

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

Site Assessment Report

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering
Group

October 2019

Quality information

Prepared by

Ryan Putt
Environmental
Consultant

Checked by

Nick Chisholm-Batten
Associate Director

Approved by

Nick Chisholm-Batten
Associate Director

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Prepared for:

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
Plumer House
Tailyour Road
Plymouth PL6 5DH
United Kingdom

aecom.com

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Executive Summary

AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent site assessment for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Melbury Abbas Parish Council and Cann Parish Council formed the Steering Group, which comprises councillors and residents.

The Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has made good progress in undertaking the initial stages of preparation for the Neighbourhood Plan and is now looking to ensure that key aspects of its proposals will be robust and defensible. In this context, the Steering Group has asked AECOM to undertake an independent and objective assessment of the sites that are available for a residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan.

The North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1) was formally adopted in January 2016 and provides an overarching planning policy framework for North Dorset for the period up to 2031. Policy 2 'Core Spatial Strategy' of the Local Plan indicates that the settlements of Melbury Abbas and Cann are located within the countryside, outside of the main towns and larger villages. The policy states that within the countryside, where access and proximity to services is more limited, development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs.

In this context, a specific housing target is not provided for Melbury Abbas or Cann. The Neighbourhood Plan is therefore seeking to take an approach which seeks to deliver sustainable development which is sensitive to the setting of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and which is intended to meet specific housing requirements or other community objectives.

Therefore, the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group were offered independent technical support to consider additional sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area which have been offered up by landowners as potentially appropriate for development. The purpose of the site assessment is therefore to produce a clear appraisal of the suitability of each of the sites available for potential housing development within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Sites considered through the appraisal, and assessment findings

Ten sites have been considered through the site assessment, listed below in Table ES1. The location of the sites is presented in Figure 1.2.

Following the completion of the site assessment, it is considered that one site is suitable to take forward for a residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan, listed below.

- Site 1: 7 St Anne's Close, Guys Marsh.

Similarly, the following five sites are potentially suitable to take forward through the Neighbourhood Plan but have some constraints which would need to be addressed prior to development.

- Site 5: Village Hall;
- Site 6: Southbank Farm (specifically the northern section of the site);
- Site 7: Land south of Melbury Motors;
- Site 8: Land behind Melbury Motors; and
- Site 10: Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350.

Table ES1: Suitability of sites for taking forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan

Name	Size (ha)	Appropriate for taking forward as allocations through the Neighbourhood Plan?
Site 1: 7 St. Anne's Close, Guys Marsh	0.13	Yes A residential allocation at this location presents an opportunity to enhance the quality of the public realm through the reuse of previously developed and underutilised land.
Site 2: Land south of A30	8.47	No Landscape and visual sensitivities and the quality of agricultural land present significant constraints to development at this location. Ecological features, noise concerns, heritage issues and the presence of significant infrastructure provide further constraints at some locations. The site has the potential to deliver large, strategic development of a scale which is less appropriate for taking forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.
Site 3: Land south of A30 / B3081 Intersection	3.43	No Outline planning application '2/2018/0602/OUT' for the development of up to 55 dwellings was refused in February 2019, primarily due to the potential landscape character impacts and the loss of high-quality agricultural land. Concerns with pedestrian safety, noise issues, the presence of significant infrastructure and the setting of heritage assets provide further constraints.
Site 4: Land south of West Lane (Hillside)	0.96	No Landscape and visual sensitivities, access issues and ecological concerns present significant constraints to development at this location. Additionally, surface water flood risk issues, the quality of agricultural land and the presence of a PRoW on the site are further constraints which are important in the local context.
Site 5: Village Hall	0.14	Potentially On the basis that a suitable alternative community asset can be delivered within the Neighbourhood Plan area to mitigate the loss of the existing village hall at this location, the site is considered suitable to take forward for a residential allocation.
Site 6: Southbank Farm	0.93	Potentially (northern section of the site) This area of the site benefits from good access and connectivity to Cann Common. Likewise, as most of this area of the site is occupied by vacant or underutilised buildings, regeneration presents an opportunity to incorporate high-quality design which is sensitive to the setting of the AONB and nearby heritage assets. No (southern section of the site) This area of the site is largely open in character and is likely to be underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land (i.e. the best and most versatile land for agricultural purposes), the loss of which cannot be mitigated.
Site 7: Land south of Melbury Motors	0.21	Potentially Providing that the design appropriately considers its setting within the AONB, the issues concerning highways safety can be resolved, and the surface water flood risk issues are alleviated.
Site 8: Land behind Melbury Motors	0.35	Potentially The site is potentially suitable for a residential-led or mixed-use development which would meet a locally identifiable housing requirement or community need (i.e. village hall or community centre), providing the development incorporates a high-quality and sensitive design which respects its setting within the AONB, alleviates surface water flood risk issues and demonstrates that the existing use of the site is no longer viable.
Site 9: Land south of Pitts Lane	1.82	No The main constraints to development at this location relate to the access issues and connectivity concerns, the visibility of the site from within the AONB, the quality of agricultural land and the potential impact to the setting of a nearby heritage designation.

Name	Size (ha)	Appropriate for taking forward as allocations through the Neighbourhood Plan?
Site 10: Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350	0.29	Potentially The site is potentially suitable for a residential-led or mixed-use development which would meet a locally identifiable housing requirement of community need, providing the development incorporates a high-quality and sensitive design which demonstrates how the setting of the Grade II listed 'Wilkins Farmhouse' will be conserved and enhanced, alleviates potential road safety concerns and retains access to right of way N59/20.

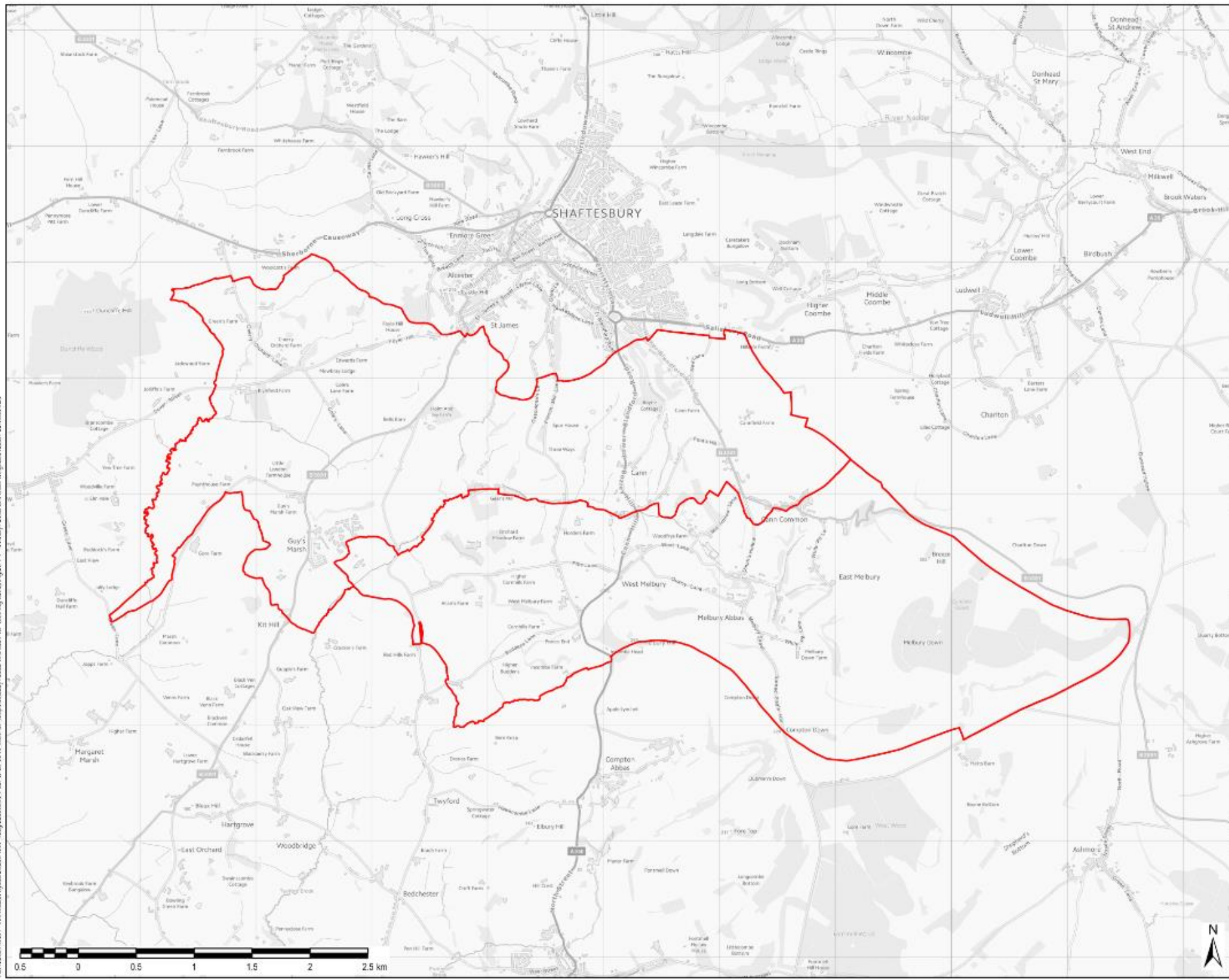
Next steps

Sites to be taken forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered and chosen by the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group based on:

- The findings of this site assessment;
- Responses received during consultation on proposed sites;
- The scope for the sites to meet identified infrastructure needs of the community;
- Viability studies; and
- The extent to which the sites support the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan.

This process will be incorporated within the next stages of development for the Neighbourhood Plan in conjunction with engagement with landowners, Melbury Abbas Parish Council, Cann Parish Council and other stakeholders.

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Melbury Abbas and Cann
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Purpose of Issue

FINAL

Client

MELBURY ABBAS AND CANN
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
STEERING GROUP

Project Title

SITE ASSESSMENT FOR THE
MELBURY ABBAS AND CANN
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Drawing Title

MELBURY ABBAS AND CANN
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Date
CN	JW	BP	04/07/2019

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01

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent site assessment for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Steering Group has made good progress in undertaking the initial stages of preparation for the Neighbourhood Plan, and it is now looking to ensure that key aspects of its proposals will be robust and defensible. In this context, the Steering Group has asked AECOM to undertake an independent and objective assessment of the sites that are available for a potential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Local Plan context for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.2 The North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1)¹ was formally adopted in January 2016 and provides an overarching planning policy framework for North Dorset for the period up to 2031. Policy 2 'Core Spatial Strategy' of the Local Plan indicates that the settlements of Melbury Abbas and Cann are located within the countryside, outside of the main towns and larger villages. The policy states that within the countryside, where access and proximity to services is more limited, development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs. Likewise, the provisions of Policy 20 'The Countryside' confirm that the existing development boundaries for all settlements in the countryside will be removed, with these areas subject to countryside policies within the Local Plan unless new boundaries are defined through neighbourhood plans.
- 1.3 A specific housing target is not provided for Melbury Abbas or Cann. The Neighbourhood Plan is therefore taking an approach which seeks to deliver sustainable development which is sensitive to the setting of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and which is intended to meet specific housing requirements or other community objectives.
- 1.4 North Dorset District Council initiated a review of the Local Plan in November 2017, consulting on an issues and options document until January 2018. The responses have been used to inform and influence the process. However, on 25th June 2019 Dorset Council cabinet agreed to stop progressing work on the Local Plan review. Instead, the council has begun work on a new Dorset-wide Local Plan. A six-week public consultation on the statement of community involvement² is scheduled to conclude in August 2019.

Sites considered through the site appraisal

- 1.5 Following the completion of a community questionnaire in January 2018 which aimed to gain a preliminary understanding of the types of sites which may be supported by the local community, the Steering Group were keen to explore opportunities for development. A 'call for sites' process was undertaken in October 2018 to determine the potentially available sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area, with the community invited to make further comments at a feedback event which was held in April 2019. A draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be finalised following the completion of the site assessment process.
- 1.6 Following a review of the potentially available sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area and the responses received through the community questionnaire and feedback event, ten sites have been taken forward for consideration within the site assessment process. The sites are listed below in Table 1.1, with their location in the Neighbourhood Plan area shown in Figure 1.2. The size of the sites has been calculated using the measuring tool on Google Earth³.

¹ Dorset Council (2016): 'The North Dorset Local Plan', [online] available to download via: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/north-dorset/the-north-dorset-local-plan/the-north-dorset-local-plan.aspx> last accessed [06/08/19]

² Dorset Council (2019): 'Local Plan Review', [online] available to access via: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/north-dorset/local-plan-review/local-plan-review.aspx> last accessed [06/08/19]

³ Google (2019): 'Google Earth', [online] software available to download via: https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/ last accessed [06/08/19]

Table 1.1: Sites considered through the site appraisal

Name	Size (ha)
Site 1: 7 St. Anne's Close, Guys Marsh	0.13
Site 2: Land south of A30	8.47
Site 3: Land south of A30 / B3081 Intersection	3.43
Site 4: Land south of West Lane (Hillside)	0.96
Site 5: Village Hall	0.14
Site 6: Southbank Farm	0.93
Site 7: Land south of Melbury Motors	0.21
Site 8: Land behind Melbury Motors	0.35
Site 9: Land south of Pitts Lane	1.82
Site 10: Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350	0.29

2. Methodology for the site appraisal

Introduction

- 2.1 Site selection and allocation is one of the most contentious aspects of planning, raising strong feelings amongst local people, landowners, builders and businesses. It is important that any selection process carried out is transparent, fair, robust and defensible and that the same criteria and thought process is applied to each potential site. Equally important is the way in which the work is recorded and communicated to interested parties, so the approach is transparent and defensible.
- 2.2 The approach to the site appraisal is based primarily on the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (Housing and Economic Assessment of Land Availability)⁴ published in 2014 with ongoing updates, which contains guidance on the assessment of land availability and the production of a SHLAA as part of a local authority's evidence base for a Local Plan.
- 2.3 Although a Neighbourhood Plan is at a smaller scale than a Local Plan, the criteria for assessing the suitability of sites for housing are still appropriate. This includes an assessment of whether a site is suitable, available and achievable. In this context, the methodology for carrying out the site appraisal is presented below.

Task 1: Development of the site appraisal pro-forma

- 2.4 Prior to carrying out the appraisal, site appraisal pro-formas were developed. The purpose of the pro-forma is to enable a consistent evaluation of each site through the consideration of an established set of parameters against which each site can be then appraised.
- 2.5 The pro-forma utilised for the assessment enables a range of information to be recorded, including the following:
- Background details on the site;
 - Existing and surrounding land uses;
 - Site characteristics;
 - Site planning history;
 - Suitability;
 - Accessibility;
 - Environmental considerations;
 - Community facilities and services;
 - Heritage considerations;
 - Flood risk;
 - Existing infrastructure;
 - Land ownership; and
 - Site availability
- 2.6 Baseline information for the pro-forma was collected using the following data sources: Google Earth, MAGIC Interactive Mapping Tool⁵, Dorset's Planning Explorer⁶ and via information provided by the landowners and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

⁴ GOV UK (2014): 'Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment' [online] available to access via: <<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>> last accessed [08/03/17]

⁵ DEFRA (2019): 'Magic' [online interactive mapping tool] available to access via: <<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>> last accessed [06/08/19]

⁶ Geo Wessex (2019): 'Dorset Explorer', [online interactive mapping tool] available to access via: <<https://explorer.geowessex.com/>> last accessed [06/08/19]

Task 2: Initial desk study

- 2.7 The second task involved conducting a desk study for each of the sites, obtaining the preliminary information needed to complete the pro-formas and highlighting areas which should be examined in more detail during the subsequent site visit (Task 3).

Task 3: Site visit

- 2.8 After the completion of the initial desk study, a site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan area was undertaken by two specialists within AECOM's Neighbourhood Planning team in June 2019. The purpose of the site visit was to evaluate the sites 'on the ground' to support the site appraisal process, in addition to gaining a better understanding of the context and nature of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Task 4: Consolidation of results

- 2.9 Following the site visit, further desk-based research was carried out to validate the findings of the visit and to enable the results of the site appraisal to be consolidated.
- 2.10 **Section 4** of this report presents a summary of the site appraisals for each of the ten sites considered in the Neighbourhood Plan area, with the completed pro-forma for each site available to view in **Appendix A**.

3. Indicative housing capacity

- 3.1 Paragraph 5.60 within the North Dorset Local Plan (Part 1) states that *“the density of existing development varies from generally lower densities in villages and rural areas to higher densities in the four main towns, especially in town centres. The wide variation in the character of different parts of the district and the densities at which housing development has been built, means that it would be inappropriate to impose a standard density requirement”*. Policy 7 ‘Delivering Homes’ affirms that the design and layout of any development with a housing element should therefore seek to achieve a residential density that makes effective use of the site, respects the character and distinctiveness of the locality, and which is acceptable in terms of design and amenity both for the intended occupants of the new development and the occupants of existing development in the vicinity.
- 3.2 In this regard, it is important to note that AECOM’s standard methodology (which assumes a density of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) for all sites) has been used for comparative purposes only and, for some sites, the indicative number of dwellings might not be deliverable due to on-site constraints. Likewise, these figures do not necessarily equate to the amount of land that is suitable for development, as, for larger sites, land needs to be allocated for non-housing uses, for example community facilities and open space (the net development area).
- 3.3 To address this, the methodology provides ratios to calculate the net housing density based on the size of sites. The approach is based on the notion that: the bigger the site, the more land that needs to be put over for non-housing uses. The ratios are provided below in Table 3.1, with the indicative number of dwellings calculated for each site shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1: Net housing density

Area	Gross to net ratio standards	Net Housing Density
Up to 0.4 ha	90%	30
0.4 ha to 2 ha	80%	30
2 ha to 10 ha	75%	30
Over 10 ha	50%	30

Table 3.2: Indicative number of dwellings for each site within the Neighbourhood Plan area

Name	Size (ha)	Indicative Number of Dwellings
Site 1: 7 St. Anne’s Close, Guys Marsh	0.13	3
Site 2: Land south of A30	8.47	190
Site 3: Land south of A30 / B3081 Intersection	3.43	77
Site 4: Land south of West Lane (Hillside)	0.96	23
Site 5: Village Hall	0.14	3
Site 6: Southbank Farm	0.93	22
Site 7: Land south of Melbury Motors	0.21	5
Site 8: Land behind Melbury Motors	0.35	9
Site 9: Land south of Pitts Lane	1.82	43
Site 10: Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350	0.29	7

4. Summary of site appraisals: Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

Site 1: 7 St. Anne's Close, Guys Marsh



Site Development Potential

- 4.1 Site 1 '7, St Anne's Close, Guys Marsh' is approximately 0.13 ha and has the potential to accommodate up to three dwellings. The site is currently an area of flat and underutilised brownfield land within an existing built-up area within Cann Parish. Therefore, a residential allocation at this location presents an opportunity to reuse previously developed land within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 4.2 The site is not within or adjacent to the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Sensitive development at this location has the potential to positively contribute to the character of the area and enhance the quality of the public realm.
- 4.3 Ecologically, the site is not within or adjacent to a protected site for biodiversity and does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the type of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e. residential, rural residential, rural non-residential).
- 4.4 There is suitable and safe access into the site from the existing road network, via a turning from St. Anne's Close. The site is not constrained by flood risk issues and is located within Flood Zone 1. From a heritage perspective, the site does not contain and is not within the setting of any heritage designations or assets.

Key Constraints

- 4.5 Visually, there are short views into the site from adjacent properties.
- 4.6 Although the site is located within an existing built-up area, services and facilities are limited. Shaftesbury town centre is approximately 3km to the north east of the site.
- 4.7 The site could potentially contain areas of contaminated land due to its current and former use. However, the former uses of the site are not known.

Recommendations

- 4.8 Due to the limited on-site constraints at this location, the site is considered suitable to take forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. A residential allocation presents an opportunity to enhance the quality of the public realm through the reuse of previously developed and underutilised land within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Site 2: Land south of A30



Site Development Potential

- 4.9 Site 2 'Land south of A30' is approximately 8.47ha and has the potential to accommodate up to 190 dwellings if the whole of the site is developed. Topographically, the site is relatively flat and is approximately 1km to the south east of the services and facilities in Shaftesbury town centre.
- 4.10 Access into the south eastern section of the site is possible via a turning from New Lane. There is the potential to establish access into the northern section of the site via a turning from the A30 (Salisbury Road).
- 4.11 The whole of the site is within Flood Zone 1 and has a low to very low surface water flood risk.
- 4.12 Ecologically, the site is not within or adjacent to a protected site for biodiversity and does not overlap with a SSSI IRZ for the type of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Key Constraints

- 4.13 Although the site is not within or within the setting of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB, it is open in character and visible from the surrounding landscape. Development of the whole site would result in a noticeable change to its character, contrasting the agricultural fields to the east and west and extending the settlement of Shaftesbury to the south east.
- 4.14 With regards to visual amenity, there are direct views into the site from the 'Orchid View' Gypsy and Traveller Site located adjacent to the north eastern site boundary.
- 4.15 The site is safeguarded for employment use through local planning policy, with Policy 11 'The Economy' in North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 identifying the land as a strategic employment site to be developed out over the plan period. Outline planning application 2/2018/1773/OUT for the erection of up to 135 dwellings, industrial starter units, primary school, flexible commercial uses including a combination of a hotel and non-food retail or residential care home, modified vehicular access, car parking, sports pitches, public open space and associated works was submitted in December 2018 (decision pending).

- 4.16 A detailed agricultural land classification assessment has been undertaken on the site. The whole of the site is underlain by Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land which is some of the 'best and most versatile' land for agricultural purposes.
- 4.17 The site does not contain and is not within the setting of any nationally designated heritage assets. However, the Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER) confirms that monument ID MDO27981 'Former quarry, near New Lane Farm, Shaftesbury' is partly located within the north eastern section of the site.
- 4.18 At the local level, ecological features on the site include an existing outbuilding and hedgerows alongside field boundaries which contain some semi-mature trees. These features could support populations of protected species.
- 4.19 There is significant infrastructure crossing the site at certain locations, including power lines. Additionally, the site is sensitive to some noise pollution from the A30 and B3081.

Recommendations

- 4.20 Landscape and visual sensitivities and the quality of agricultural land present significant constraints to development at this location. Ecological features, noise concerns, heritage issues and the presence of significant infrastructure provide further constraints at some locations.
- 4.21 The site has the potential to deliver large, strategic development of a scale which is less appropriate for taking forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Site 3: Land at A30 / B3081 Intersection



Site Development Potential

- 4.22 Site 3 'Land at A30 / B3081 Intersection' is approximately 3.43 ha and has the potential to accommodate up to 77 dwellings if the whole site is developed. The site gently slopes downwards to the south and benefits from existing access into its western section via a turning from the B3081.
- 4.23 The whole of the site is within Flood Zone 1 and has a very low surface water flood risk.
- 4.24 Ecologically, the site is not within or adjacent to a protected site for biodiversity and does not overlap with a SSSI IRZ for the type of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan. The hedgerows located along the site boundaries contribute to local ecological network and could be retained and enhanced through development proposals.

Key Constraints

- 4.25 Although the B3081 is frequented by traffic, there is good visibility (i.e. sight lines in both directions) from the turning into the site. Nonetheless, a suitable and safe crossing over the B3081 would be required to provide pedestrian access from the existing pavement into the site.

- 4.26 From a landscape perspective, the site is not within or adjacent to the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. However, development of the whole site would result in a noticeable change to its existing character, in contrast to the agricultural fields to the east and extending the settlement of Shaftesbury to the south east.
- 4.27 A detailed agricultural land classification assessment has been undertaken on the site. The whole of the site is underlain by Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land which is some of the 'best and most versatile' land for agricultural purposes.
- 4.28 The site does not contain any heritage designations or assets. However, the Grade II listed 'Mayo Cottage' is located directly to the south west of the site adjacent to the B3081. Therefore, development could potentially impact upon the setting of this nationally protected building.
- 4.29 There is significant infrastructure crossing the site at certain locations, including power lines. Additionally, the site is sensitive to noise pollution from the A30 and B3081.

Recommendations

- 4.30 Outline planning application '2/2018/0602/OUT' for the development of up to 55 dwellings with associated vehicular access, open space and infrastructure was refused in February 2019. The decision notice states: *"The proposed development, due to its significantly prominent position in the landscape, on grade 2 agricultural land, and being remote from services, would lead to an urbanisation of the site that would significantly diminish the open countryside and rural character of the area"*.
- 4.31 Concerns with pedestrian safety, noise issues, the presence of significant infrastructure and the setting of heritage assets provide further constraints at certain locations. As such, the site is considered inappropriate to take forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Site 4: Land south of West Lane (Hillside)



Site Development Potential

- 4.32 Site 4 'Land south of West Lane (Hillside)' is approximately 0.96ha and has the potential to accommodate up to 23 dwellings across the whole site. The site gently slopes downwards to the north west.
- 4.33 From a heritage perspective, the site does not contain and is not within the setting of any heritage designations or assets.

Key Constraints

- 4.34 Ecologically, the Fontmell & Melbury Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are located approximately 200m to the south of the site (at their nearest points). The hedgerows located along the site boundaries contribute to local ecological network and should be retained through development proposals.

- 4.35 Although the whole of the site overlaps with SSSI IRZs for the types of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan, the indicative capacity for the site is not likely to exceed the thresholds at most locations. Only the land located towards the southern corner of the site could exceed the threshold and might require consultation with Natural England, specifically: 'Any residential development of 10 or more households outside existing settlements/urban areas.'
- 4.36 Regarding landscape and visual sensitivities, the site is within the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. There are some long views to the north east and south east of the site, with direct views into the site from residential properties located adjacent to its north western boundary (along West Lane). Similarly, the site is likely to be visible from Melbury Beacon, a locally important landmark for visitors and residents.
- 4.37 The existing access into the western section of the site is perhaps problematic due to its location across an existing public right of way (PRoW) which connects to Melbury Beacon approximately 1km to the south. Access into the eastern section of the site via Quarry Lane is potentially possible, but this would require the removal of some of the hedgerow at this location.
- 4.38 The whole of the site is within Flood Zone 1 and most of the site has a very low risk of surface water flooding. However, there is an area of land within the western section of the site which has a medium to high surface water flood risk potential.
- 4.39 Natural England's regional agricultural land classification map for South West England indicates that the whole site is underlain by Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land. In this absence of a detailed agricultural land classification assessment it is not currently possible to determine whether the site is underlain by Grade 3a land (i.e. best and most versatile) or Grade 3b land.

Recommendations

- 4.40 Landscape and visual sensitivities, access issues and ecological concerns present significant constraints to development at this location. Additionally, surface water flood risk issues, the quality of agricultural land and the presence of a PRoW on the site are further constraints which are important in the local context. The site is therefore considered less suitable to take forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Site 5: Village Hall



Site Development Potential

- 4.41 Site 5 'Village Hall' is approximately 0.14 ha and has the potential to accommodate up to three dwellings. Topographically, the site is predominantly flat and benefits from suitable access into its northern section via an existing turning from West Lane.
- 4.42 As the site is an area of brownfield land, a residential allocation at this location presents an opportunity to reuse previously developed land within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

- 4.43 The site is not located within identified flood risk zones for fluvial flooding; the site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1. The site has a very low risk from surface water flooding.
- 4.44 In terms of the historic environment, the site does not contain and is not within the setting of any heritage designations or assets.
- 4.45 Although the whole of the site overlaps with SSSI IRZs for the types of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan, the site is not able to accommodate the number of dwellings which would exceed the IRZ thresholds and therefore require consultation with Natural England.

Key Constraints

- 4.46 The existing use of the site as the local village hall provides community and wellbeing benefits for residents. Therefore, a residential allocation at this location is likely to result in the loss of an essential community asset in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 4.47 Ecologically, the Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC and SSSI are located approximately 550m to the south of the site (at their nearest points). There is a corridor of trees located adjacent to the eastern site boundary which contributes to local ecological networks, along with an area of 'Lowland Meadows' BAP Priority Habitat located directly to the east of the site. Nonetheless, as the site is currently hardstanding it is important to acknowledge that the site itself has a relatively low biodiversity value.
- 4.48 The site is within the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. However, redevelopment at this location presents an opportunity to enhance the special qualities of the AONB through sensitive design and landscaping. The site is located within a topographical dip and is therefore relatively screened from view.

Recommendations

- 4.49 As the site is only able to accommodate a level of development which is small-scale (due to its size), an allocation at this location is less likely to result in significant adverse impacts to the AONB and the ecological features which surround the site. Redevelopment would also support the efficient use of previously developed land in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 4.50 On the basis that a suitable alternative community asset can be delivered within the Neighbourhood Plan area to mitigate the loss of the existing village hall at this location, the site is considered suitable to take forward for a residential allocation.

Site 6: Southbank Farm



Site Development Potential

- 4.51 Site 6 'Southbank Farm' is approximately 0.93ha and has the potential to accommodate up to 22 dwellings. The site comprises a mix of agricultural land with associated outbuildings, areas of hard-standing and a farmhouse, with some of the existing buildings in a poor state of repair.
- 4.52 The site benefits from existing access via a turning from the B3081. Topographically, the northern section of the site is predominantly flat, which is a contrast to the southern section of the site which gently slopes downwards to the south west. The site is currently vacant and underutilised.
- 4.53 The site is not located within identified flood risk zones for fluvial flooding; the site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1. The site has a very low risk from surface water flooding.
- 4.54 In terms of the historic environment, the site does not contain and is not within the setting of any heritage designations or assets.
- 4.55 Ecologically, the site is not within or adjacent to a protected site for biodiversity and does not overlap with a SSSI IRZ for the type of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Key Constraints

- 4.56 The site is mostly open in character and visible from the surrounding landscape. The Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB is located directly to the east of the site. There are short views into the site from properties located alongside the B3081 and longer views to the west and south west of the site across to Melbury Beacon.

- 4.57 A detailed agricultural land classification assessment has not been undertaken for the site. Natural England's regional agricultural land classification map for South West England indicates that the whole site is underlain by Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.
- 4.58 Regarding locally important heritage features, the Dorset HER confirms that monument ID MDO27485 'Boundary Cottage' is located within the setting of the site (directly to the east on the other side of the B3081).
- 4.59 Local ecological features of value include the hedgerows which border the site, which should be retained through any development proposals. Similarly, the existing buildings on the site could potentially support populations of protected species.

Recommendations

- 4.60 The northern section of the site is potentially suitable to take forward for a residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan. This area of the site benefits from good access and connectivity to Cann Common. Likewise, as most of this area of the site is occupied by vacant or underutilised buildings, regeneration presents an opportunity to incorporate high-quality design which is sensitive to the setting of the AONB and nearby heritage assets.
- 4.61 Comparatively, the southern section of the site is less suitable to take forward for a residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan. This area of the site is largely open in character and is likely to be underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land (i.e. the best and most versatile land for agricultural purposes), the loss of which cannot be mitigated.

Site 7: Land south of Melbury Motors



Site Development Potential

- 4.62 Site 7 'Land south of Melbury Motors' is approximately 0.21 ha and has the potential to accommodate up to five dwellings. However, a proposed site plan prepared in March 2018 on behalf of an interested developer shows an indicative layout for eight dwellings on the site, along with associated parking, open space and landscaping.
- 4.63 The site does not contain and is not within the setting of any heritage designations or assets.
- 4.64 Ecologically, the site is not within or adjacent to a protected site for biodiversity and does not overlap with a SSSI IRZ for the type of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Key Constraints

- 4.65 Access into the north western corner of the site is possible via a turning from the B3081. However, there are potential safety issues due to poor visibility / sight lines associated with the turning at this location.

- 4.66 The whole of the site is within Flood Zone 1 and most of the site has a very low risk of surface water flooding. There is an area of land within the southern section of the site which has a medium surface water flood risk potential, although this is not a significant constraint to development.
- 4.67 The site is within the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Visually, there are some longer views to the east and south east of the site. However, the site does benefit from screening from the B3081 from trees along its boundaries. There are some short and direct views into the site from neighbouring properties.
- 4.68 A detailed agricultural land classification assessment has not been undertaken for the site. Natural England's regional agricultural land classification map for South West England indicates that the whole site is underlain by Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.
- 4.69 Regarding locally important ecological assets, there is a semi-mature tree located at the south western corner of the site which should be retained through any development proposals.

Recommendations

- 4.70 The main constraints to development at this location concern the safety issues associated with the turning from the B3081, the quality of the agricultural land (the loss of which cannot be mitigated), and the setting of the site within a nationally protected landscape. Nonetheless, the site sits within the existing built-up area around Cann Common and is relatively screened from view.
- 4.71 As such, the site is potentially suitable to take forward for a residential allocation through the of Neighbourhood Plan providing that the design appropriately considers its setting within the AONB, the issues concerning highways safety can be resolved, and the surface water flood risk issues are alleviated.

Site 8: Land behind Melbury Motors



Site Development Potential

- 4.72 Site 8 'Land behind Melbury Motors' is approximately 0.35 ha and has the potential to accommodate up to nine dwellings. Topographically, the site is flat and benefits from connectivity to the existing road network, via the B3081.

- 4.73 The site is a storage yard and car park located behind 'Melbury Motors', a local car sales business. As the site is an area of brownfield land, regeneration will support the most efficient use of land at this location.
- 4.74 Ecologically, the site is not within or adjacent to a protected site for biodiversity and does not overlap with a SSSI IRZ for the type of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.75 In terms of the historic environment, the site does not contain and is not within the setting of any heritage designations or assets.

Key Constraints

- 4.76 The land is currently associated with Melbury Motors. It is unknown whether the land is available for development or whether any lease or tenancy agreements are in place (and over what timescales). In this regard, the current access into the site is through privately-owned land and is therefore a potential issue.
- 4.77 The whole of the site is within Flood Zone 1 and most of the site has a very low risk of surface water flooding. However, there is an area of land within the eastern section of the site which has a medium to high surface water flood risk potential.
- 4.78 The site is within the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. However, redevelopment at this location presents an opportunity to enhance the special qualities of the AONB through sensitive design and landscaping.
- 4.79 Visually, the site is relatively screened from view from the surrounding landscape due to its location behind existing buildings and the hedgerows / trees located alongside its boundaries.
- 4.80 The site could potentially contain areas of contaminated land due to its current and former use.

Recommendations

- 4.81 The main constraints to development at this location concern the potential land ownership issues, its setting within the AONB, surface water flood risk concerns and possible contamination issues. Nonetheless, the site benefits from good connectivity to the existing road network and is within the built-up area at Cann Common
- 4.82 On the basis that development proposals incorporate a high-quality and sensitive design which respects its setting within the AONB, alleviates potential surface water flood risk issues and demonstrates that the existing use of the site is no longer viable, the site is potentially suitable for a residential-led or mixed-use development which would meet a locally identifiable housing requirement or community need (i.e. village hall or community centre).

Site 9: Land south of Pitts Lane



Site Development Potential

- 4.83 Site 9 'Land south of Pitts Lane' is approximately 1.82 ha and has the potential to accommodate up to 43 dwellings across the whole site.
- 4.84 The site is not located within identified flood risk zones for fluvial flooding; the site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1. The site has a very low risk from surface water flooding.
- 4.85 From a landscape perspective, the site is not within or adjacent to the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

Key Constraints

- 4.86 Ecologically, the Fontmell & Melbury Downs SAC and SSSI are located approximately 450m to the south east of the site (at their nearest points). Likewise, the whole of the site overlaps with SSSI IRZs for the types of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the site is not able to accommodate the number of dwellings which would exceed the IRZ thresholds and therefore require consultation with Natural England.
- 4.87 There are potential safety issues associated with the existing access into the north western section of the site due to its location at an existing crossroads between Pitts Lane and French Mill Lane. Similarly, access into the northern section of the site via Pitts Lane is constrained due to the width of the road.
- 4.88 Although the site is within proximity to local bus stops, these are not accessible via pedestrian access due to the absence of a walkway along Pitts Lane. As a single lane track, the road is unsuitable for frequent vehicular use. Considering the relative distance of the site from services and facilities, an allocation at this location is less likely to encourage sustainable transport options for undertaking day-to-day activities within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 4.89 With regards to visual amenity, there are long views to the south and to the south east and some long views to the north. The site is relatively open in character and is also likely to be visible from Melbury Beacon, which is within the AONB.
- 4.90 The site does not contain any heritage designations or assets. However, the Grade II listed 'Cornhill Cottage' is located directly to the west of the site. Development on the site could potentially impact upon the setting of this nationally listed building.
- 4.91 Natural England's regional agricultural land classification map for South West England indicates that the whole site is underlain by Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land. In this absence

of a detailed agricultural land classification assessment it is not currently possible to determine whether the site is underlain by Grade 3a land (i.e. best and most versatile) or Grade 3b land.

Recommendations

- 4.92 The main constraints to development at this location relate to the access issues and connectivity concerns, the visibility of the site from within the AONB, the quality of agricultural land and the potential impact to the setting of a nearby heritage designation. In this regard, the site is considered less suitable to take forward for a residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Site 10: Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350



Site Development Potential

- 4.93 Site 10 'Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350' is approximately 0.29 ha and has the potential to accommodate up to seven dwellings.
- 4.94 The site is not located within identified flood risk zones for fluvial flooding; the site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1. The site has a very low risk from surface water flooding.
- 4.95 Ecologically, the site is not within or adjacent to a protected site for biodiversity and does not overlap with a SSSI IRZ for the type of development likely to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.96 From a landscape perspective, the site is not within or adjacent to the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

Key Constraints

- 4.97 The Grade II listed "Wilkins Farmhouse" is located directly to the north west of the site. As this heritage asset is directly visible from the site, an allocation at this location has the potential to impact upon the setting and special qualities of this nationally designated listed structure in the absence of sensitive design mitigation measures. Additionally, the Dorset Historic Environment Record confirms that monument ID MDO28058 'Former Orchard, Bozley Farm, Cann' partly overlaps with the south eastern section of the site.
- 4.98 With regards to visual amenity, there are long views to the south and to the west of the site. There are also some short views into the site from residential properties located adjacent to the northern, eastern and north western site boundaries.
- 4.99 The site is relatively open in character and is also likely to be visible from Melbury Beacon, within the AONB. However, as the site covers a relatively small area adjacent to the village, this limits the potential scale of proposals which can come forward at this location. Therefore, development will unlikely change the character of any views across the parish from the AONB.
- 4.100 Natural England's regional agricultural land classification map for South West England indicates that the whole site is underlain by Grade 4 (poor) agricultural land. Nonetheless, the site is currently used for agricultural purposes and would result in the loss of greenfield land.
- 4.101 Although the site is within proximity to local bus stops, these are not accessible via pedestrian access due to the absence of a walkway along the A350. As a single lane track which is

relatively narrow, Long Lane is unsuitable for frequent vehicular use. Also, the extent of the sight lines onto the A350 are limited by the hedgerows on either side of Long Lane, which is a safety concern.

4.102 Considering the relative distance of the site from services and facilities, an allocation at this location is less likely to encourage sustainable transport options for undertaking day-to-day activities within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

4.103 Right of way N59/20 passes from the north western corner to the south eastern corner of the site and extends for approximately 2km between French Mill Lane and Cann Common. An allocation at this location should therefore seek to retain this right of way.

Recommendations

4.104 The main constraints to development at this location relate to road safety issues and connectivity concerns, the relative distance of the site from local services and facilities, and the potential impact to the setting of a nearby heritage designation.

4.105 On the basis that development proposals incorporate a high-quality and sensitive design which demonstrates how the setting of the Grade II listed 'Wilkins Farmhouse' will be conserved and enhanced, alleviates potential road safety concerns and retains access to right of way N59/20, the site is potentially suitable for a residential-led or mixed-use development which would meet a locally identifiable housing requirement or community need.

5. Conclusions

Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 The site assessment has assessed the ten sites in the Neighbourhood Plan area which have been considered as potential allocations in the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan. The sites have been evaluated utilising the consistent criteria in the pro-forma developed by AECOM.

Sites to take forward for the purposes of the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan

5.2 Following the completion of the site assessment, it is considered that one site is suitable to take forward for a residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan, listed below.

- Site 1: 7 St Anne's Close, Guys Marsh.

5.3 Similarly, the following five sites are potentially suitable to take forward through the Neighbourhood Plan but have some constraints which would need to be addressed prior to development.

- Site 5: Village Hall;
- Site 6: Southbank Farm (specifically the northern section of the site);
- Site 7: Land south of Melbury Motors;
- Site 8: Land behind Melbury Motors; and
- Site 10: Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350.

Table 5.1: Suitability of sites for taking forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan

Name	Size (ha)	Appropriate for taking forward as allocations through the Neighbourhood Plan?
Site 1: 7 St. Anne's Close, Guys Marsh	0.13	Yes A residential allocation at this location presents an opportunity to enhance the quality of the public realm through the reuse of previously developed and underutilised land.
Site 2: Land south of A30	8.47	No Landscape and visual sensitivities and the quality of agricultural land present significant constraints to development at this location. Ecological features, noise concerns, heritage issues and the presence of significant infrastructure provide further constraints at some locations. The site has the potential to deliver large, strategic development of a scale which is less appropriate for taking forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.
Site 3: Land south of A30 / B3081 Intersection	3.43	No Outline planning application '2/2018/0602/OUT' for the development of up to 55 dwellings was refused in February 2019, primarily due to the potential landscape character impacts and the loss of high-quality agricultural land. Concerns with pedestrian safety, noise issues, the presence of significant infrastructure and the setting of heritage assets provide further constraints.
Site 4: Land south of West Lane (Hillside)	0.96	No Landscape and visual sensitivities, access issues and ecological concerns present significant constraints to development at this location. Additionally, surface water flood risk issues, the quality of agricultural land and the presence of a PRow on the site are further constraints which are important in the local context.

Name	Size (ha)	Appropriate for taking forward as allocations through the Neighbourhood Plan?
Site 5: Village Hall	0.14	Potentially On the basis that a suitable alternative community asset can be delivered within the Neighbourhood Plan area to mitigate the loss of the existing village hall at this location, the site is considered suitable to take forward for a residential allocation.
Site 6: Southbank Farm	0.93	Potentially (northern section of the site) This area of the site benefits from good access and connectivity to Cann Common. Likewise, as most of this area of the site is occupied by vacant or underutilised buildings, regeneration presents an opportunity to incorporate high-quality design which is sensitive to the setting of the AONB and nearby heritage assets. No (southern section of the site) This area of the site is largely open in character and is likely to be underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land (i.e. the best and most versatile land for agricultural purposes), the loss of which cannot be mitigated.
Site 7: Land south of Melbury Motors	0.21	Potentially Providing that the design appropriately considers its setting within the AONB, the issues concerning highways safety can be resolved, and the surface water flood risk issues are alleviated.
Site 8: Land behind Melbury Motors	0.35	Potentially The site is potentially suitable for a residential-led or mixed-use development which would meet a locally identifiable housing requirement or community need (i.e. village hall or community centre), providing the development incorporates a high-quality and sensitive design which respects its setting within the AONB, alleviates surface water flood risk issues and demonstrates that the existing use of the site is no longer viable.
Site 9: Land south of Pitts Lane	1.82	No The main constraints to development at this location relate to the access issues and connectivity concerns, the visibility of the site from within the AONB, the quality of agricultural land and the potential impact to the setting of a nearby heritage designation.
Site 10: Land at the junction of Long Lane and the A350	0.29	Potentially The site is potentially suitable for a residential-led or mixed-use development which would meet a locally identifiable housing requirement of community need, providing the development incorporates a high-quality and sensitive design which demonstrates how the setting of the Grade II listed 'Wilkins Farmhouse' will be conserved and enhanced, alleviates potential road safety concerns and retains access to right of way N59/20.

- 5.4 If site allocations are included in the Neighbourhood Plan, it is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group discuss site viability with North Dorset District Council. Viability appraisals for individual sites may already exist. If not, it is possible to use the Council's existing viability evidence (such as an Affordable Housing Viability Study or Community Infrastructure Viability Study) to test the viability of sites proposed for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. This can be achieved by 'matching' site typologies used in existing reports, with sites proposed by the Neighbourhood Steering Group to give an indication of whether a site is viable for development and therefore likely to be delivered. Likewise, the developer should be contacted to ensure that the site remains deliverable.
- 5.5 Overall it is recommended that the policy approaches proposed by the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to address the potential constraints highlighted in this report. This can include targeted site-specific Neighbourhood Plan policies to address the elements raised relating to environmental constraints and accessibility.

Appendix A Completed site appraisal pro-forma

