

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report to accompany the submission version of the
Neighbourhood Plan

Marnhull Parish Council

July 2025

Quality information

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Revision History

| Revision | Revision date | Details | Name | Position |
|----------|---------------|---|--------|----------------------------------|
| V1.0 | 27.01.25 | Initial version for Neighbourhood Group comment | J.C. | Chair, Neighbourhood Group |
| V2.0 | 07.02.25 | Regulation 14 version | N.C.B. | Technical Director |
| V3.0 | 11.07.25 | Submission version | N.C.B. | Technical Director |

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SEA Summary Note

Overview of plan making / SEA work to date

Key deliverables

Documents produced as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process to date include:

- The SEA Scoping Report (October 2024), which contained information about the neighbourhood area's environment and community.
- The SEA Environmental Report (February 2025), which accompanied the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan (MNP) at Regulation 14 consultation. This document identified, described and evaluated the likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives, and was prepared to meet the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).

Purpose of this document

This Environmental Report accompanies the proposed submission version of the MNP and considers the implications of the updates to the Neighbourhood Plan for the SEA findings previously presented at Regulation 14 consultation (in February 2025). This includes relating to the potential for any likely significant effects that may arise as part of the updates.

The SEA Environmental Report which was prepared for (and accompanied) the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan has been revised to reflect the updates made to the policies. The revised document (the 'submission version') is presented below. Where appropriate, the SEA findings have been updated to reflect the updates to the Neighbourhood Plan policies (as discussed below). A proportionate approach has been undertaken to reflect the scope of the updates.

Key considerations for plan makers and the SEA

Housing numbers

As discussed in **Chapter 2** within the main body of this Environmental Report, Appendix 2 (Neighbourhood Plan Housing Requirement) within the consultation draft of the Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP) includes a minimum housing target of 153 homes for Marnhull. This has been met through existing completions and commitments. However, it is recognised that Dorset Council are accepting site submissions in Marnhull as part of their emerging DCLP process, via their online 'call for sites' form, and that the housing target is expressed as a minimum.

It is anticipated that the updates within the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) should not alter the housing numbers for Marnhull, as the current approvals in the neighbourhood area already exceed existing targets. However, there are several available site options within the neighbourhood area which have the potential to be included as a housing or employment allocation during the plan period.

Additional evidence

To support the choice of a development strategy for the MNP, the SEA process assessed four housing spatial strategy options, and two employment spatial strategy options, as reasonable alternatives. The detailed findings of the assessments are presented in **Chapter 4** within the main body of this Environmental Report.

A hybrid outline planning application for Site LA/MARN/014¹ (i.e., the site considered through housing **Option 2**) and Site LA/MARN/004² (i.e., the site considered through employment **Option 2**) was initially refused in July 2024. The decision notice (ref: P/OUT/2022/02644) highlighted potential issues relating to:

- Whether Marnhull is an appropriate location for housing, retail and commercial development of this scale.
- The effect of the development on the character and appearance of Marnhull and on the significance of its heritage assets.

In May 2025, the refusal was approved on appeal (ref: APP/D1265/W/24/3353912).

The conclusions of the updated evidence have informed the decision to revisit and update policies within the submission version of the MNP. This is considered below.

Appraising the updates within the Neighbourhood Plan

Methodology

The updates to the MNP have been screened for likely significant effects. The purpose of this screening exercise is to establish whether the proposed updates are likely to lead to significant effects in relation to the findings previously presented in the Regulation 14 version of the Environmental Report, which should then be appraised in more detail.

Findings of the screening exercise

The following table presents the findings of the screening of the updates to the MNP.

Table SN1: Screening the key updates to the Neighbourhood Plan

| Update (Policy ref.) | Focus (changes in relation to...) | Screened in? | Rationale |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------|---|
| Policies 2, 6, 10, 11 and 12 | Minor word changes to strengthen the policy provisions where appropriate. | No | The revisions do not comprise any significant changes to the overall aim and focus of the policies and do not impact on the overall spatial strategy. |
| Policy 1 | Additional wording included to take account of the SEA recommendation within the Regulation 14 version of the Environmental Report. | No | The modifications have positive impacts for the 'historic environment' SEA theme by encouraging proposals to consider (via a more detailed investigation) the significance of heritage assets and areas |

¹ Proposal for 120 homes, including a percentage of affordable homes, refused primarily on access and heritage grounds.

² Proposal for a food store with cafe, plus office space, and a building for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E), (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet).

| Update (Policy ref.) | Focus (changes in relation to...) | Screened in? | Rationale |
|--|--|-----------------|--|
| | | | <p>which might be impacted by new development.</p> <p>However, this does not change the overall conclusions of the assessment findings or impact on the overall spatial strategy within the MNP</p> |
| Site allocation policies: Policy 8 and Policy 9. | <p>Additional design criteria added to Policy 8 to account for the reserved matters application for the site which has since been approved, providing further detail with respect to the proposed highway access and site layout.</p> <p>Additional wording included in Policy 9 to account for the approval (at appeal) of the hybrid application for 120 homes at this location, providing additional input with respect to protecting the historic rural setting and views, safeguarding meadowland, and opportunities for active and sustainable travel.</p> | No. | <p>The SEA has considered the potential impacts of taking forward development at these locations through the consideration of reasonable alternatives presented in Chapter 4 in this Environmental Report. No further assessments are required. No new sites for development are included as allocations within the submission version of the MNP to those which have already been granted planning approval.</p> <p>The potential constraints to development have therefore been identified through the SEA work to date, and plan-makers have incorporated additional mitigation measures within policy provisions which seek to address the constraints to development. These have also been reflected via the preparation of indicative maps for how the sites could be developed (see Map 4 and Map 5 in the submission version of the MNP).</p> <p>The revisions to the site allocation policies do not comprise any significant changes to their overall aim and focus, and do not impact on the overall spatial strategy.</p> <p>No additional significant effects are identified through the SEA as a result of the policy updates.</p> |

Screening conclusions

The SEA Regulations require the SEA process to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the MNP and alternatives.

The screening of the updates has concluded that **the submission version of the MNP would not have any additional significant effects to those presented in the SEA Environmental Report which accompanied the Regulation 14 consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan.**

In light of the above, in association with the requirements of the SEA Regulations, further detailed assessment work **is not required** to explore the implications of the updates to the MNP.

Non-Technical Summary

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as “the MNP”). This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan groups use SEA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to help avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects through the Neighbourhood Plan and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.

What is the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan?

The MNP has been prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Purpose of this Environmental Report

This Environmental Report, which accompanies the submission version of the MNP is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (October 2024), which included information about the neighbourhood area’s environment and community. The second document was the SEA Environmental Report (February 2025) which accompanied the MNP at Regulation 14 consultation.

The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects of the MNP and alternatives.
- Provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.

The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the MNP and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes.
- Relevant aspects of the current and future state of the environment and key sustainability issues for the area.
- The SEA Framework of objectives against which the MNP has been assessed.
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the MNP.
- The likely significant effects of the MNP.
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the MNP.
- The next steps for the MNP and accompanying SEA process.

Consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan

Establishing reasonable alternatives

Whilst work on the MNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.

In the context of the above, the Environmental Report presents information on reasonable alternative approaches to addressing key issues that are of central importance to the MNP.

Local Plan context

As Dorset Council was re-organised into a Unitary Authority in April 2019, the Council are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan, or DCLP'). The emerging DCLP has reached Regulation 18 consultation, which was completed between January and March 2021. Dorset Council are now intending to start preparing a new-style local plan, under the new plan-making system introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA).

Appendix 2 (Neighbourhood Plan Housing Requirement) within the consultation draft of the DCLP includes a minimum housing target of 153 homes for Marnhull. This has been met through existing completions and commitments. However, it is recognised that Dorset Council are accepting SHLAA site submissions in Marnhull as part of their emerging DCLP process, via their online 'call for sites' form.

It is anticipated that the NPPF updates should not alter the housing numbers for Marnhull, as the current approvals in the neighbourhood area already exceed existing targets. However, there are several available site options within the neighbourhood area which have the potential to come forward as a housing or employment allocation during the plan period.

Consideration of potential site options

Within the latest SHLAA³, several sites were assessed to be unsuitable for development due to their location outside of the village boundary. In total, there are nine sites that being considered for a potential allocation within the MNP. These include sites that have been given a 'potentially suitable' rating through the SHLAA, sites with known developer interest, and sites known to the Parish Council which are likely to become available during the plan period.

These nine sites, listed in **Table NTS1**, have therefore been the focus for defining the spatial strategy alternatives considered through the SEA.

³ Dorset Council (2024). 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment update 2024' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Table NTS1: Site options considered through the SEA

| Site reference: | Potential use | Indicative Housing Capacity | Approved Housing Capacity | Planning context |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| LA/MARN/001 (Crown Road (South)) ⁴ | Housing or Mixed-Use | 34 | - | The SHLAA confirms that the site is unsuitable for development. However, the landowner has indicated that they are considering proposing a mix of uses on a smaller part of the larger site which may overcome the concerns from Dorset Council. |
| LA/MARN/002 (Land at Butts Close (West)) | Housing | - | 39 | Outline planning permission granted (P/OUT/2021/03030). |
| LA/MARN/003 (Land north of Crown Road) | Housing | - | 72 | Outline planning permission granted (2/2018/1124/OUT). |
| LA/MARN/004 (Land off Church Hill – Tess Square) ⁵ | Employment | N/A | N/A | The SHLAA confirms that the site is unsuitable for development. Application refusal for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E) is being appealed by the applicant. |
| LA/MARN/005 (Land off Salisbury Street) | Housing | - | 67 | Outline planning permission granted on appeal (P/OUT/2023/00627). |
| LA/MARN/006 (Mill Lane) | Housing | 73 | - | A potentially suitable site identified in the SHLAA (subject to policy change). |
| LA/MARN/008 (Land off Stonelawn) | Housing | 29 | - | A potentially suitable site identified in the SHLAA (subject to policy change). |
| LA/MARN/014 (Land at Butts Close (East)) ⁶ | Housing | 90 | - | A potentially suitable site identified in the SHLAA (subject to policy change). Application refusal for 120 homes (including LA/MARN/002) is being appealed by the landowner. |
| Church Farm | Employment | N/A | N/A | Discussions between the landowner and the Parish Council confirm that the site is likely to become available during the plan period. |

Spatial strategy options to consider through the SEA

To support the choice of a development strategy for the MNP, the SEA process has assessed four housing spatial strategy options, and two employment spatial strategy options, as reasonable alternatives.

⁴ The western section of the site is being considered through the SEA, representing the area of the site which is most likely to be proposed for a housing / mixed-use scheme during the plan period.

⁵ LA/MARN/004: Hybrid planning application (P/OUT/2023/02644) for a food store with cafe, plus office space, and a building for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E), (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet) was refused in July 2024. The applicant is appealing the refusal, with the decision expected in April 2025.

⁶ LA/MARN/014: Hybrid planning application (P/OUT/2023/02644) for 120 homes was refused in July 2024 on access and heritage grounds. The applicant is appealing the refusal, with the decision expected in April 2025.

These spatial strategy options comprise packages of the sites which have been shortlisted for consideration through the SEA (discussed above).

Spatial strategy options for housing⁷

- **Option 1:** Deliver growth on sites LA/MARN/002, 003, and 005.
- **Option 2:** Deliver growth on the sites considered in Option 1, plus site LA/MARN/014.
- **Option 3:** Deliver growth on the sites included in Option 1, plus site LA/MARN/001.
- **Option 4:** Deliver growth on the sites included in Option 1, plus sites LA/MARN/006 and 008

Spatial strategy options for employment⁸

- **Option 1:** Church Farm
- **Option 2:** Tess Square (LA/MARN/004)

Figure 4-1 and **Figure 4-2** within the main body of the Environmental Report visually presents the housing and employment options considered as reasonable alternatives through the SEA.

The appraisal considers the relative sustainability merits of the spatial strategy options. Findings are presented as a commentary on effects.

To support the appraisal findings, the options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SEA Theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the relative performance of the two options in relation to each theme considered.

Chapter 4 within the main body of the Environmental Report present the full appraisal findings for the housing options and employment options. A summary of the appraisal findings are presented below.

⁷ Planning permission for these sites has been granted. In this respect, the sites in Option 1 are considered as 'constants' for the purposes of the SEA. Options 2, 3, and 4 are higher growth scenarios which incorporate the constants plus combinations of the additional site(s) which have been shortlisted for consideration through the SEA.

⁸ The employment options consider a site which has developer interest (see planning application P/OUT/2023/02644 for Tess Square), alongside a site which is likely to become available during the plan period (Church Farm).

Summary of appraisal findings for the housing options

| SEA Theme | | Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 | Option 4 |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Biodiversity | Option Rank | =1 | =1 | =1 | =1 |
| | Significant effects? | No | No | No | No |
| Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) | Option Rank | =1 | =1 | =1 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | Uncertain | Uncertain | Uncertain | Uncertain |
| Community Wellbeing | Option Rank | 1 | =2 | =2 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - positive | Yes - positive | Yes - positive | Yes - uncertain |
| Historic Environment | Option Rank | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative |
| Landscape | Option Rank | 1 | =4 | 2 | =4 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Yes - negative | Yes - mixed | Yes - negative |
| Land, Soil and Water Resources | Option Rank | 1 | =2 | =2 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative |
| Transportation | Option Rank | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Uncertain | No | Yes - negative |

Summary of appraisal findings for the employment options

| SEA Theme | | Church Farm (Option 1) | Tess Square (Option 2) |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Biodiversity | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Uncertain | Uncertain |
| Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Uncertain |
| Community Wellbeing | Option Rank | 2 | 1 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - positive | Yes - positive |
| Historic Environment | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - mixed | Yes - negative |

| SEA Theme | | Church Farm (Option 1) | Tess Square (Option 2) |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Landscape | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Yes - negative |
| Land, Soil and Water Resources | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - positive | Uncertain |
| Transportation | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Uncertain | Yes - negative |

Developing the preferred approach

The preferred approach of the MNP has been informed by the various surveys and evidence base documents prepared to support the MNP (to date), responses from community consultation events, and the SEA findings.

With respect to housing allocations, the MNP allocates the sites proposed through **Option 1** to meet local housing requirements. Specifically, sites LA/MARN/003 and LA/MARN/005 are allocated together under an 'eastward expansion' for residential development of up to 139 dwellings. Site LA/MARN/002 is allocated as a 'southward' expansion for residential development of up to 120 dwellings⁹. While the sites in **Option 1** have planning permission, it is recognised that the sites are at the 'reserved matters' stage. In this context, MNP policies and proposals seek to influence the design and layout of the schemes which come forward at these locations. There is a strong focus on design through the MNP, and a separate Design Code has been prepared to contribute to the evidence base for the MNP. This should ensure that community preferences are appropriately considered in shaping the design of new developments which come forward during the plan period.

To support the economic vitality of the neighbourhood area, **Church Farm** has been allocated as an opportunity for further business / employment uses (including shops and local services)¹⁰. The viability of the proposed uses will also be a key consideration, alongside the potential impacts to the character and significance of Marnhull Conservation Area and setting of nearby listed buildings (including the approach to the Grade I Church).

The site-specific policies within the MNP (see Policies 8,9, and 10) contain further detail with respect to design and mitigation considerations which aim to address any potential constraints to development. These aspects are further discussed within the plan appraisal in **Chapter 5** within the main body of the Environmental Report.

⁹ As detailed within the 'SEA Summary Note', the total number of homes has increased from 39 homes to 120 homes to reflect the approval (at appeal) of application P/OUT/2022/02644 in May 2025.

¹⁰ Additional detail within the 'business needs' section of the MNP has been revised and updated to account for the Tess Square proposals which were approved at appeal in May 2025.

Appraising the submission version of the MNP

The submission version of the MNP presents 13 planning policies for guiding development in the neighbourhood area. These were developed following extensive community consultation and evidence gathering.

Chapter 5 within the main body of the Environmental Report presents the findings of the appraisal of the submission version of the MNP. Utilising the SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SEA, the Environmental Report presents the findings of the assessment as a commentary of effects under the SEA themes.

A summary of the appraisal findings is presented below.

Long-term significant positive effects are expected in relation to Community Wellbeing, through the delivery of local housing; the safeguarding and expansion of existing community services, facilities, and employment areas; and the designation of 13 Local Green Spaces.

Minor positive effects are considered most likely in relation to Biodiversity, Climate Change (Including Flood Risk), and Land, Soil, and Water Resources. This reflects the avoidance of impacts expected by the spatial strategy (site allocations), and additional policy measures which seek to protect and improve biodiversity, increase climate resilience, and limit the loss of productive agricultural land as a result of the housing allocations.

Mixed effects are anticipated for the Landscape and Heritage themes. Whilst high-quality is encouraged through the site allocation policies, there is potential for negative effects from one site allocation on a potential Local Key View. Regarding heritage, while there are policies in place to safeguard and enhance Marnhull's historic environment, there are still potential adverse effects associated with developing within a conservation area.

Neutral effects are anticipated for the Transportation theme. Whilst new development is likely to result in an increased number of vehicles on the road network, the MNP includes a suite of policies that aim to facilitate (and encourage) the uptake of public transport and active travel.

The Regulation 14 version of the SEA Environmental Report put forward the following recommendation for consideration by plan makers to inform policy development:

- In light of the heritage sensitivities associated with the site allocations, the SEA recommends that proposals are accompanied by proportionate heritage assessments which detail the heritage sensitivities and significance of the location, with the design of any new development areas informed by the findings of the assessments and the stipulations within the Marnhull Design Code.

The SEA makes no further recommendations for plan makers based on the updates which have been made to the MNP following Regulation 14 consultation.

Next steps

This is the version of the SEA Environmental Report which accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council, for subsequent Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with local planning policy.

If the Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by Dorset Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for the parish.

Monitoring

The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the MNP will be undertaken by Dorset Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the MNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by Dorset Council.

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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the MNP').
- 1.2 The MNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011¹¹ and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012¹², and in the context of the local development framework for Dorset Council.
- 1.3 It is currently anticipated that the MNP will be submitted to Dorset Council later in 2025. Key information relating to the MNP is presented in **Table 1-1**.
- 1.4 The Marnhull neighbourhood area was designated in July 2023 and is depicted in **Figure 1-1** below.

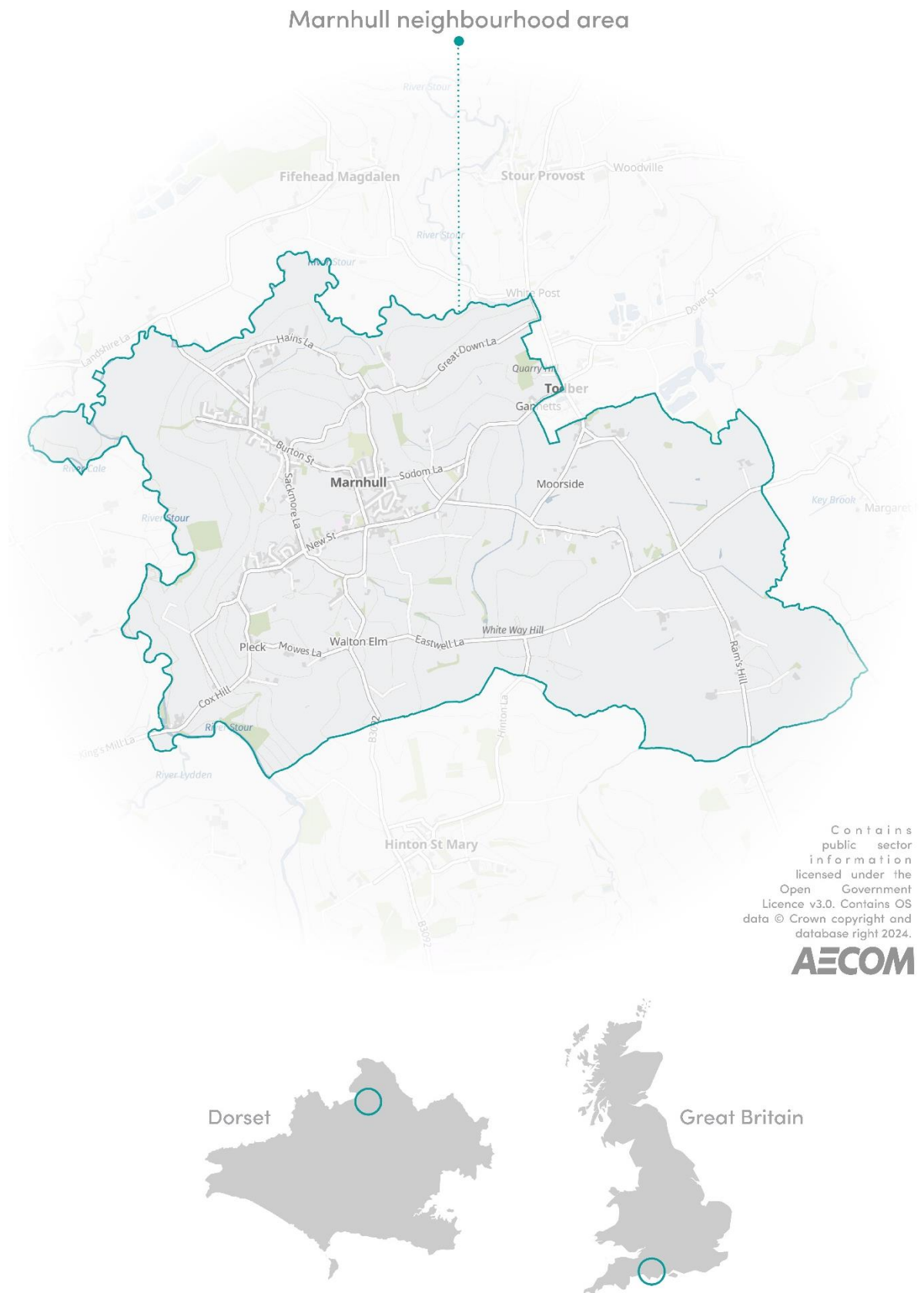
Table 1-1: Key information relating to the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Name of Responsible Authority | Marnhull Parish Council |
| Title of Plan | Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan ("the MNP") |
| Subject | Neighbourhood planning |
| Purpose | <p>The MNP is being prepared as a neighbourhood plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the North Dorset Council Local Plan (2016). Due regard is also given to the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.</p> <p>The Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan will be used to guide and shape development within the neighbourhood area.</p> |
| Timescale | The plan period is expected to cover a period of at least 15 years (from adoption). |
| Area covered by the plan | The neighbourhood area covers the parish of Marnhull, in Dorset. |
| Summary of content | The MNP will set out a vision, strategy, and range of policies for the neighbourhood area. |
| Plan contact point | S.P, Treasurer of the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan Committee |

¹¹ UK Government (2011) 'Localism Act 2011' can be accessed [here](#).

¹² UK Government (2012) 'The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012' can be accessed [here](#).

Figure 1-1: Marnhull Neighbourhood Area



SEA Screening for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.5 A Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA where it is likely to have significant environmental effects. In this respect, neighbourhood plans are more likely to be screened in as requiring an SEA if both the following apply:
- the neighbourhood plan is being prepared within a neighbourhood area with significant environmental constraints, such as, for example, sites of international or national importance for biodiversity conservation, or large concentrations of heritage assets; and
 - the neighbourhood plan is likely to allocate sites for development.¹³
- 1.6 The MNP was screened by Dorset Council in 2023. The screening process is based upon consideration of standard criteria to determine whether the MNP is likely to have “significant environmental effects”, and subsequently whether there is a need for SEA. The screening concluded that an SEA is required because the MNP is planning to allocate new sites in potentially environmentally sensitive locations.
- 1.7 In light of this outcome, an SEA process is being undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).¹⁴

SEA Explained

- 1.8 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the MNP seeks to maximise the emerging plan’s contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.9 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
- i. When deciding on ‘*the scope and level of detail of the information*’ which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues.
 - ii. A report (the ‘Environmental Report’) is published for consultation alongside the draft plan (i.e., the draft MNP) that presents outcomes from the environmental assessment (i.e., discusses ‘likely significant effects’ that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.
- 1.10 This ‘Environmental Report’ is concerned with item ‘ii’ above.

¹³ DLUHC (February 2022). ‘*Strategic Environmental Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans: Timely and effective screening*’ accessible [here](#).

¹⁴ UK Government (2004) ‘*The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004*’ can be accessed [here](#).

Structure of this Environmental Report

1.11 This document is the SEA Environmental Report for the MNP and hence needs to answer all four of the questions listed below with a view to providing the information required by the SEA Regulations. Each of the four questions is answered in turn within this report, as follows:

Table 1-2: Questions that Must be Answered by the SEA Environmental Report to Meet the Regulatory¹⁵ Requirements

| Environmental Report question | | In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ¹⁶ |
|---|---|---|
| What's the scope of the SEA? | What is the plan seeking to achieve? | An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan. |
| What's the scope of the SEA? | What is the sustainability 'context'? | Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The relevant environmental protection objectives , established at international or national level. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. |
| What's the scope of the SEA? | What is the sustainability 'baseline'? | The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. |
| What's the scope of the SEA? | What are the key issues and objectives? | Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment. |
| What has plan-making/SEA involved up to this point? | | Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with alternatives . Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan. |
| What are the assessment findings at this stage? | | The likely significant effects associated with the submission version of the plan . The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the submission version of the plan . |
| What happens next? | | The next steps for the plan making / SEA process. |

¹⁵ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

¹⁶ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

2. Local Plan Context and Vision for the Neighbourhood Plan

Local Plan Context for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁷ provides an overarching framework for development in England. It sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is supported by planning practice guidance, which is a suite of policy papers covering a broad range of topics, including SEA.
- 2.2 The Local Development Framework for the neighbourhood area consists of the North Dorset Local Plan Part One (2016), as well as a selection of saved policies from the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (2003), the Minerals Strategy (2014), the Minerals Sites Plan (2019), and the Waste Plan (2019).¹⁸
- 2.3 As Dorset Council was re-organised into a Unitary Authority in April 2019, the Council are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan, or DCLP'). The emerging DCLP has reached Regulation 18 consultation, which was completed between January and March 2021. Dorset Council are now intending to start preparing a new-style local plan, under the new plan-making system introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA). The latest Local Development Scheme (March 2024) suggests that the emerging DCLP isn't expected to be adopted until 2027.¹⁹
- 2.4 With respect to local housing need, Appendix 2 (Neighbourhood Plan Housing Requirement) within the consultation draft of the DCLP includes a minimum housing target of 153 homes for Marnhull. This has been met through existing completions and commitments. However, it is recognised that Dorset Council are accepting SHLAA site submissions as part of their emerging DCLP process, via their online 'call for sites' form.
- 2.5 As of January 2025, the revised National Planning Policy Framework has been published by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. This updated NPPF, effective from December 2024 for development management decisions and from March 2025 for plan-making, includes several significant reforms. Among these amendments is the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets, which now require an increased number of dwellings in Dorset. Whilst this matter will influence the Local Plan spatial strategy going forward, any substantial increase at the Neighbourhood Plan level will not be confirmed until the Local Plan is further advanced, and Dorset Council have not suggested that additional sites should be allocated in Marnhull at this stage.

¹⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024). 'National Planning Policy Framework' can be accessed through [this link](#).

¹⁸ Dorset Council (no date). 'North Dorset adopted Local Plan' can be accessed through [this link](#).

¹⁹ Dorset Council (no date). 'The Local Development Scheme for Dorset Council March 2024' can be accessed through [this link](#).

- 2.6 Neighbourhood plans will form part of the development plan for Dorset, alongside, but not as a replacement for, the Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. In this way it is intended for the Local Plan to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Dorset, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

Vision, Aims, and Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.7 The vision for the MNP captures the community's views and aspirations for the neighbourhood area as expressed through the neighbourhood planning process. It forms the basis on which the neighbourhood objectives and proposed policies have been formulated. The vision for the MNP is to create:

'A thriving, sociable and sustainable village that retains its unique character – specifically its collection of hamlets on a limestone ridge flanked by green fields, linked by quiet lanes and focused on the Grade I Parish Church'

- 2.8 The vision is accompanied by eight objectives:

- *'Protect the distinctive local character and heritage of the Parish by ensuring new developments are respectful of the historic built and natural environment. Ensure that new developments will contribute to the character and interest of the Parish and not harm the fabric or setting of historic buildings including non-designated heritage assets.'*
- *'Minimise the environmental impact of new buildings by encouraging the use of renewable technologies, energy efficient design, efficient use of water resources, tree planting, measures to mitigate against overheating.'*
- *'Maintain the important open spaces that help define our settlements, the valued views and the area's landscape character and natural amenities.'*
- *'Encourage a mix of housing and other development designed to attract people of all ages and backgrounds to enhance our thriving local community. Prioritise affordable housing for residents with a 'local connection', young and old.'*
- *'Support local businesses, the village schools, healthcare facilities, and provision of local amenities (including sports and leisure facilities) and measures to ensure their long-term viability.'*
- *'Facilitate walking and cycling and encourage improvements to public transport provision – primarily local bus services.'*
- *'Minimise the adverse impacts from increased motor vehicle traffic on the roads and rural lanes, recognising that many of our rural lanes are unsuitable for large or high volumes of traffic, and that they are frequently shared with pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.'*
- *'Reduce flood risk by encouraging a range of measures to minimise the potential for and impact of flooding around the Parish, recognising that climate change is expected to increase the severity of flood events.'*

3. What is the Scope of the SEA?

Summary of SEA Scoping

- 3.1 The SEA Regulations require that: *‘When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies’*.
- 3.2 In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England.²⁰ These authorities were consulted on the scope of the SEA between October 2024 and November 2024.
- 3.3 The purpose of scoping was to outline the ‘scope’ of the SEA through setting out the following information:
- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the MNP;
 - Baseline data against which the MNP can be assessed;
 - The key sustainability issues for the MNP; and
 - An ‘SEA Framework’ of objectives against which the MNP can be assessed.
- 3.4 The full SEA Scoping Report is available on the Neighbourhood Plan website and accompanies the evidence base for the MNP.
- 3.5 Responses received on the Scoping Report, and how they were addressed, have been summarised below.

Table 3-1: Consultation Responses Received on the SEA Scoping Report

| Consultation Response | How the Response was Considered and Addressed |
|---|--|
| Historic England Historic Places Adviser | Response received on 02.12.24 |
| We have previously only been involved in the preparation of this Plan on a preliminary basis, offering advice on design guidance and codes which the community is drafting. | Comment noted. Dorset Council confirmed that a full SEA process was required for the MNP. This is discussed within Chapter 1 of this report. |
| Not having been consulted on the SEA Screening Report we assume that there was agreement between the community and the local planning authority on the need for a full SEA. The Scoping Report refers to the intention for the Plan to allocate sites for development in what are likely to be environmentally sensitive locations. | |

²⁰ In-line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because *‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme’*.

| Consultation Response | How the Response was Considered and Addressed |
|--|--|
| <p>Without knowing whether, and to what extent, this conclusion might have been based on specific historic environment considerations we would recommend the use of our guidance relevant to such proposals. We are therefore pleased to note the inclusion of that guidance within the Historic Environment section of the Scoping Report. Its meaningful application will help ensure that proposals are fully and appropriately informed of the existence of heritage assets and their significance so that the Plan can demonstrate conformity with overarching national and local planning policy for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.</p> <p>There are no other issues associated with the Report upon which we wish to comment.</p> | <p>Historic England's guidance documents have been essential sources of reference throughout the SEA process.</p> <p>Potential impacts to the historic environment associated with the policies and proposals within the MNP and considered and discussed through the assessment of reasonable alternatives (Chapter 4) and appraisal of the draft MNP (Chapter 5), in this report.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the SEA has made recommendations for consideration by plan makers with a view to maximising the sustainability benefits associated with the policies and proposals within the MNP.</p> |
| <p>Environment Agency Planning Specialist</p> | <p>Response received on 25.11.24</p> |
| <p>Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the scoping report for the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>We do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects associated with the plan, based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee.</p> <p>Please note that the Lead Local Flood Authority can advise if there are areas at risk from surface water flood risk (including groundwater and sewerage flood risk) in your neighbourhood plan area. The Surface Water Management Plan is the evidence base for this and contains recommendations and actions to reduce the risk of flooding. This may be useful when gathering baseline data and drafting key sustainability issues and objectives on which to appraise the neighbourhood plan.</p> | <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Potential climate change impacts associated with the policies and proposals in the MNP (including with respect to potential flood risks) are considered and discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this Environmental Report.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the SEA has made recommendations for consideration by plan makers with a view to maximising the sustainability benefits associated with the policies and proposals within the MNP.</p> |
| <p>Natural England Consultations Team Member</p> | <p>Response received on 28.11.24</p> |
| <p>Natural England has no specific comments to make on the scope of this neighbourhood plan's SEA.</p> | <p>Comment noted</p> |
| <p>Dorset Council Senior Planning Policy Officer</p> | <p>Response received on 22.11.24</p> |
| <p>Correction of one misspelling</p> | <p>Comment noted.</p> |

3.6 The SEA Framework provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard ‘tests’. Each proposal within the current version (i.e., the submission version) of the MNP will be assessed consistently using the framework (see **Table 3-2**).

Table 3-2: SEA Framework

| SEA Theme | SEA Objective | Supporting Questions (Will the Option/ Proposal Help to...) |
|--|---|---|
| Biodiversity | Maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity habitats and networks within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and species that are important to the integrity of these sites? • Protect and enhance priority habitats and the links between them? • Deliver net gains for nature? • Encourage opportunities for habitat restoration or new habitat creation within the identified Network Enhancement or Expansion Zones? • Support enhancements to multifunctional green and blue infrastructure networks and the network of open spaces? |
| Climate Change (including Flood Risk) | Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the neighbourhood area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Improve or extend local footpaths, cycle paths or strategic green infrastructure routes? • Increase the number of new development meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? • Support the transition to electric vehicles? |
| Climate Change (including Flood Risk) | Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area? • Sustainably manage water runoff? • Increase the resilience of the local built and natural environment? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are duly considered in the design of new development in the neighbourhood area? |
| Community Wellbeing | Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents and in suitably connected places, supported by the appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure to enable cohesive and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes (including affordable homes) targeted at aligning the housing stock with local needs? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's changing needs? • Improve the availability and/ or accessibility of local services and facilities? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Contribute to improving aspects of deprivation in the neighbourhood area? |

| SEA Theme | SEA Objective | Supporting Questions (Will the Option/ Proposal Help to...) |
|--|---|---|
| | inclusive communities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing and future residents? |
| Historic Environment | Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of locally important features and their settings? • Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Dorset HER / Historic England research records? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area? |
| Landscape | Protect and enhance landscape and villagescape character and quality within the neighbourhood area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and/ or enhance local landscape and villagescape character and quality? • Safeguard local distinctiveness and 'sense of place'? • Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Protect and extend/ enhance green infrastructure corridors? • Retain and enhance landscape and villagescape features that contribute to the rural setting, including trees and hedgerows? |
| Land, Soil, and Water Resources | Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard areas of productive agricultural land? • Promote opportunities for the use of previously developed land, or vacant / underutilised land? • Support improvements to water quality? • Encourage the delivery of natural drainage solutions within new development areas? • Protect the neighbourhood area's waterbodies? • Support water efficiency measures and opportunities for water harvesting and/ or water recycling? • Protect the integrity of mineral resources? |
| Transportation | Encourage sustainable and active travel opportunities within the neighbourhood area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Improve local connectivity and accessibility within the neighbourhood area, encouraging active travel opportunities (e.g., walking and cycling)? • Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area? • Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change? |

4. Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives Through the SEA

Introduction

- 4.1 In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include:
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
 - The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.
- 4.2 The 'narrative' of plan-making / SEA up to this point is told within this part of the Environmental Report. Specifically, how the SEA process to date has informed the consideration of different approaches for key elements of the MNP.

Defining Reasonable Alternatives

- 4.3 Whilst work on the MNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 4.4 In the context of the above, this chapter of the Environmental Report presents information on reasonable alternative approaches to addressing key issues that are of central importance to the MNP.

Local Plan context

- 4.5 As mentioned in **Chapter 2**, Appendix 2 (Neighbourhood Plan Housing Requirement) within the consultation draft of the DCLP includes a minimum housing target of 153 homes for Marnhull. This has been met through existing completions and commitments. However, it is recognised that Dorset Council are accepting SHLAA site submissions in Marnhull as part of their emerging DCLP process, via their online 'call for sites' form, and that the housing target is expressed as a minimum.
- 4.6 It is anticipated that the NPPF updates should not alter the housing numbers for Marnhull, as the current approvals in the neighbourhood area already exceed existing targets. However, there are several available site options within the neighbourhood area which have the potential to be included as a housing or employment allocation during the plan period.

Consideration of Potential Site Options

- 4.7 Within the latest SHLAA²¹, several sites were assessed to be unsuitable for development due to their location outside of the village boundary. In total, there are nine sites that the MNP Committee identified that could be

²¹ Dorset Council (2024). 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment update 2024' can be accessed through [this link](#).

considered for a potential allocation within the MNP. These include sites that have been given a 'potentially suitable' rating through the SHLAA, sites with known developer interest, and sites known to the Parish Council which are likely to become available during the plan period.

- 4.8 These nine sites, listed in **Table 4-1**, have therefore been the focus for defining the spatial strategy alternatives considered through the SEA.

Table 4-1: Site options considered through the SEA

| Site reference: | Potential use | Indicative Housing Capacity | Approved Housing Capacity | Planning context |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| LA/MARN/001 (Crown Road (South)) ²² | Housing or Mixed-Use | 34 | - | The SHLAA confirms that the site is unsuitable for development. However, the landowner has indicated that they are considering proposing a mix of uses on a smaller part of the larger site which may overcome the concerns from Dorset Council. |
| LA/MARN/002 (Land at Butts Close (West)) | Housing | - | 39 | Outline planning permission granted (P/OUT/2021/03030). |
| LA/MARN/003 (Land north of Crown Road) | Housing | - | 72 | Outline planning permission granted (2/2018/1124/OUT). |
| LA/MARN/004 (Land off Church Hill – Tess Square) ²³ | Employment | N/A | N/A | The SHLAA confirms that the site is unsuitable for development. Application refusal for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E) is being appealed by the applicant. |
| LA/MARN/005 (Land off Salisbury Street) | Housing | - | 67 | Outline planning permission granted on appeal (P/OUT/2023/00627). |
| LA/MARN/006 (Mill Lane) | Housing | 73 | - | A potentially suitable site identified in the SHLAA (subject to policy change). |
| LA/MARN/008 (Land off Stoneylawn) | Housing | 29 | - | A potentially suitable site identified in the SHLAA (subject to policy change). |
| LA/MARN/014 (Land at Butts Close (East)) ²⁴ | Housing | 90 | | A potentially suitable site identified in the SHLAA (subject to policy change). Application refusal for 120 homes (including LA/MARN/002) is being appealed by the landowner. |
| Church Farm | Employment | N/A | N/A | Discussions between the landowner and the Parish Council confirm that the site is likely to become available during the plan period. |

²² The western section of the site is being considered through the SEA, representing the area of the site which is most likely to be proposed for a housing / mixed-use scheme during the plan period.

²³ LA/MARN/004: Hybrid planning application (P/OUT/2023/02644) for a food store with cafe, plus office space, and a building for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E), (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet) was refused in July 2024. The applicant is appealing the refusal, with the decision expected in April 2025.

²⁴ LA/MARN/014: Hybrid planning application (P/OUT/2023/02644) for 120 homes was refused in July 2024 on access and heritage grounds. The applicant is appealing the refusal, with the decision expected in April 2025.

Spatial Strategy Options to Consider Through the SEA

- 4.9 To support the choice of a development strategy for the MNP, the SEA process has assessed four housing spatial strategy options, and two employment spatial strategy options, as reasonable alternatives. These spatial strategy options comprise packages of the sites which have been shortlisted for consideration through the SEA (discussed above).

Spatial strategy options for housing²⁵

- **Option 1:** Deliver growth on sites LA/MARN/002, 003, and 005.
- **Option 2:** Deliver growth on the sites considered in Option 1, plus site LA/MARN/014.
- **Option 3:** Deliver growth on the sites included in Option 1, plus site LA/MARN/001.
- **Option 4:** Deliver growth on the sites included in Option 1, plus sites LA/MARN/006 and 008

Spatial strategy options for employment²⁶

- **Option 1:** Church Farm
- **Option 2:** Tess Square (LA/MARN/004)

- 4.10 **Figure 4-1** and **Figure 4-2** below visually presents the housing and employment options considered as reasonable alternatives through the SEA.

²⁵ Planning permission for these sites has been granted. In this respect, the sites in Option 1 are considered as 'constants' for the purposes of the SEA. Options 2, 3, and 4 are higher growth scenarios which incorporate the constants plus combinations of the additional site(s) which have been shortlisted for consideration through the SEA.

²⁶ The employment options consider a site which has developer interest (see planning application P/OUT/2023/02644 for Tess Square), alongside a site which is likely to become available during the plan period (Church Farm).

Figure 4-1: Housing Options Considered as Reasonable Alternatives Through the SEA

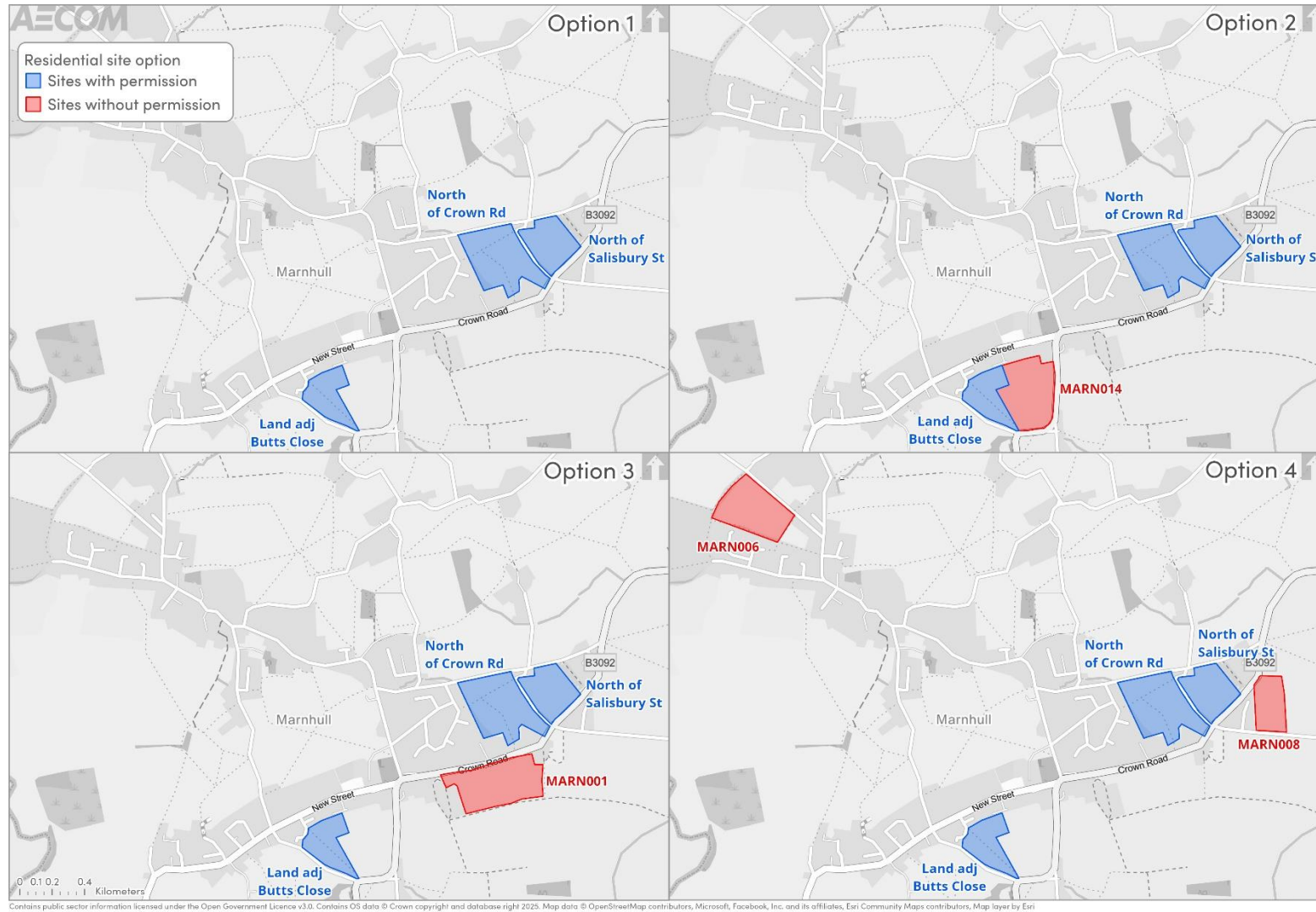
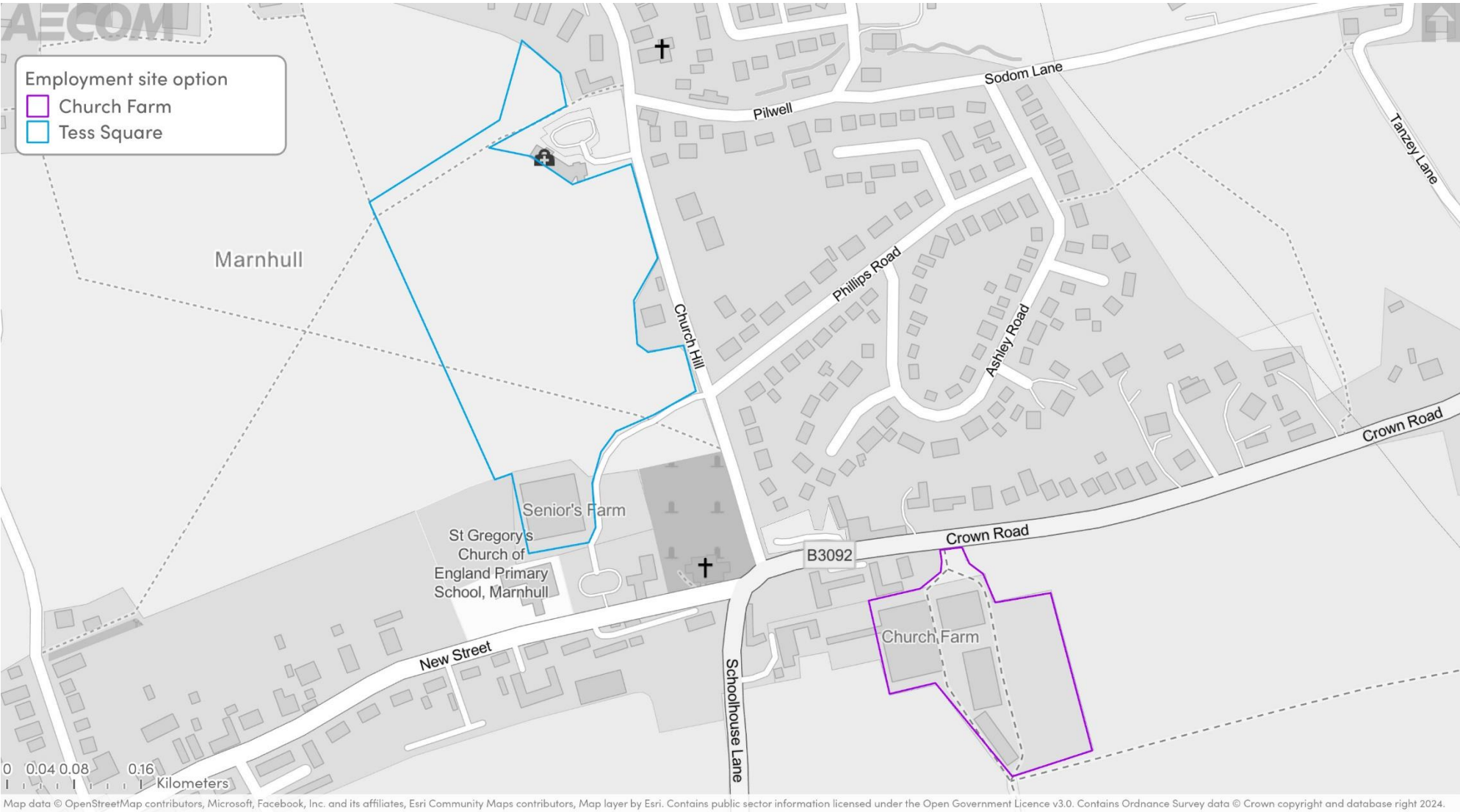


Figure 4-2: Employment Site Options Considered as Reasonable Alternatives Through the SEA



Appraisal Findings

- 4.11 Utilising the SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SEA, the appraisal has been presented through seven SEA Themes, as follows:
- Biodiversity;
 - Climatic Change (Including Flood Risk);
 - Community Wellbeing;
 - Historic Environment;
 - Landscape;
 - Land, Soil and Water Resources; and
 - Transportation.
- 4.12 The appraisal considers the relative sustainability merits of the spatial strategy options. Findings are presented as a commentary on effects. To support the appraisal findings, the options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SEA Theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the relative performance of the two options in relation to each theme considered.
- 4.13 Sources of information to support the appraisal has included (amongst others): Ordnance Survey maps, MAGIC Interactive Map,²⁷ the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Maps for England,²⁸ Natural England's Agricultural Land Classification maps,²⁹ Google Earth,³⁰ reports and interactive mapping layers available on Dorset Council's webpages,³¹ the Dorset HER,³² and baseline studies provided by the Neighbourhood Group.
- 4.14 The full appraisal findings are presented below.

²⁷ MAGIC (2025). 'Interactive Map' available to access via [this link](#)

²⁸ Environment Agency (2025). 'Flood Map for Planning' available to access via [this link](#)

²⁹ Natural England (2021). 'Regional Agricultural Land Classification Maps and Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile Land' available to access via [this link](#)

³⁰ Google (2025). 'Google Earth', available to access via [this link](#)

³¹ Dorset Council (no date). 'Home', available to access via [this link](#)

³² Dorset Council (no date). 'Dorset Historic Environment Record', available to access via [this link](#)

Appraisal Part 1: Housing Options

Summary of Appraisal Findings

4.15 The table below summarises the rankings of the options with regards to their relative sustainability performance in relation to each SEA Theme.

| SEA Theme | | Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 | Option 4 |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Biodiversity | Option Rank | =1 | =1 | =1 | =1 |
| | Significant effects? | No | No | No | No |
| Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) | Option Rank | =1 | =1 | =1 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | Uncertain | Uncertain | Uncertain | Uncertain |
| Community Wellbeing | Option Rank | 1 | =2 | =2 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - positive | Yes - positive | Yes - positive | Yes - uncertain |
| Historic Environment | Option Rank | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative |
| Landscape | Option Rank | 1 | =4 | 2 | =4 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Yes - negative | Yes - mixed | Yes - negative |
| Land, Soil and Water Resources | Option Rank | 1 | =2 | =2 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative | Yes - negative |
| Transportation | Option Rank | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Uncertain | No | Yes - negative |

Biodiversity

4.16 Options which have the greatest potential to enhance ecological networks through new development areas are those which will perform the most favourably with respect to this theme. For example, ensuring proposals are designed to deliver measurable and proportionate net gains in line with national and local policy.

4.17 There is very little to differentiate the four options from a biodiversity perspective. All of the options fall within a Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zone (SSSI IRZ); however, the IRZ does not apply to housing developments.

4.18 The only sites that overlap with any locally important biological designations or habitats are LA/MARN/003 and LA/MARN/005, which feature deciduous

woodland. These two sites are included in all four options and therefore do not serve as differentiating factors.

- 4.19 The only notable distinction between the options, in relation to the Biodiversity SEA theme, is that Options 2, 3, and 4 have a larger footprint (and include more sites). This larger scale increases their potential to deliver mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. However, this is dependent on the design of new development areas. On this basis, Options are ranked equally.
- 4.20 None of the Options are anticipated to result in significant effects for the Biodiversity SEA theme.

Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)

- 4.21 Potential impacts relating to climate change are largely dependent on the extent to which mitigation and adaptation measures are incorporated into the design of new development areas.
- 4.22 With regard to climate change adaptation, the SHLAA notes that all of the Options contain at least one site that is noted to potentially be affected by flooding from sources other than rivers, including from surface water and groundwater emergence. Flood maps online show that there is a high risk of surface water flood risk in the south-east corner of LA/MARN/006, while at all other sites the flood maps show the risk to be medium or lower. Options 1, 2, and 3, therefore, all perform slightly better than Option 4 in this regard.
- 4.23 The same conclusions can be made with regard to climate change mitigation, given that Option 4 includes LA/MARN/006, which is further away from public travel stops than all the other, centrally located, sites. Therefore, Option 4 is therefore less likely to maximise opportunities for active travel.
- 4.24 Uncertain effects are anticipated for the Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) SEA theme. Impacts are dependent on the extent to which development proposals incorporate mitigation and adaptation measures through the design of any schemes which come forward during the plan period.

Community Wellbeing

- 4.25 The four options being assessed each have their own benefits and drawbacks concerning the Community Wellbeing SEA theme. Focusing on the differentiators, Options 1, 2, and 3 are better located than Option 4 for access to the neighbourhood area's schools, pharmacy, public transport, and sports and recreational facilities.
- 4.26 While Options 4 and 2 have the largest indicative capacities, which would normally suggest significant potential benefits from the delivery of new housing, it is important to note that Marnhull's housing needs have already been met. Therefore, the appraisal should focus on the qualitative benefits associated with delivering growth within the village centre, such as enhancing accessibility to existing services and facilities.
- 4.27 It is also important to acknowledge that higher growth options, while potentially offering opportunities to deliver housing that meets wider strategic needs and/or housing types (such as retirement / care homes that are not

currently proposed in the sites with extant consent), and a greater number of dwellings in affordable tenures, could place additional pressures on existing services and facilities if appropriate infrastructure is not delivered alongside the development. This could result in more negative than positive outcomes for community wellbeing.

- 4.28 Taking into account that Marnhull's housing needs have been met, Option 1 performs the most favourably due to its smaller scale of development and better location near existing services, which minimises potential pressures on infrastructure while enhancing connectivity and quality of life. Options 2 and 3 are the next most favourable, offering opportunities for growth while maintaining reasonable proximity to the village centre. Option 4, while delivering the most housing, includes sites that are located farther from the centre of Marnhull, potentially reducing the ability to deliver well-connected places and impacting the quality of life for local residents.
- 4.29 In conclusion, all the Options are anticipated to result in significant positive effects for the Community Wellbeing SEA theme. However, for some of these Options, the effects are contingent on ensuring that development is accompanied by appropriate community infrastructure and is located in a manner that prioritises connectivity, accessibility, and quality of life for local residents.

Historic Environment

- 4.30 Potential impacts to the historic environment are possible through options which would deliver new development areas within or within the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets and areas. Key considerations with respect to the options are discussed below.
- 4.31 All four Options are within 50 m of a listed building, so development at all of the sites has the potential for adverse effects on historic environment assets during the construction and operation phase of developments.
- 4.32 Sites that are adjacent to/in proximity of a listed building include LA/MARN/003 and LA/MARN/005; however, these two sites appear in all four options, so are not a differentiating factor in this appraisal. LA/MARN/001 (Option 3) is located opposite from two listed buildings, and LA/MARN/014 (Option 2) abuts the curtilage of two listed buildings.
- 4.33 All of the Options contain LA/MARN/002, which is 50 m away from Marnhull Conservation Area. However, Option 2 also includes site LA/MARN/014, which is adjacent to Marnhull Conservation Area, meaning that development at this site is particularly sensitive in this regard. With further reference to LA/MARN/014, the setting of the Grade I listed Church is of particular note given that the Church is recognised as a cultural destination and focal point of the village. Development at LA/MARN/014 therefore has the potential to impact views to the Church (on approach from the south).
- 4.34 Overall, Options 1 and 4 are considered to perform the most favourably with respect to the Historic Environment theme. Option 2 and 3 perform least favourably due the potential direct and indirect impacts to the Marnhull Conservation Area, the setting of listed buildings, and key views.

- 4.35 All of the Options are anticipated to result in significant negative effects for the Historic Environment SEA theme in the absence of mitigation. Consultation with Historic England is encouraged to ensure that development proposals seek to implement sensitive design which respects and enhances the setting of nearby heritage assets and areas.

Landscape

- 4.36 The neighbourhood area is not within or near a National Park, National Landscape, or Green Belt land. Therefore, the local landscape and villagescape character considerations will be the primary focus for the landscape appraisal.
- 4.37 Woodland is present on LA/MARN/003 (the SHLAA notes that at least one of these trees is designated under a Tree Preservation Order (TPO)) and LA/MARN/005, which, if removed as a result of development, would have an adverse effect on the local landscape. However, these two sites appear in all four options, so they are not a differentiating factor.
- 4.38 Looking at the topography of the neighbourhood area reveals that most of the sites sit at a similar elevation, with the exception of LA/MARN/006 (Option 4), which sits on slightly higher land. Therefore, development at this site has more potential to have an adverse effect on the local villagescape character because a higher elevation can make new buildings more visually prominent, potentially disrupting the existing landscape and views. However, growth at LA/MARN/014 (Option 2) also has the potential to impact views of the Grade I listed Church from key locations (including the Hardy Way footpath).
- 4.39 All of the sites being considered are currently outside of the built-up area of the village, and therefore have the potential for adverse effects on views into Marnhull and local character. This concern is particularly pronounced for Options 2, 3, and 4, as their additional sites expand the village's urban area outward in more directions, surrounded by open countryside, making them more visible in views toward Marnhull.
- 4.40 LA/MARN/001 (Option 3) is unique in following the historic linear settlement pattern along Crown Road, unlike the other sites, which deviate from this pattern. While the SHLAA acknowledges that the site is surrounded by open countryside with long views and significant landscape impacts, it also notes that the northern strip alongside Crown Road may have less impact and some potential for development.
- 4.41 Overall, Option 1 is the most favourable with regard to the Landscape SEA theme, as it allocates the fewest sites, minimising impacts on the local settlement pattern and views into the village. Option 3 follows, given that its extra site follows the historic settlement pattern in Marnhull. Option 2 and Option 4 are the least favourable options due to the potential intervisibility with the surrounding environment (LA/MARN/006) and impacts to key views into the village from surrounding locations, including the Church (LA/MARN/014).

Land, Soil and Water Resources

- 4.42 All of the sites assessed for the housing options are located on greenfield sites classified as Grade 3 ('Good to Moderate') agricultural land. Therefore,

development on any of the Options could lead to the permanent loss of Grade 3 farmland. The sites within Option 1 have received planning permission. Whilst development at these locations could potentially result in the permanent loss of productive agricultural land, the total amount of land-take would increase under the remaining options. This is given that Options 2-4 encompass additional sites which would deliver higher levels of growth on greenfield sites.

- 4.43 Other than the constant sites across all four options, the only site that has a moderate likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land is LA/MARN/006 (Option 4). All other differentiator sites lie on low likelihood BMV land (or worse). There are no other significant differentiators towards this theme for the four options; therefore, Option 1 performs the most favourably, followed by Options 2 and 3, and then Option 4. All of the Options are anticipated to result in significant adverse effects for Land, Soil and Water Resources.

Transportation

- 4.44 Marnhull is served by two bus routes that offer weekday journeys to nearby urban centres such as Gillingham and Yeovil, with bus stops located centrally in the neighbourhood area, along New Street/Crown Road and Sodom Lane. The sites included within Options 1, 2, and 3 are all within a 10-minute walk of a bus stop, whereas LA/MARN/006 (Option 4) is located at around double the distance. In this regard, Options 1, 2, and 3 are better for public transport accessibility because they provide more convenient and quicker access to bus stops.
- 4.45 While an increase in congestion on local road from new developments is an issue at all of the Options, Option 4 also performs less favourably as it has the greatest indicative capacity for housing, which would lead to more congestion on local roads. Additionally, Option 4 includes the sites that are furthest from the bulk of community facilities, which is less likely to reduce the reliance of private vehicles for accessing the village. Conversely, Option 1 has the smallest indicative capacity for housing delivery, which means that it is the least likely to result in adverse effects on Marnhull's road network³³.
- 4.46 Access to many sites across the options is limited by the availability of paved footpaths: this is an issue at LA/MARN/005 (all Options), LA/MARN/014 (Option 2)³⁴, LA/MARN/006 (Option 4), and LA/MARN/008 (Option 4). It is also notable that Public Rights of Way (PRoW) pass through LA/MARN/003 (all Options); therefore, development at this site has the potential for significant adverse effects on the walking network east of Marnhull centre.
- 4.47 It should be noted that the anticipated significance of effects from the options is dependent on the extent to which the design of the developments integrate with PRoW and improve connectivity and accessibility to local public transport networks. Option 1 and 3 perform most favourably in this respect, with Option 2 and 4 the least favourable options in the absence of pedestrian connectivity associated with LA/MARN/006, 008, and 014.

³³ The potential highway safety issues associated with the site options has been guided by the SHLAA findings. It is outside of the scope of the SEA to undertake a detailed highways safety assessment.

³⁴ Unless accessed via LA/MARN/002.

Appraisal Part 2: Employment Options

Summary of Appraisal Findings

4.48 The table below summarises the rankings of the options with regards to their relative sustainability performance in relation to each SEA Theme.

| SEA Theme | | Church Farm (Option 1) | Tess Square (Option 2) |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Biodiversity | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Uncertain | Uncertain |
| Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Uncertain |
| Community Wellbeing | Option Rank | 2 | 1 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - positive | Yes - positive |
| Historic Environment | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - mixed | Yes - negative |
| Landscape | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | No | Yes - negative |
| Land, Soil and Water Resources | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Yes - positive | Uncertain |
| Transportation | Option Rank | 1 | 2 |
| | Significant effects? | Uncertain | Yes - negative |

Biodiversity

- 4.49 Neither of the Options overlap with any internationally to locally important biological designations/habitats. The two Options fall within a SSSI IRZ, however the IRZ is not applicable to the type of developments which are likely to come forward at these locations.
- 4.50 From a local ecological perspective, Tess Square is a large greenfield site with biodiversity interest, including habitats (such as native hedgerows) which could support protected species for both breeding and foraging. It is also worth noting that the existing outbuildings on Church Farm are potentially suitable habitats for protected species (such as bats or barn owls).
- 4.51 In line with national policy requirements, development proposals are required to deliver mandatory biodiversity net gains. Whilst this is perhaps more readily achievable at Tess Square (given the size of the site), the level of

growth which could come forward at this location may impact local ecological networks depending on the design of new development areas. Option 1 is ranked more favourably on this basis.

Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)

- 4.52 Potential impacts relating to climate change are largely dependent on the extent to which mitigation and adaptation measures are incorporated into the design of new development areas.
- 4.53 Both sites perform equally for climate change mitigation, given that both options are close to bus stops and services/facilities in central Marnhull, making them equally likely to maximise opportunities for public/active travel.
- 4.54 From a climate change adaptation perspective, flood risk maps suggest that there are no flood risk concerns at Church Farm, while the north of Tess Square is noted to be at 'high' risk for surface water flooding. As a result, Church Farm performs more favourably in this regard and overall, for the Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) theme.
- 4.55 Option 1 is not anticipated to result in significant effects for the Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) SEA theme. Uncertain effects are anticipated for Option 2 in light of the surface water flood risks in the northern section of the site. The extent to which the flooding issues are alleviated will be influenced by the application of natural drainage solutions through the design of new development areas.

Community Wellbeing

- 4.56 Both Tess Square and Church Farm are equally well located, being easily accessible by foot, car, and bus. Their locations are both in proximity to other businesses in Marnhull, which may lead to mutual benefits.
- 4.57 The planning application at Tess Square included plans to develop a food store with a café, a separate office space, and parking spaces. In contrast, there are currently no planning applications for the Church Farm site to provide specific details on potential developments. Tess Square's larger size may offer greater capacity to deliver employment space and supporting infrastructure, leading to additional community benefits through services and job creation. However, it is important to note that assessments would need to be completed at both sites to determine the viability of the proposed uses.
- 4.58 Overall, as the site can potentially accommodate a greater variety of employment uses given its size, Tess Square performs more favourably than Church Farm for the Community Wellbeing SEA theme. Nonetheless, both Options are anticipated to result in significant beneficial effects.

Historic Environment

- 4.59 Both options overlap with Marnhull Conservation Area: a small portion of Tess Square's southern tip (approximately 15 sqm) overlaps with the designation, while the north-western segment of Church Farm site (approximately 0.5 ha) falls within the designation. As a result, both sites have the potential for significant effects on the Conservation Area, especially the Church Farm site.

However, it is noted that Tess Square is greenfield site which contributes to the setting of the Marnhull Conservation Area, including by maintaining a sense of openness between the two key areas which encompass the designation: Burton Street and New Street.

- 4.60 Both options are within 100 m of a listed building, and therefore have the potential for adverse effects on these designations during the construction and operation phases of development. Notably, Church Farm and Tess Square are approximately 60 m and 100 m from Marnhull's only Grade I listed building (Church of St. Gregory), respectively. Tess Square's boundary is even closer than 60 m to the Grade I building's cemetery (to the north of the listed building), while Church Farm is separated from the designation by roads and other buildings. Church Farm, in its current form, comprises relatively modern farm buildings which are perhaps less likely to make a positive contribution to the approach / views of the Church. Consequently, Tess Square has a greater potential to have significant adverse effects on the Church of St. Gregory, particularly its setting.
- 4.61 Overall, both options are sensitive from a heritage perspective. However, it is recognised that the regeneration of Church Farm may strengthen the character of Marnhull Conservation Area, by rejuvenating underutilised buildings which may detract from the significance of the area in their current form. Option 1 is more favourable in this respect, although the potential significance of any impacts are dependent on the application of sensitive design measures within new development areas at this location.

Landscape

- 4.62 Church Farm is a brownfield site adjoining the settlement boundary. Development at this site, therefore, offers an opportunity to enhance the character of this part of the village, through the redevelopment of existing buildings. Tess Square, on the other hand, is a greenfield site adjoining the settlement boundary, which makes this site more sensitive to potential landscape/villagescape effects from a new development. The SHLAA also acknowledges this, noting that development at Tess Square could undermine and dilute the historic linear development pattern in Marnhull.
- 4.63 Satellite imagery suggests that trees, an important landscape feature, are present in the central-western area of Tess Square, while Church Farm also appears to have trees located on its southern boundary. Development at both sites has the potential for significant adverse effects on these trees; however, the risk is lower at Church Farm, as the trees are perhaps more likely to be retained and incorporated within new development areas.
- 4.64 Overall, Church Farm performs more favourably for the Landscape theme. Church Farm is anticipated to result in no significant effects, while Tess Square is expected to result in significant adverse effects, in relation to the Landscape SEA theme.

Land, Soil and Water Resources

- 4.65 Tess Square is located on a greenfield site, classified as Grade 3 ('Good to Moderate') agricultural land. Development on this site could lead to the

permanent loss of Grade 3 farmland, although it is recognised that in the absence of a detailed assessment it cannot be concluded whether site comprises 'best and most versatile' land (i.e., Grade 3a) for agricultural purposes. In contrast, the regeneration of the Church Farm site would support the most efficient use of previously developed land in the neighbourhood area. This is given that the site currently comprises modern farm buildings.

- 4.66 With respect to the above, Church Farm is anticipated to result in significant beneficial effects in relation to the Land, Soil and Water Resources SEA theme. Negative effects are anticipated if Tess Square is brought forward, although the significance of the effects is dependent on whether the development would result in the loss of 'best and most versatile' land for agricultural purposes.

Transportation

- 4.67 With respect to Transportation, the key difference between the options is that Church Farm is accessible via the B3092, and Tess Square is accessible via Church Hill. In this respect, increase vehicle use via Church Hill (e.g., associated with deliveries, non-local employees, and customers) has the potential to adversely impact pedestrian safety. This is due to the fact that there are sections of Church Hill that do not contain pavements, and there are pinch points at certain locations due to the narrowing of the road. This is less of a concern for Church Farm given the footpath which runs alongside the B3092 which provides safe pedestrian access to the village.
- 4.68 Both sites also have Public Rights of Way (PRoW) running through them, which could be significantly adversely affected if development leads to the loss of these paths. However, it is anticipated that the PRoW could be retained and enhanced through the design of new development areas.
- 4.69 Overall, Option 1 is the more favourable option with respect to the Transportation theme. No significant effects are identified. Option 2 is the less favourable option given the pedestrian safety concerns associated with increased vehicle use along Church Hill. Significant negative effects are concluded in this respect.

Developing the Preferred Approach

Choice of Sites Taken Forward for the Purposes of the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.70 The preferred approach of the MNP has been informed by the various surveys and evidence base documents prepared to support the MNP (to date), responses from community consultation events, and the SEA findings.
- 4.71 With respect to housing allocations, the MNP allocates the sites proposed through **Option 1** to meet local housing requirements. Specifically, sites LA/MARN/003 and LA/MARN/005 are allocated together under an 'eastward expansion' for residential development of up to 139 dwellings. Site LA/MARN/002 is allocated as a 'southward' expansion for residential development of up to 120 dwellings³⁵. While the sites in **Option 1** have planning permission, it is recognised that the sites are at the 'reserved matters' stage. In this context, MNP policies and proposals seek to influence the design and layout of the schemes which come forward at these locations. There is a strong focus on design through the MNP, and a separate Design Code has been prepared to contribute to the evidence base for the emerging MNP. This should ensure that community preferences are appropriately considered in shaping the design of new developments which come forward during the plan period.
- 4.72 To support the economic vitality of the neighbourhood area, **Church Farm** has been allocated as an opportunity for further business / employment uses (including shops and local services)³⁶. The viability of the proposed uses will also be a key consideration, alongside the potential impacts to the character and significance of Marnhull Conservation Area and setting of nearby listed buildings (including the approach to the Grade I Church).
- 4.73 The site-specific policies within the MNP (see Policies 8,9, and 10) contain further detail with respect to design and mitigation considerations which aim to address any potential constraints to development. These aspects are further discussed within the plan appraisal (**Chapter 5**) below.

³⁵ As detailed within the 'SEA Summary Note', the total number of homes has increased from 39 homes to 120 homes to reflect the approval (at appeal) of application P/OUT/2022/02644 in May 2025.

³⁶ Additional detail within the 'business needs' section of the MNP has been revised and updated to account for the Tess Square proposals which were approved at appeal in May 2025.

5. Appraisal of the submission version of the MNP

Introduction

5.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the submission version of the MNP. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version (i.e., the submission version) of the MNP under the seven SEA theme headings;
- Consideration of potential cumulative effects; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage.

Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan Policies

5.2 To support the implementation of the vision statement for the MNP, the submission version of the plan puts forward 13 policies to guide new development within the neighbourhood area. Specifically:

Table 5-1: Policies in the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan

| Policy Reference | Policy Name |
|--|---|
| Section 6: Heritage and Design | |
| Policy 1 | Heritage |
| Policy 2 | Design Guidelines on New Buildings, Boundary Treatments, Extensions and Alterations |
| Section 7: Landscape Characteristics, Green Spaces and Important Views | |
| Policy 3 | Green Gaps, Local Green Spaces and the Settlement Pattern |
| Policy 4 | Tranquillity and Dark Skies |
| Policy 5 | Important Views |
| Policy 6 | Woodlands, Hedgerows and Wildlife Areas |
| Section 8: Meeting Local Needs for Housing, Employment and Community Facilities | |
| Policy 7 | Meeting Local Housing Needs |
| Policy 8 | The Eastward Expansion of Marnhull |
| Policy 9 | The Southward Expansion of Marnhull |
| Policy 10 | Business Strategy |

| Policy Reference | Policy Name |
|---|--|
| Policy 11 | Supporting Community Facilities |
| Section 9: Highway Safety, Traffic and Transport | |
| Policy 12 | Highway Safety, Traffic and Transport |
| Policy 13 | Flooding and Flood Mitigation Measures |

Approach to the Appraisal

- 5.3 For each theme, ‘significant’ effects of the submission version of the MNP on the baseline are predicated and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. For example, the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects as far as possible. These effect ‘characteristics’ will be described within the assessment, as appropriate.
- 5.4 Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the MNP. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict ‘significant effects’, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 5.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. For example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the MNP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect ‘characteristics’ are described within the assessment as appropriate.

Biodiversity

- 5.6 A key objective of the MNP is to respect the natural environment. This is recognised and acknowledged within several policies aimed at: 1) limiting potential effects on features and areas of ecological interest, and 2) supporting the resilience of green infrastructure networks. Further details are discussed below.
- 5.7 The MNP proposes the development of eastward and southward expansions for housing, along with one site for employment land.
- 5.8 The three housing sites are located adjacent to the existing Marnhull settlement boundary. The eastward expansion includes two sites, LA/MARN/003 and LA/MARN/005, which feature designated deciduous woodland habitats within their boundaries. Other forms of non-designated

vegetation, such as grass, trees, and hedgerows, are also found within or adjacent to the boundaries of all housing sites.

- 5.9 The housing allocation policies include provision to protect the vegetation on the allocation sites. The eastward expansion policy (Policy 8) sets out criteria to protect biodiversity within the respective sites, including the provision of a green buffer, green corridor (where possible), and the retention of hedge banks. While the southward expansion policy (Policy 9) encourages development to be focused in the north of the site, avoiding potential adverse effects on hedgerows and trees found to the south.
- 5.10 The employment site is located on a brownfield site within the Marnhull settlement boundary and does not contain any designated habitats. However, satellite imagery suggests that some vegetation, including trees, adjoin the site. Additionally, the existing buildings on the site may support populations of protected species. On this basis, the Business Strategy (Policy 10) expects development to avoid significant adverse environmental effects.
- 5.11 The wider policy framework supports biodiversity through a suite of policies under Section 7 (Policies 3, 4, and 6) that afford protection and, where possible, enhancement of the neighbourhood area's habitats, species, and wildlife corridors. Policy 3 encourages the provision of green networks and the designation of Local Green Spaces. Policy 4 requires developments to be considerate of Marnhull's tranquillity and the preserve/enhance Marnhull's dark night skies. Policy 6 requires developments to retain existing deciduous woodlands, hedgerows, and mature trees unless necessary for village character or safety, enhance and link habitats to reinforce landscape features, avoid large hard surfaces, and incorporate small-scale biodiversity improvements like nest boxes and wildflower planting.
- 5.12 Additional positive effects are anticipated from wider measures such as encouraging tree planting in and around new developments (Policy 2) and the creation of green corridors around new transport networks associated with developments (Policy 12).
- 5.13 Overall, no significant impacts are predicted for biodiversity. The supportive policy framework is considered likely to lead to **minor positive effects**.

Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)

- 5.14 In response to the UK Government's commitment to tackling the climate crisis, Dorset Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Consequently, the MNP encourages design features that help the area mitigate and adapt to climate change, increasing the resilience of the neighbourhood and its community.
- 5.15 Several policies in the MNP aim to ensure that new developments minimise their carbon footprint. For example, Policy 2 requires all developments (unless demonstrably not feasible) to be fitted with solar panels, consider ground source heat pumps, and use locally sourced materials.
- 5.16 To reduce the neighbourhood area's carbon footprint, the MNP also promotes better use of active and public transport options. Ensuring new developments are connected to the existing footpath and public transport network is one way

to achieve this. The housing and employment site allocations are all located in the centre of Marnhull, providing good links to local footpaths and public transport networks, which will help limit emissions within the neighbourhood.

- 5.17 Some parts of the allocated sites will still require upgrades to their local footpath network, either through improving existing access or creating new footpaths. The MNP addresses this by ensuring that the allocation policies (Policies 8 and 9) include provisions for pedestrian connectivity within the sites and the safeguarding of existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW).
- 5.18 With regard to adapting to the effects of climate change, all proposed site allocations are within Flood Zone 1, representing areas of England with a low fluvial flood risk potential. Therefore, fluvial flood risk is unlikely to be a significant constraint to development. Most of the area covered by the allocated sites are in areas of 'very low' surface water flood risk, although some parts have up to 'high' flood risk within or adjacent to the sites. Any residual flood risk is likely to be mitigated through site-specific considerations in the housing allocation policies (Policies 8 and 9) and wider policies that support developments reducing and slowing run-off (Policy 13).
- 5.19 Policies 2, 3, and 6 encourage the protection and growth of the neighbourhood area's existing green network of trees and hedgerows, which will also indirectly reduce local flood risk. These policies will positively respond to the potential effects of climate change, particularly extreme weather events, by providing summer shading and shelter and reducing surface water run-off issues.
- 5.20 Overall, no significant impacts are anticipated in relation to this SEA topic. The supporting policy framework, which seeks to reduce flood risk and improve climate resilience, is considered likely to lead to **minor positive effects**.

Community Wellbeing

- 5.21 The MNP includes three allocations for housing in Policies 8 and 9 (LA/MARN/002, LA/MARN/003, and LA/MARN/005). It is recognised that the sites have existing permission and will deliver a total of 178 homes within the neighbourhood area during the plan period. The approach for the MNP is to shape how development comes forward at these location, including with respect to the design and layout of the schemes. A key policy in this respect is Policy 7, which supports opportunities to deliver housing of appropriate tenure, size, and type. This will help to ensure that community aspirations and objectives are appropriately considered within new development areas.
- 5.22 The quality of housing will also be supported by several policies, including Policy 2, which seeks to promote energy-efficient and low-carbon development. This will help address issues such as fuel poverty, which is particularly important given the current cost of living crisis.
- 5.23 The MNP contains several policies emphasising public realm improvements, especially through green infrastructure provision. Green infrastructure provides space for recreation and relaxation, which has been shown to improve people's health and wellbeing. Policy 3 specifically acknowledges the importance of green infrastructure, designating 13 sites as Local Green

Spaces. Policy 5 also safeguards important views in the neighbourhood area, which can be considered community assets.

- 5.24 Further supporting residents' quality of life, a key aspect of the MNP is to safeguard existing community services and facilities, ensuring they are accessible to everyone in the neighbourhood area. Policy 11 is important in this regard, seeking to protect and support the safeguarding and expansion of community facilities and services to enable people to live locally. This includes aspirations to reinstate full medical services, improve sports and recreation facilities, and provide additional allotment and cemetery spaces.
- 5.25 The MNP also seeks to promote the economic vitality of the neighbourhood area by expanding employment opportunities through Policy 10, which includes an employment allocation at Church Farm. Overall, Policy 10 will help grow the local economy. To improve this policy, it may be suitable to include aspirations to improve the local broadband network to enable better internet access, supporting more people to work from home.
- 5.26 Overall, the MNP policy framework encourages high-quality development that supports residents' quality of life and meets key housing objectives in terms of type, tenure, and affordability. Additionally, the policy framework seeks to facilitate opportunities to expand the local economy and enhance community vitality. Therefore, **long-term significant positive effects** are expected in relation to community wellbeing.

Historic Environment

- 5.27 The MNP has taken a proactive approach to protecting and enhancing the historic environment.
- 5.28 Policies 1, 2, and 5 encourage the safeguarding of designated heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings and the Marnhull Conservation Area. While these policies provide protection to designated heritage assets, the MNP could be improved by also providing protections to locally important heritage assets.
- 5.29 There are historic environment designations within or near the proposed housing and employment site allocations (see Policies 8, 9, and 10). However, protection of the neighbourhood area's historic environment is included in the individual allocation policies. Policies 8 and 9 include provisions to protect the setting of nearby listed buildings, such as St. Gregory's Church. While Policy 10 acknowledges that some sites are 'particularly sensitive due to their heritage', it also supports an employment allocation at Church Farm, which is partially within the Marnhull Conservation Area. The MNP outlines that given the sites' location being partly within the Conservation Area and visible in the view of the Grade I listed Church and Grade II Crown Inn (as approached from along the B3092), care will need to be taken to ensure the character of the Conservation Area and setting of these important heritage assets is appropriately considered in line with Policies 1 and 2. However, in light of the heritage sensitivities associated with the site allocations, **the SEA recommends** that proposals are also accompanied by proportionate heritage assessments which detail the heritage sensitivities and significance of the location, with the design of any new

development areas informed by the findings of the assessments and the stipulations within the Marnhull Design Code.

- 5.30 Consideration of the neighbourhood area's historic environment is further reflected in MNP Policies 3, 6, and 8, which aim to preserve Marnhull's historic linear settlement pattern and rural setting. This will benefit the historic environment by ensuring new development does not detract from the historic character of the area or the setting of heritage features.
- 5.31 Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated in relation to this SEA theme. While allocations are located within or near designated heritage features, offering a potential source of adverse effects, the potential impact of development is mitigated by policies requiring sensitive design that respects the designation and its setting, alongside additional policies focusing on preserving and enhancing the heritage significance of the neighbourhood area.

Landscape

- 5.32 The neighbourhood area is not within or near a National Park, National Landscape, or Green Belt land. Therefore, the proposed site allocations through Policies 8, 9, and 10 are unlikely to adversely impact the integrity of any nationally protected landscapes.
- 5.33 At the local level, landscape and villagescape character play an important role in understanding the relationship between people and place, identifying recognisable and distinct patterns that make one area different from another. These characteristics can assist in assessing the likely significance of changes resulting from new development, both visually and in terms of amenity.
- 5.34 It is important for development to consider the key characteristics of the local landscape and the features that contribute to the special qualities of the neighbourhood area. Two key policies in this regard are Policies 3 and 5. Policy 3 confirms that development should maintain the linear settlement pattern and rural character of the neighbourhood area, while Policy 5 designates Important Views that should be preserved. Policy 5 also protects the tranquillity and dark skies of Marnhull, preserving its rural character.
- 5.35 Additionally, other policies, such as Policies 1, 2, and 10, require new developments to fully consider the historic character of the site location and seek to preserve or enhance that character. Allocations in the MNP for housing and employment land (Policies 8, 9, and 10) have been chosen to align with these principles, being located adjacent to or within the existing settlement boundary. This will help safeguard the surrounding landscape and ensure that development is sensitive to the relationship between the natural and built environment. The policies also include design stipulations to further achieve these goals (as informed by the Marnhull Design Code), such as the retention of trees, the provision of suitable landscape buffers between the development and the surrounding countryside, and consideration of site-specific topography in the design.
- 5.36 It should be noted that there is potential for a negative landscape effect from Policy 9, which could impact the integrity of proposed Important View 08.

However, Policy 9 includes the requirement for development to be located to the north of the site, mitigating the impacts on the proposed Important View.

- 5.37 Trees are an important part of the rural landscape. Policies 2 and 6, along with both housing allocation policies, encourage the planting of new trees. The SHLAA notes that a TPO is present on LA/MARN/003, with any protected trees expected to be retained to preserve its significance.
- 5.38 Overall, **mixed effects** are expected in relation to the landscape SEA theme. On one hand, there is potential for new development to adversely impact a Local Key View. On the other hand, the MNP is likely to deliver positive effects through its strategic framework and site-specific policy provisions which seek to protect and enhance local landscape character through the inclusion of high-quality and sensitive design measures.

Land, Soil, and Water Resources

- 5.39 The employment allocation (see Policy 10) is located entirely on brownfield land. Redevelopment at this location will support the efficient re-use of land in the neighbourhood area. However, the housing allocations (Policies 8 and 9) are both located on greenfield sites. While there is potential for the permanent loss of productive agricultural land at these locations (which cannot be mitigated), brownfield opportunities for housing developments within the neighbourhood area are relatively limited due to site availability. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the housing site allocations already have permission for development. On this basis, as the preferred approach for the MNP is to shape the development of the three sites for housing which have been approved, the MNP would not result in any further losses in productive land during the plan period. It is the intention of the MNP to ensure that the housing site allocations maximise the benefits to land, soil and water resources through their sensitive design - which is reflected within MNP policies. This is considered below.
- 5.40 Regarding the protection of water resources, Policy 13 specifies a requirement to produce a proportionate Flood Risk Assessment for developments with recognised flooding issues and for designs to inherently reduce local flood risk. This includes incorporating a drainage scheme that meets Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) principles. This will indirectly contribute to water quality improvements by limiting suspended solids entering watercourses from surface water run-off.
- 5.41 MNP policies also work to maintain and enhance land, soil, and water resources in the neighbourhood area. Key policies in this regard include Policies 3, 4, and 6, which aim to protect and expand green infrastructure networks, as well as protect the open countryside from inappropriate levels of development, helping to safeguard the natural environment within the neighbourhood area. This will support the capacity of the environment to regulate soil and water quality. Policy 2 also encourages the re-use of existing building materials.
- 5.42 In conclusion, the MNP demonstrates a proactive approach to balancing development needs with the protection of land, soil, and water resources. While acknowledging the unavoidable loss of some productive agricultural

land, the plan prioritises the efficient re-use of brownfield sites, promotes sustainable design principles, and incorporates measures to mitigate flood risks and improve water quality. Therefore, **minor positive effects** are anticipated in relation to the Land, Soil, and Water Resources SEA theme.

Transportation

- 5.43 The addition of up to 178 new homes and employment land within the neighbourhood area during the plan period will result in additional vehicles on the road network, potentially exacerbating congestion issues. However, being centrally located, the site allocations have good potential to connect well with the existing bus network and are close to the existing community facilities within the village. This is particularly beneficial locally, as it is likely that future residents will walk or cycle to local services and facilities, reducing the potential for adverse effects on the local road network. For this potential to be realised, footpath access at certain sites needs to be improved; this has been addressed in the individual site allocation policies, where relevant (Policies 8 and 9). Policy 11 also follows these principles by preferring new or expanded community facilities to be readily accessible by foot.
- 5.44 Policy 12 specifically addresses transport-related issues in the MNP and requires transport assessments to accompany any new developments to ensure they do not adversely affect the local road network. Policy 12 also provides a wider policy framework that emphasises improving cycle and footpath networks in the neighbourhood area, improving parking provisions and traffic management, and ensuring appropriate infrastructure improvements alongside housing growth.
- 5.45 Overall, **neutral effects** are anticipated in relation to the transportation SEA topic. Despite the allocation of new housing in the neighbourhood area likely leading to additional private vehicles on the local road network, the MNP takes a considered approach to mitigating these potential issues. This is evident from the site allocations being in proximity to public transport networks, as well as the inclusion of design-related policies that emphasise improving connectivity and accessibility in the village, while also requiring a transport assessment to accompany any new developments.

Conclusions

- 5.46 **Long-term significant positive effects** are expected in relation to Community Wellbeing, through the delivery of local housing; the safeguarding and expansion of existing community services, facilities, and employment areas; and the designation of 13 Local Green Spaces.
- 5.47 **Minor positive effects** are considered most likely in relation to Biodiversity, Climate Change (Including Flood Risk), and Land, Soil, and Water Resources. This reflects the avoidance of impacts expected by the spatial strategy (site allocations), and additional policy measures which seek to protect and improve biodiversity, increase climate resilience, and limit the loss of productive agricultural land as a result of the housing allocations.
- 5.48 **Mixed effects** are anticipated for the Landscape and Heritage themes. Whilst high-quality is encouraged through the site allocation policies, there is

potential for negative effects from one site allocation on a potential Local Key View. Regarding heritage, while there are policies in place to safeguard and enhance Marnhull's historic environment, there are still potential adverse effects associated with developing within a conservation area.

- 5.49 **Neutral effects** are anticipated for the Transportation theme. Whilst new development is likely to result in an increased number of vehicles on the road network, the MNP includes a suite of policies that aim to facilitate (and encourage) the uptake of public transport and active travel.
- 5.50 The Regulation 14 version of the SEA Environmental Report put forward the following recommendation for consideration by plan makers to inform policy development:
- In light of the heritage sensitivities associated with the site allocations, the SEA recommends that proposals are accompanied by proportionate heritage assessments which detail the heritage sensitivities and significance of the location, with the design of any new development areas informed by the findings of the assessments and the stipulations within the Marnhull Design Code.
- 5.51 The SEA makes no further recommendations for plan makers based on the updates which have been made to the MNP following Regulation 14 consultation.

6. What Are the Next Steps?

Plan Finalisation

- 6.1 This is the version of the SEA Environmental Report which accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council, for subsequent Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with local planning policy.
- 6.2 If the Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by Dorset Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for the parish.

Monitoring

- 6.3 The SEA regulations require '*measures envisaged concerning monitoring*' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the MNP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the MNP will be undertaken by Dorset Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the MNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by Dorset Council.

