Country Water and Environment to route the pipeline catering for the release of treated recycled water into the River Stour to the south side of the village, as part of the much larger Poole Water Recycling and Transfer Project. Details of the project are included online at

<https://www.westcountrywaterandenvironment.org/flagship-projects/poole-transfer-sro/poole-sro-consultation>. A planning application for this is anticipated in 2027, with construction likely between 2030 – 2034.

Duel (two circuits) 33000 volt overhead line runs across the sites and feed the whole area via a SSE primary sub- station at Blandford.

LA/SMAR/009: Springfield Farm

Dorset Council estimated capacity 36 dwellings

See commentary on LA/SMAR/004.

LA/SMAR/014: Land west of A350

Dorset Council estimated capacity 522 dwellings

What are the main considerations for this site?

- a. Specific design requirements
- ✓ b. Natural environment and ecology
- ✓ c. Landscape and visual
- ✓ d. Heritage
- ✓ e. Flood risk
- ✓ f. Amenity, health, education
- ✓ g. Transport (access and movement)
- ✓ h. Green Belt (if applicable)
- ✓ i. Other issues

This site has been assessed through the SEA as liable to cause significant adverse impacts on water quality and heritage, and some degree of adverse impact on biodiversity, soil quality, air quality, climate change, landscape and the economy. There are no significant positive impacts identified.

This site has not been previously assessed as part of the SHLAA process, and the landowner of the north-eastern parcel visited the consultation event held by the Parish Council and verbally confirmed that they had not submitted the site for consideration and had no intention of making the site available. The rest of the site would not be able to connect to the built up area.

The remaining area would therefore need to access onto Newton Peveril and would be in the region of 1.5km walking distance to the school and pre-school (from the site centre), which is unlikely to encourage active travel modes for such trips. Furthermore, the road is rural in character with no footway, and like Dullar Lane is used as a cut-through between the A350 and A31. There are no obvious opportunities to provide a safe and attractive pedestrian / cycle route into the village in this case.

See overview regarding wider transport issues.

The northern portion of the site includes the River Winterborne and its associated floodplain. There is also a significant area in the centre prone to waterlogging as a result of surface water run off draining from the higher land. Whilst it may be possible to keep these areas free from development and used for associated recreation and biodiversity enhancement, there is no clear opportunity to provide safe emergency access given that the road also floods (most notably to the south, but with climate change this is likely to extend further along the road).

Part of this site is indicated as Grade 2 on the Agricultural Land Classification maps, and much of the area falls with the highest category of the predictive BMV land assessment (having a "High likelihood of BMV land (>60% area bmv)").

The southern extent of the site, like Site 006, is particularly sensitive in heritage terms, given its close relationship with the Grade II* Listed Charborough Park. The walled perimeter of the park abuts the A31, leading on to Lion Gate which is clearly visible in views, and the land to the north slopes up, providing a strong rural context to the park's setting and the Listed Lion Gate. Given the topography and open character of the landscape, it is difficult to envisage how this impact could be mitigated should development occur on the south-facing slopes, and how significant harm to this heritage asset avoided. There is also evidence of potential Romano-British settlement in this general area, according to the Dorset Heritage Explorer.

This site is also within the area indicated as needed for the Poole Water Recycling and Transfer Project (see comments under LA/SMAR/005,006,007). The dual (two circuits) 33000 volt overhead line also runs across this site.

Whilst the site has not been subject to previous consultation, feedback at the drop-in session run by the Parish Council signalled that there is very little if any support for this site. Given the above issues, it is difficult to understand why the site was identified for this consultation.

LA/SMAR/015: Land east of Poole Road

Dorset Council estimated capacity 43 dwellings

What are the main considerations for this site?

- ✓ a. Specific design requirements
- ✓ b. Natural environment and ecology
- ✓ c. Landscape and visual
- d. Heritage
- ✓ e. Flood risk
- ✓ f. Amenity, health, education
- ✓ g. Transport (access and movement)
- ✓ h. Green Belt (if applicable)
- i. Other issues

This site has been assessed through the SEA as liable to cause significant adverse impacts on soil quality, and some degree of adverse impact on biodiversity, air quality, climate change, landscape, heritage, high quality homes / infrastructure and the economy. There are no significant positive impacts identified.

This site has not been previously assessed as part of the SHLAA process, and is part of the land associated with Bailie House. It is not clear whether the landowner intends to make the site available for development.

This site has been used for pony / horse grazing for many years. It sits alongside the busy A350 and like Site 007 is some distance from the village and would significantly elongate the village away from its centre, and, given its open nature, would also give rise to a much greater level of harm to the Green Belt.

Typical walking distance to the school and pre-school from the site centre would be in the region of 1km, which is unlikely to encourage active travel modes for such trips, and would require vulnerable pedestrians to cross the busy A350.

The low-lying nature of the site is likely to mean that groundwater levels will be problematic for drainage, with the overland flow of water also disrupted by the main road.

MAIN CONSULTATION DOCUMENT QUESTIONS

Question 1:

Do you have any comments on the proposed vision for Dorset?

Whilst supporting the overall vision, the potential extent of change proposed to the village of Sturminster Marshall, which would transform it into the equivalent of a town, does not appear to reflect this vision.

Question 2:

Do you have any comments on the proposed strategic priorities for the Local Plan?

The strategic priorities do not reflect how the plan will ensure that the unique character of our towns and villages will be retained and enhanced, through a clear understanding of those factors that each community values and which makes those places feel like home.

The need to coordinate and ensure the timely delivery of necessary infrastructure (utilities, transport and community facilities) does not come across as a priority and would benefit from being a distinct objective in its own right or greater emphasis under the objective 'communities for all'. For example, the sentence could be amended to read: "We will work to build and maintain strong, healthy communities where everyone thrives, essential services are accessible and necessary infrastructure planned and delivered in a timely manner." The explanation focuses on health inequalities, but there is also access to education and training that could also be added here or under the economic priority.

Question 3:

The proposed settlement hierarchy lists the towns and villages that will be the focus for new homes. Are there other settlements where we should plan for new homes? Do you have any comments on whether a settlement is in the right Tier or not?

Sturminster Marshall is considered a Tier 3 settlement, with a current recorded population of about 1,567 living in about 580 households (suggesting an average occupancy of 2.7). The scale of growth that could come forward (in the region of 1860 dwellings) would grow the population by more than 5,000 to a total of more than 6,500 residents, which in terms of the settlement hierarchy would be in the same category of some of the smaller Tier 2 settlements. This degree of transformation flies in the face of the settlement strategy given there is no indication that such changes are envisaged, and no discussion in the settlement hierarchy

background paper as to how this works. It is clear from the paper that Tier 1 and 2 settlements would have an individual strategy developed to plan for their growth, whereas the same approach would not be applied to the Tier 3 settlements. The change between a Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlement would also have implications for consideration of the role of the Green Belt, which refers specifically to towns in two of its purposes.

Question 4:

Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the south eastern area?

The strategy lacks detail. This is particularly important given the large area is covers and differences across the area and between the Tier 3 villages.

It would be helpful for the strategy name those settlements which are at significant risk of fluvial and surface water flooding – which should include Sturminster Marshall. The flood risk reference appears marginalised at the end of 3.3.3.

The reference to traffic congestion is welcomed, but it would be useful to detail the locations where this is recognised as a particular constraint. This includes the limitations on the A350 Blandford – Poole corridor. Given the distance to the towns and lack of rail services, the ability to provide sufficient infrastructure to make any meaningful shift to active forms of travel and public transport is critical and needs to be highlighted.

The strategy does not appear to recognise the important role of the Green Belt in restricting urban sprawl and the importance of ensuring that any land released from the Green Belt is compensated by improved recreation opportunities.

See also response to Question 3.

Question 5:

Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the central area?

[No comment]

Question 6:

Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the northern area?

[No comment]

Question 7:

Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the western area?

[No comment]

Question 8:

Is there any important infrastructure that needs to be delivered alongside new homes in the Western / Central / South Eastern / Northern area?

This depends in part on the degree of growth planned for each settlement. For Sturminster Marshall, the answer could vary considerably depending on which if the potential opportunity sites may be allocated. Existing community facilities are set out in the Neighbourhood Plan (section 8.1).

Through the Neighbourhood Plan and further consultation with residents, the following concerns and (where identified) potential solutions have been raised:

- **Flooding and drainage** – Section 4.3 of the Neighbourhood Plan details the flood risk issues experienced in and around the village. Sturminster Marshall is built on natural springs and large parts of the village are in the flood plain. Groundwater flooding risk is widespread in and around Sturminster Marshall. There is little published data on groundwater levels and the intermittent springs which complicates the understanding of flood risk. Sections of the local highway network are also prone to flooding, which impacts on emergency access and the local economy. There are already flood defences that require ongoing maintenance – but the future adequacy of these defences needs further investigation, and they only address the flood risk in relation to the River Stour.
- **Sewage treatment and disposal** - in their response to Dorset Council's Draft Local Plan in 2021, Wessex Water identified that significant improvements to the sewerage system are likely to be required to serve the cumulative level of development for this area. The infiltration of groundwater into the sewer network has contributed to sewerage-related pollution of the river network.
- **Capacity of and access to education and childcare** – the pre-school is based in a purpose-built building within the main school grounds, but only operates within term time. The First School is a one-form entry school (for 4-9 years) with a capacity for 150 children. It needs improvement including a new school hall and toilets to cater for the existing population. Older children are bussed to the catchment middle and upper schools at Corfe Mullen (Lockyers and Corfe Hills), which limits pupil's ability to engage in after-school activities.
- **Capacity of and access to healthcare** - up until 2018 a Doctors Surgery was held once a week within the Memorial Hall, but this service was withdrawn and there is no local provision – our discussions with the NHS have revealed that a new Medical Centre can only be justified if it will serve over 10,000 patients. The village is lucky to have access to a local pharmacy.
- **Recreation provision** – the village is currently lacking allotments, a Multi-Use Games Area and skate park. There is also the need for further sports pitches and associated changing rooms - the 2019 assessment evidences an issue with the adult match spare capacity, and that there is little in the way of full sized 3G pitches for team training in the area, but suggests that it would be appropriate to transfer demand to a site with spare capacity potentially in another settlement – though how this is achieved is not clear. Alternative options of using the cricket pitch or school playing fields aren't feasible – the former is within the area used for football, the latter has limited space (taking into account the trees and temporary classrooms / tarmacked areas) and would raise security issues in terms of access arrangements. Table 11 of the Neighbourhood Plan details Rights of Way Improvement Priorities, some of which relate to recreation, others to encourage active travel options for short journeys, and some would provide both. Key to recreation would be the inclusion of a footbridge over the Stour which would allow walkers to walk to Shapwick or Wimborne or access the paths on the Kingston Lacy Estate, connecting to the proposed Stour Valley Park, and promoting Moor Lane to Mill Lane path as a circular recreational route.
- **Burial grounds** – at the current rate of growth further burial space will be needed in about 15 years, but this may be brought forward if the population grows significantly
- **Road infrastructure, walking / cycle routes and public transport** - The main access routes into the village of Sturminster Marshall are directly off the A350, either using Station Road or Newton Road. The location of the Bailie Gate Industrial Estate in the village means that Station Road has a much higher level of medium and heavy goods vehicles, as well as agricultural machinery. The village roads and Mill Lane, towards narrow, Listed White Mill Bridge and on to the B3082 (Blandford/Wimborne Road, promoted as part of the national cycle network), are also used as a "rat run" during peak traffic periods due to drivers trying to avoid delays on the A350 and A31. Due to the haphazard nature of on -street parking, some areas such as near the shops and school

and in older parts of the village where homes were built without parking and limited pavements, can also be problematic. Table 11 of the Neighbourhood Plan details Rights of Way Improvement Priorities, some of which relate to recreation, others to encourage active travel options for short journeys, and some would provide both. The Trailway project (connecting to the trailway linking to Blandford, and the extension south to Corfe Mullen), the potential extension of the footway alongside the A350 to the junction of Newton Road at Maggs Bridge, addressing safety concerns for pedestrian using Newton Road and Kings Street, and improving pedestrian links from Sturminster Marshall village to the employment / farm shop in Henbury, all feature. Public transport improvements are needed if we are serious about providing a realistic alternative to car use. In particular, improving the frequency and increasing the coverage of bus services to enable travel to key local centres such as Wimborne, Poole and Blandford, are needed and should run half-hourly between 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week, with stops in easy walking distance of people's homes. The possible development of land off Station Road between the Industrial Estate and the A350, alongside the proposed expansion of the Bailie Gate Industrial Estate, provides an opportunity to explore the feasibility of creating another access point to the A350. Such an access could be more suited to cater for the lorries / HGVs that need to get to and from the industrial estate, and potentially reduce the amount of traffic queuing at the Station Road A350 junction and improve the amenity of those using and living in this area.

Question 9:

The Local Plan sets out a strategy to meet the area's housing needs through allocating sites for new homes, the flexible settlements policy, new settlements and the efficient use of land. Are there any other measures could help to meet housing needs?

There is no mention of either the potential role of Neighbourhood Plans, or the potential for rural affordable housing exception sites.

Neighbourhood Plans are particularly important in helping identify local need and suitable sites for housing. Whilst the adopted version of our Neighbourhood Plan did not allocate sites, this was due to the restrictive Green Belt policy in place at that time. With the introduction of Grey Belt, there is now the potential to identify and allocate sites which would meet the Grey Belt definition, without releasing land from the Green Belt.

Our Neighbourhood Plan includes a rural exception site policy for affordable housing, that encourages such provision adjoining the village of Sturminster Marshall and within the built-up area at Jubilee Cross, subject to certain criteria. This allows up to 25% of the homes as open market housing to improve the viability of such schemes.

Question 10:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Plan including a lower housing target for the first few years and a higher figure towards the end of the plan period to meet housing needs?

a. Agree

b. Disagree

c. I have another suggestion

a. Agree – given that the plan would otherwise be reliant on the building industry ramping up its delivery to uncharted levels in order to maintain a healthy housing land supply.

Question 11:

Where should a policy allowing sites for only affordable homes apply?

a. All of Dorset

b. Only around those towns and villages listed in the proposed settlement hierarchy

c. Only in the Green Belt

a. All of Dorset, but subject to clear criteria in terms of local need, prioritisation and accessibility / settlement form and environmental considerations. Please see the Sturminster Marshall NP policy

SMNP15: RURAL EXCEPTION SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Rural exception sites within the Green Belt adjoining the village of Sturminster Marshall and within the built-up area at Jubilee Cross will be supported, provided:

- The proposed development would provide a mix of affordable housing size and type which meets demonstrated local housing needs arising from within the parish, and taking into account the need for car ownership for locations that are poorly served by public transport;
- Any open market housing must be demonstrably necessary to facilitate the affordable housing, be of a type and size to reflect local need, and should only comprise a small proportion (no more than 25%) of the total housing mix on that site;
- Secure arrangements are included to ensure that affordable housing will be enjoyed by successive as well as initial occupiers, with priority given to those with a local connection to the parish;
- The development is small scale (typically no more than 10 dwellings) and would not significantly detract from the character of the settlement and the surrounding landscape.

Question 12:

We have suggested that the Local Plan will not include clear boundaries to define the edges of towns and villages. Instead, the flexible settlements policy would allow new homes to be built around certain towns and villages. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

e. Disagree – the use of a settlement boundary is a well-established planning tool that is clearly understood by local communities. It enables clarity in terms of where new housing and other specified development is in principle acceptable, can be amended based on local circumstances, and provides greater opportunity to bring forward sites for affordable housing through rural exception site policies. It also provides reasonable certainty on the level of housing to be expected over the plan period, enabling more effective and timely planned for infrastructure delivery, and balancing this with consideration of employment opportunities.

There are also other issues relating to imposing such a policy which are explored in the following questions, but are summarised here:

- Lack of clear relationship with the particular characteristics of each settlement
- Difficulty in ensuring that the policy is not abused through amalgamation or subdivision of natural development parcels

- Difficulty and potential inconsistency in determining what areas are sufficiently 'densely developed' to be part of the built-up area
- Uncertainty regarding whether, in areas covered by Green Belt, the lack of a policy would result in more pressure on Grey Belt sites (in the event of housing delivery not meeting the Government's imposed targets)

Whilst the settlement boundaries were not updated in the last iteration of the local plan, the Parish Council would welcome engaging with Dorset Council to identify a robust settlement boundary area for Sturminster Marshall.

Question 13:

We propose that the flexible settlements policy will include a limit of 30 homes per site. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this threshold?

- a. The limit of 30 homes is about right*
- b. There should be less homes*
- c. More homes per site should be allowed*

Please explain your reasoning

(d) none of the above.

The answer to this question assumes that all towns and Tier 3 settlements have similar characteristics. A limit of 30 however may be too small to be effective for larger towns in those circumstances where the surrounding landscape is primarily large open fields, and the need for affordable housing particularly high, and may be too high for the smaller Tier 3 villages or settlements where the 'edge' is made up of much smaller parcels of land, and this would encourage amalgamation of these parcels to the detriment of the village character, and cumulatively could significantly alter its character.

In the case of Sturminster Marshall, adjoining fields range from under 0.5ha to over 5ha, with the majority being in excess of 3ha. It is not clear how this policy would work in relation to larger fields and the potential for a landowner to artificially divide up a field in order to bring the whole forward in consecutive smaller parcels that have no bearing on the settlement form.

There is no consideration of how this policy would work in creating a more sustainable Tier 3 village, as it does not enable the provision of essential services and new facilities, local employment opportunities (other than for the small builder) or specific needs for certain housing types, such as sheltered / care home accommodation. Multiple sites could cumulatively have a significant impact on local services which cannot readily be addressed as part of a speculative application.

There is also a subsequent question whether there should be a 10 home minimum to ensure the delivery of affordable housing, with smaller sites then being rural exception sites. However without a settlement boundary this would not work as it would then apply an overly restrictive approach to infill sites.

Question 14:

At a town/village, should one flexible settlement policy site be started, before another one is permitted?

- a. Yes*
- b. No*

Please provide any further comments

(a) Yes – but this is still prone to abuse. A meaningful start can be as little as they laying of a trench. This neither controls the phasing, prevents the salami slicing of larger land parcels from

being brought forward in tandem, or ensures the paced assimilation of the new community into the village.

Question 15:

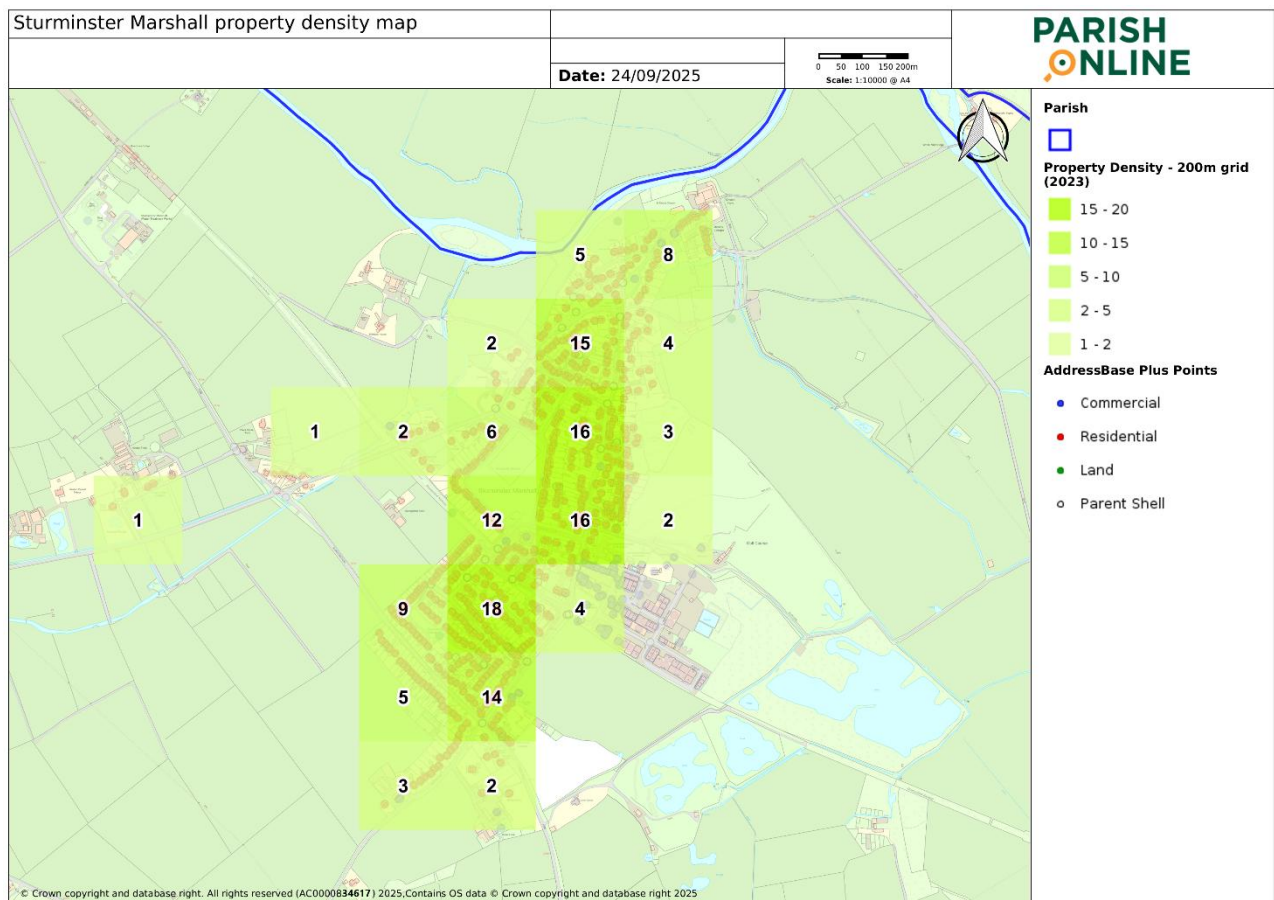
We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy will only apply to the areas around certain towns and villages, these are those ranked as ‘Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3’ in our settlement hierarchy. What do you think about the locations where we have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should apply?

The Parish Council does not consider that it would be an appropriate policy for Sturminster Marshall for the reasons given.

Question 16:

We have suggested that the flexible settlement policy should only be applied around the ‘continuous built-up areas’ (i.e. ‘densely populated areas with high concentrations of buildings, infrastructure and paved roads’) of certain towns and villages. Do you have any comments on our definition of this ‘continuous built-up area’?

The proposed definition of “a densely populated area with a high concentration of buildings, infrastructure, and paved roads” does not include clear parameters and will come down to planning judgement and therefore may be interpreted differently in differently locations. What is densely population / a high concentration in an area such as Sturminster Marshall, where the density (measures in dwellings per hectare) typically lies below 20dph (measures across a 200m square grid), and there tends to be more dispersed settlement pattern on the outer edges which softens the transition to the wider countryside.



Question 17:

We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in the Green Belt. What are your thoughts on this?

The Parish Council does not consider that it would be an appropriate policy for Sturminster Marshall for the reasons given. However the removal of the settlement boundary without a clear policy for Green Belt Tier 1 – 3 settlements also leaves uncertainty over what approach might apply to areas of the Green Belt adjoining those settlements that may be classed as ‘Grey Belt’. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states that:

The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.*

Whilst footnote 56 makes clear that ‘unmet need’ for housing means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, this could be changed without warning, or broadened by the decision maker to include other factors.

The ‘Golden Rules’ that aim to deliver affordable housing and necessary infrastructure, as well as better green spaces, do not apply to non-major development.

Question 18:

Away from the towns and villages listed in the settlement hierarchy, there may be types of development that we could support. Do you have any comments on this approach and on the types of development that could be supported in the countryside?

The countryside in the wider parish comprises a mix of farmland and woodland, as well as sand and gravel workings, a golf course and fishing lakes. The main settlements in the area are Henbury to the east, Jubilee Cross to the south, and Almer and Mapperton to the south-west, together with various farmsteads, farm workers cottages and isolated homes. On the north side of the A31 at Henbury there is a small industrial estate that has developed from original farm buildings associated with Henbury Farm, and Vines Close farm shop and café have similarly evolved from a former agricultural site. There is a church in Almer, and the Worlds End pub on the A350. Jubilee Cross has a car garage on the junction.

There is no provision to consider how Tier 4 settlements may be made more sustainable through the provision of modest community facilities and services.

See answer to Question 11 with regard to affordable housing.

Question 19:

We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in places with a recently made neighbourhood plan which includes allocations for new homes. What are your thoughts on this?

This would appear reasonable given the efforts involved in drafting a Neighbourhood Plan, although this does not alter the Parish Council’s view that the flexible settlements policy is not a good policy.

Question 20:

The Local Plan will retain and protect existing key employment sites, identify new employment sites at locations close to more sustainable settlements, allow for expansion of existing employment sites and allow for new employment sites in suitable locations. Do you have any comments on this approach?

Whilst the reasoning behind this policy approach is understood, further thought is needed as to the fit between employment provision and to what extent it is able to draw its labour from the local area, and its access onto the road network.

Research that fed into the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrated that few parishioners work at the Bailie Gate Industrial Estate - most of those employed there travel into the village from elsewhere. The same point was noted in the 2004 village plan.

The result is that this is a net contributor to road traffic, rather than the opposite.

Policy SMNP16 Neighbourhood Plan supports the retention and small-scale expansion of existing employment sites in our area (Bailie Gate, Henbury Farm Industrial Estate and Field Dairy Farm. The latter two have direct access onto the main road network, but Bailie Gate is accessed from Station Road within the village, and local residents have raised strong concerns regarding the impact of increased traffic (including HGVs) in this area. The site may be better suited to provide typical "High Street" uses that would serve the local population, particularly in the area closest to Station Road, with any industrial uses that have little connection to the village provided with a more direct access to the main road network.

Question 21:

The Local Plan will enable employment land to be developed outside identified sites at certain towns and villages, subject to certain considerations. Do you agree with this approach?

See response to Question 20.

Question 22:

We have suggested that larger scale housing sites should be required to provide land for employment uses. Proposals for 300 homes or more would be mixed residential and employment developments, with a ratio of 0.25ha of employment space for every 100 homes. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

See response to Question 20.

Question 23:

We have suggested that the Local Plan should include policies to protect the most important existing 'key' employment sites.

a) Do you have any views on the strategy we have suggested for protecting employment sites?

b) What criteria should we consider when defining 'key' and 'non-key' employment sites?

a. Site size

b. Location

c. Employment use type

d. Accessibility

e. Contribution to meeting economic objectives/needs

f. Market attractiveness

g. Opportunities for growth/expansion

h. The site's status in previous local plans

i. Other

See response to Question 20.

Question 24:

How do you think we should plan to support town centres in the future?

Sturminster Marshall is a village and does not have a distinct local centre. Its historic cores is to the north-eastern end of the village, which has gradually expanded up to and across the A350. Local facilities and services are not clustered in a single location. The scale of growth that could come forward (in the region of 1860 dwellings) would grow the population by more than 5,000 to a total of more than 6,500 residents, which in terms of the settlement hierarchy would be in the same category of some of the smaller Tier 2 towns, yet there is no clear plan or ability to develop a town centre which would not undermine the historic character and focus of the village. Yet without a more robust centre, this level of development would add to the unsustainable, dormitory nature of the village.

Question 25:

What types of use do you think will be most important for the future of our town centres?

a. Shops

b. Cafes/restaurants

c. Leisure (e.g. cinemas)

d. Offices

e. Cultural (e.g. museums)

f. Community (e.g. libraries)

g. Hotels

h. Other...

[No comment]

Question 26:

We are suggesting that retail impact assessments should be undertaken for retail development proposals outside the town centres defined in the Plan, that are over the size of a small food store (280 square metres net). How much do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a threshold of 280 square metres for retail impact assessments?

- a. Agree*
- b. Partially agree*
- c. Neutral*
- d. Partially disagree*
- e. Disagree*

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

See response to Question 24.

Question 27:

Should the threshold also apply to leisure uses that are net 280 square metres? Yes/No

See response to Question 24.

Question 28:

We are considering whether the Local Plan should include a policy which supports interim or temporary uses pending a permanent use for a vacant town centre building - we have called these 'meanwhile uses'. To what extent do you agree with the introduction of a meanwhile uses policy?

- a. Agree*
- b. Partially agree*
- c. Neutral*
- d. Partially disagree*
- e. Disagree*

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

Question 29:

How else can we encourage development on brownfield land, whilst also planning positively to meet our needs for homes and employment land?

[No comment]

Question 30:

To what extent do you agree with taking land out of the Green Belt to help meet our development needs?

- a. Agree*
- b. Partially agree*
- c. Neutral*
- d. Partially disagree*
- e. Disagree*

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl, one of the core purposes of Green Belt land includes safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Whilst it may be necessary and appropriate to review the Green Belt boundary as part of the Local Plan, the potential scale of land that could be released around Sturminster Marshall village is strongly opposed.

The status of Sturminster Marshall as a village appears to be a double-edged sword, in that it has to grow to the size of a town in order to benefit from the added protection of benefiting from two of the five Green Belt purposes. Yet given the nature of the settlement, its transformation into a town would fundamentally undermine the character of the settlement and the reason why many of our residents chose to live here.

Whilst Grey Belt land is favoured above other Green Belt, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development is also determinative as to whether a site's location is appropriate (NPPF paragraph 148). This means ensuring that significant development is focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. For Sturminster Marshall, this would require a major uplift in the frequency and route coverage of public transport provision as well as the provision of attractive and reasonably direct cycle routes into the conurbation (which simply do not exist and are not demonstrably feasible). There has been no clear assessment of the impact of traffic on local roads if this shift to more sustainable modes is not achieved – and no indication of the impacts from this cumulative development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, and whether this can be cost effectively mitigated.

Question 31:

We have suggested that the Local Plan should include a flexible settlements policy which would allow new homes around certain towns and villages. What impact, if any, do you think the proposed flexible settlements policy might have on opportunities for self-build homes?

- a. High impact*
- b. Some impact*
- c. No impact*

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

[No comment]

Question 32:

Is there anything else we should do to increase the supply of self-build plots?

[No comment]

Question 33:

We have suggested that housing requirements for neighbourhood plan areas should be finalised at the next stage of preparing the Local Plan. This is likely to involve consideration of sites with planning permission, local plan allocations and unplanned development. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach?

- a. Agree*
- b. Partially agree*
- c. Neutral*
- d. Partially disagree*
- e. Disagree*

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

d. Partially disagree Whilst this appears logical, the basis for calculating a reasonable figure for the windfall development component results in quite varied and potentially unreasonable figures when the potential opportunities that remain are considered. This was the case with the SMNP, when Sturminster Marshall's indicative target was 472 dwellings for the period up to 2038, of which land was allocated for 425 homes on land to be released from the Green Belt, with the remainder expected to come forward through extant consents and windfall development (such as infilling within the village and the conversion / replacement of rural buildings). Whilst the Parish Council undertook a call for sites and considered opportunities for windfall development it was not evident how this amount of windfall could be achievable. As such, there should be a degree of 'sense-checking' of the windfall element.

Question 34:

Should the housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plan areas outside the Green Belt, include an allowance for sites that could come forward through the flexible settlements policy?

- a. Yes*
- b. No*

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

There is no discussion where neighbourhood plan areas are partly within but include elements outside of the Green Belt. In the case of our parish, the settlements of Almer and Mapperton are beyond the Green Belt but are Tier 4 status and therefore presumably would not trigger this consideration.

Question 35:

We have suggested that our Local Plan objectives for Travellers should be:

- to reduce the numbers of unauthorised sites,*
- to provide opportunities for sites to expand,*
- to encourage new Traveller sites in sustainable locations, and*
- to provide opportunities for Travellers to deliver their own sites.*

Do you have any comments on the objectives for meeting the need for Traveller sites?

Question 36:

To help ensure that enough pitches are provided to meet Dorset's needs, Traveller pitches could be delivered alongside homes for the settled community on large scale residential development. Are there any issues which you think we need to consider in locating Traveller pitches alongside new built homes for the settled community?

[No comment]

Question 37:

We are suggesting that 5 Traveller pitches should be provided for every 500 homes on large development sites. Is this threshold correct?

- a. Yes
- b. No-it should be higher
- c. No-it should be lower

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

[No comment]

Question 38:

To encourage Travellers to deliver their own sites, we are suggesting that the Local Plan should include a criteria policy which takes account of the site's location, access, neighbouring development, environmental impact and management of the site. Do you think we need to add or change any of the suggested criteria?

[No comment]

Question 39:

We have identified opportunity sites which could deliver more homes to help meet Dorset's housing needs. Do we need to change the approach to mitigating impacts on protected Dorset Heaths habitat sites as part of planning to meet increased housing needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

[No comment]

Question 40:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with development at Shapwick to enable the delivery of public benefits from investment in the Kingston Lacy Estate?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

Please note that our Neighbourhood Plan highlights the need for a footbridge over the Stour which would allow walkers to walk to Shapwick and/or access the paths on the Kingston Lacy Estate, connecting to the proposed Stour Valley Park.

Question 41:

We have outlined some areas which could be appropriate for wind turbines, ground mounted solar panels and battery energy storage. To what extent do you agree or disagree with identifying broad areas of opportunity for wind, solar and battery energy storage?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

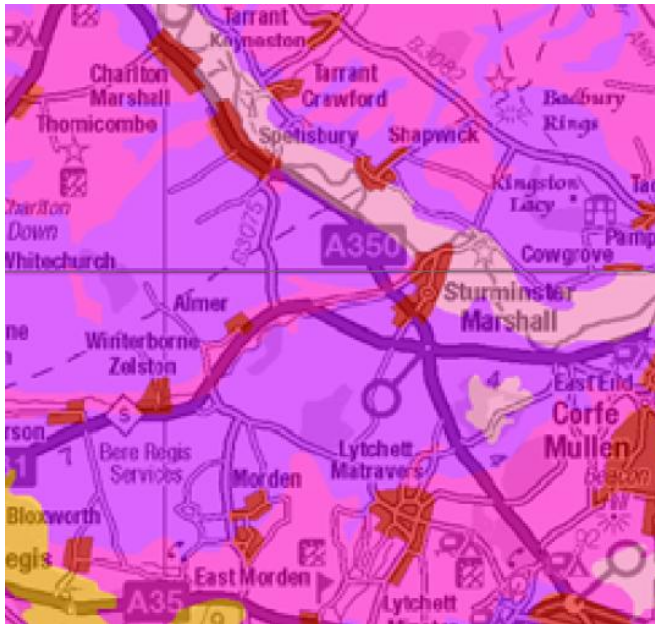
Please provide any further comments or reasoning

d. Partially disagree – whilst in theory this is sensible, the resulting maps appear to be misleading, and may be due to the high level assessment basis, particularly with regard to heritage, agricultural land and landscape character.

Areas identified within the parish through the study include the immediate setting of Charborough Park, and its associated Listed buildings, together with the immediate rural setting of the area's three Conservation Areas. There has been no careful / measured consideration given to the relative significance of these assets and their setting.

The reference to avoiding higher quality agricultural land also does not appear to take into account the assessment of the likely presence of higher quality agricultural land in the area as published by Natural England 2017

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6056482614804480>



South West Region

Likelihood of 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) Agricultural Land

This map shows the best available estimate of agricultural land quality at the date of compilation (2001) expressed in terms of the proportion of land likely to be classified as 'best and most versatile' ('BMV') i.e. Grades 1, 2, 3a in the Defra Agricultural Land Classification (revised 1988).

Predictive BMV Land Assessment © Defra

- High likelihood of BMV land (>60% area bmv)
- Moderate likelihood of BMV land (20 - 60% area bmv)
- Low likelihood of BMV land (<= 20% area bmv)
- Non-agricultural use
- Urban / Industrial

Much of the land to the west of the A350 is understood to be Grade 2 agricultural land.

The Neighbourhood Plan also refers to and describes key views that are important (5.3) that contribute to whether sites may be considered part of a valued landscape.

If this Plan is to provide guidance then a more informed assessment of these factors should be undertaken.

Question 42:

Since Roman times, the centre of Dorchester has had a prominent position in the landscape. One of the threats to this identity is at the eastern edge of the potential development area (near the A35). Would you support keeping this eastern area more green and open, even if that means fewer homes, facilities and jobs?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

[No comment]

Question 43.

Supporting jobs, homes and services all in one place is an essential part of the health of a town. Do you see new workspaces that are integrated into walkable neighbourhoods and local centres as an attractive part of Dorchester in the future?

- a. Agree*
- b. Partially agree*
- c. Disagree*
- d. Partially disagree*
- e. Neutral*

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

[No comment]

Question 44:

We believe that the valley at Pigeon House Farm can play an important role in encouraging access to nature and celebrating local landscape — What type of development, if any, do you think could help support this in a sustainable way?

- i. A smaller scale of development*
- ii. A larger scale of development*
- iii. The use of the area as an undeveloped landscape buffer, for recreation, education and nature interpretation, without any housing development.*
- iv. A mixture of the above*

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

[No comment]

Question 45: What are your priorities for a new east–west route?

[No comment]
