

# Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan 2016 to 2031

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*Draft for consultation - May 2015*

*Produced by Piddle Valley Parish Council with the help of local residents*

## How this plan came about

Back in 2012, the idea of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Piddle Valley was discussed at the Parish Council meetings. A small working group was formed.

Having done some research and looked at other examples, the group wanted to be sure that there was enough support for a Neighbourhood Plan, as it was clear that producing a plan would take a lot of community time and effort. So the group put articles in the Piddle Valley News and Views to try to explain what a Neighbourhood Plan was, and what it could achieve, and organised presentations at the school in October that year. They gave local residents the chance to vote whether or not they wanted a Neighbourhood Plan. They explained that -

*If nothing is done, then future planning decisions that affect the Valley will be taken by the District Council as they see fit. If the Valley has its own Neighbourhood Plan, which sets out our wishes for things we both do and do not wish to see occur, then the District Council have to take those views into account in reaching their decision.*

*The Plan will take a lot of time and work to prepare, including further consultations, and must eventually be approved by a referendum of the Valley residents. It is important therefore for the Parish Council to know that there is support in principle for the work involved.*

Of the 113 voting slips returned (representing about 11% of the electorate), the majority were in favour (81 for, 31 against). There were also 37 offers of help. Based on this result, the Parish Council decided to go ahead with preparing a plan. As a start, five focus groups were formed to look specifically at transport, landscape and environment, housing, energy and business. These were open to anyone with an interest in the Piddle Valley. Representatives from all the different parts of the Valley, and the lead person for each focus group, formed the main working group. Different people have come onto the working groups as more people learnt about the ideas, and some have left when they found they couldn't commit the time.

This plan is the culmination of all the work and consultation that has taken place. It could not have been drafted without the help and support of all the people on the working and focus groups, the volunteers that have helped distribute leaflets to all households, and the residents that turned up to the various meetings and events and gave their views on what they wanted or didn't want to see in the plan.

We would like to take this opportunity to say **thank you** to everyone who has been involved.



*Particular thanks is given to members of the working group, including: Dot Browning, John Browning, Peter Chance, Gill Christian, Andrew Cowley, Terry Cowley, John Cox, Cllr Jacqui Cuff, Colin Dean, Richard Drewe, Phil Gardner, Sue Hennessy, Neil Herbert, Paul Johns, Malcolm Johnston, Sara Milne, Alan Phillips, Dave Saxby and Jane Willitts*

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## Introduction

### What a Neighbourhood Plan does

A Neighbourhood Plan is part of the development plan for the area, and sits alongside the Local Plan. Together they describe what types of building work or other development will generally be allowed and under what circumstances. They also say what uses or places should be protected, and why. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out over-arching requirements that both plans and development proposals need to follow.

Because there is national policy and guidance, and a Local Plan for the area, this Neighbourhood Plan doesn't need to cover those subject areas where it would have said the same thing these other documents say. So this is why the Neighbourhood Plan is much shorter, and focused on specific sites or issues for the Valley.

The Neighbourhood Plan doesn't give planning permission. Any development that takes place will still need to go through the normal procedure of the developer putting in a planning application to West Dorset District Council, which local people and the Parish Council can comment on. But when the decision is taken, it will normally follow the policies in this plan and the Local Plan, unless there are exceptional reasons to go against these policies. Where the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan say slightly different things, the Neighbourhood Plan will be used if it is more up to date.

Having a Neighbourhood Plan doesn't change the requirement to get Listed Building or other consents where these might apply. Nor does it change permitted development rights, such as the right to build a small-scale extension on a house (though such rights are subject to meeting certain criteria).

### Community projects

This plan mentions a number of possible **community projects**. These are ideas that have arisen from the issues and thoughts put forward by local people. If taken forward, they could make a real difference. Some, such as forming a Community Land Trust, could help bring forward the proposals in this plan. It is up to the community to take these projects forward, as the Neighbourhood Plan working group will no longer meet once this plan is adopted by West Dorset District Council.

### What is meant by "development"

Development is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as **"the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land"**

So development includes:

- erecting new buildings and structures
- making extensions and alterations to existing buildings and structures, including the subdivision of a house into two homes
- demolishing a building
- engineering works such as building a new access road, or excavating out the ground
- changing the of use of land or buildings from one thing to another

The following changes are specifically excluded by the Act, and therefore do not require planning consent (although they may require other forms of consent)

- changing the interior layout or appearance of a building
- the use of any buildings or land within the grounds of a house for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of that house
- the use of any land for the purposes of agriculture or forestry

### What area the plan covers

This plan and its policies relate to the Piddle Valley neighbourhood area, which covers the three parishes of Piddlehinton, Piddletrenthide and Alton Pancras.

### How the plan is structured

This introduction tells the reader why and how the plan was drafted, how long it will last, and the next part goes on to describe the neighbourhood area for those readers who don't know it that well.

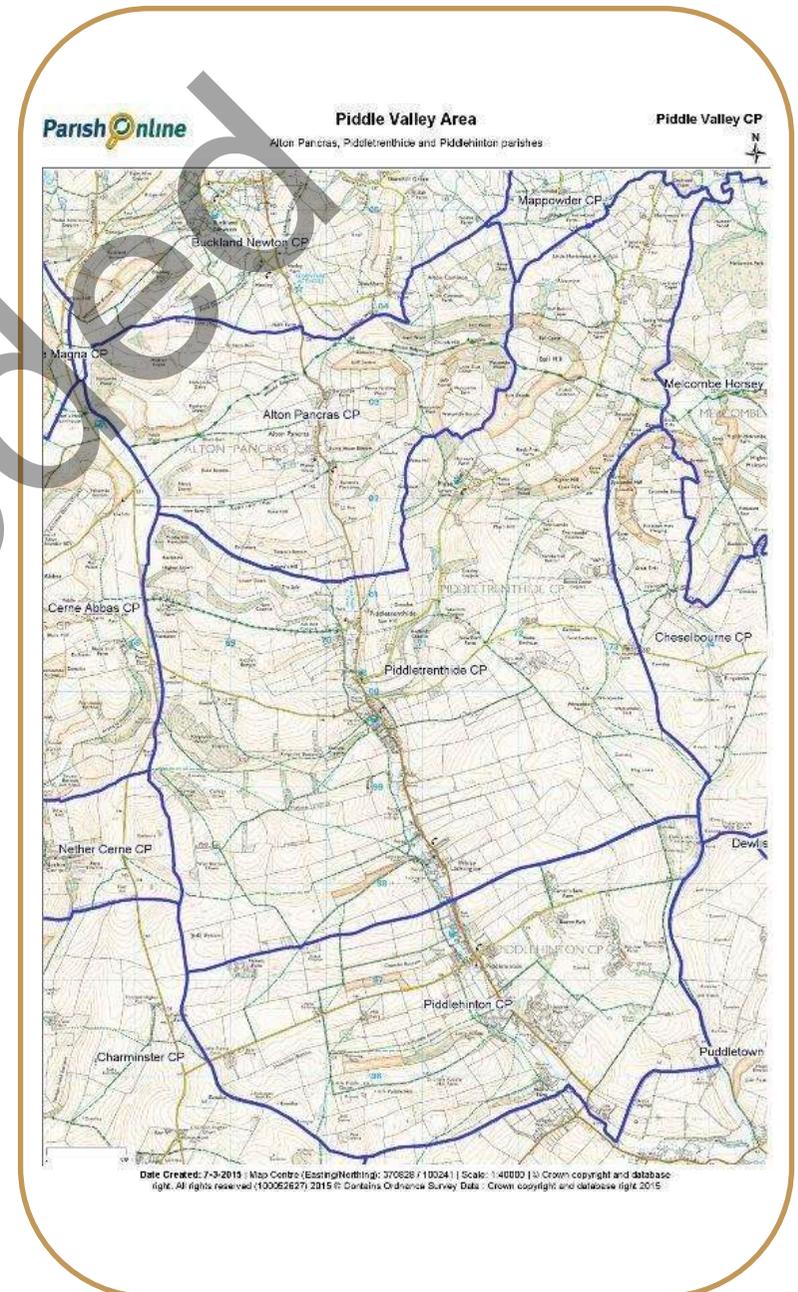
The next chapter sets out the main aims for the plan – so what this plan is intended to achieve. The following chapters then set out the planning policies, under the following headings

- Spaces and places protected from development
- Known issues that may prevent development
- Locations for new development
- Type and design of new development

Maps and photographs are included alongside the text, but there are also specific maps showing the Neighbourhood Plan proposals for each settlement in Appendix A.

### How long the plan will remain in place

The plan will last for 15 years from adoption (anticipated to be early 2016). However if it becomes clear to the Parish Council that changes need to be made or additional policies added to the plan, the Parish Council will consider reviewing the plan earlier than 2031. Any review will follow a similar process to the one for making this plan in the first place.



## What has happened so far, and what happens next

The idea of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Piddle Valley was first raised in 2012. By early 2013 it was clear that there was enough support to proceed, a new working party was established from the volunteers that had come forward, and the first of many Neighbourhood Plan newsletters was published in March of that year. Since that time there have been 13 newsletters published, 15 public meetings and open events held and over 120 people have fed back using comments forms or questionnaire at various stages.

### Main events and milestones up to plan drafting

January 2012	Idea of having a plan raised at the Parish Council meeting
May 2012	Neighbourhood Plan area request submitted to West Dorset District Council (who ran their own consultation)
October 2012	Event at the First School to gauge the level of support to proceed with preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (also in News and Views)
January 2013	Volunteers meeting – from which the focus groups were formed
March 2013	Neighbourhood Plan area approved by District Council
Summer Fetes and shows 2013	Neighbourhood Plan stand to seek peoples input and ideas for the plan
November 2013	Housing needs and land survey launched in News and Views and meeting at school
Summer Fetes and shows 2014	Neighbourhood Plan stands to publicise and receive comment on initial policies and potential sites
Autumn 2014	Series of village meetings held to discuss emerging proposals and possible development sites for each settlement
Winter 2014/15	Forms delivered to each house to formalise feedback from meetings
April 2015	Feedback meeting on the emerging draft plan

### Next stages – from draft plan to adoption

The Parish Council are now consulting on this plan, and will consider all the points made. The Council may make changes to the plan as a result, before giving it to West Dorset District Council who are responsible for organising the examination and referendum on the plan. If you are registered on the electoral role you will be eligible to vote in the referendum. Remember - this plan will only get adopted if it has the support of the local community.

May / June	Parish Council runs 6 week consultation on this draft plan
July	Parish Council considers consultation responses and possible changes to the plan
August	Parish Council submits the plan to West Dorset District Council
September / October	District Council arranges the independent examination of the plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– organises 8 week consultation</li> <li>– appoints independent Examiner</li> <li>– publishes consultation summary</li> </ul>
November	Examiner considers plan (and may hold public hearing), and produces a report
December / January 2016	Examiner's report is considered by the Parish and District Council. It may require the plan to be modified. Decision taken whether or not to proceed to referendum
early 2016	<b>Referendum held, plan adopted if the majority of people who vote, vote "yes"</b>

## About the Piddle Valley area

This section gives people who don't know the area that well, a bit of background about the Valley, and what makes it different from other places. This is because this plan will be used not only by local people, but also by builders who are submitting planning applications to develop sites in the Valley, and the staff and members of West Dorset District Council who will make the decision whether or not to approve a planning application.

### Location

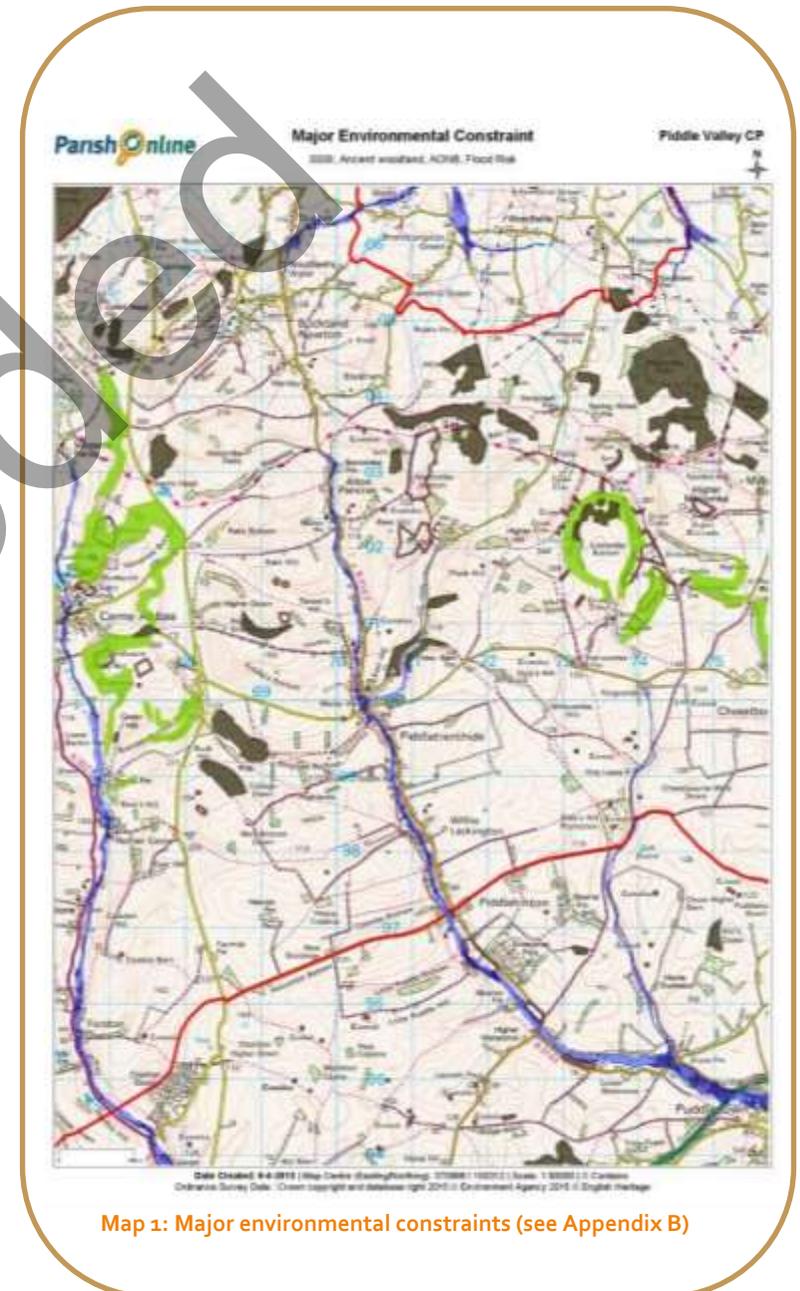
The Piddle Valley is a rural area in the heart of Dorset. It lies some 6 miles north of Dorchester and approximately 9 miles south of Sherborne. The main road through the Valley, the B3143, runs alongside the River Piddle through the settlements of Alton Pancras, southwards through Piddletrenthide, White Lackington and Piddlehinton. The small settlement of Plush lies off this main route, on a tributary of the River Piddle.

### Environment

The area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan totals 4,450 hectares (11,000 acres). It is very rural in nature. Over 90% is farmland, 3.3% is woodland and the rest is built-up areas including the settlements and roads.

The landscape is dominated by open, chalk downland, with a linear settlement pattern along the valley floor. Most of the area is within the nationally important Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) apart from a small section in the southern part of the Valley. There are magnificent views from the escarpment to the north east of Alton Pancras and Piddletrenthide which encompass the Blackmore Vale as far as the Mendips. From the chalk hilltops there are sweeping views across the chalk downs and into the valley itself, and south across the Purbecks. Views from the villages to the surrounding chalk downland are limited. The river valley has a different, more intimate and enclosed character, with old water meadows along the floodplain, small scale pastoral fields lined by dense and tree-rich hedgerows and characteristic settlements of stone, brick and flint.

There are no nationally important wildlife sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) within the valley. There are some just outside. To the west in Cerne Abbas parish are the Giant Hill and Blackdown Hill SSSIs, which form part of the Cerne and Sydling Downs European Special Area of Conservation – an area of calcareous (chalk) grassland which is home to the marsh fritillary butterfly. To the east in Cheselbourne and Melcombe Horsey parishes is the Lyscombe and Highdon SSSI, which is another area of chalk downland mixed with some scrub and ancient



Map 1: Major environmental constraints (see Appendix B)

woodland. Within the Valley there are 17 sites of local nature conservation interest (SNCl)s, mainly within or adjacent to woodland. Most of these sites are in fair to good condition but several have deteriorated due lack of grazing livestock.

There are just over 80 Listed buildings or structures within the Valley, mainly in the settlements, with two Grade I churches (Church of All Saints in Church Lane, Piddletrenthide and Church of St Mary in Rectory Road, Piddlehinton), and three Grade II\* Listings (The Manor House in Piddletrenthide, The Manor House in Alton Pancras and the Parish Church of St Pancras in Alton Pancras). The remainder are all Grade II.

There are 24 scheduled monuments, mainly historic field systems, earthworks and enclosures, barrows and tumuli. These are found primarily on the valley sides and higher ground. There is a medieval settlement (of Little Piddle) across the B3143 from Enterprise Park, and one just outside the area slightly further south.

**Population**

According to the 2011 Census there were 1,225 people living in the area. Compared to the South West average there is a notable lack of younger adults (with only 12% of the population aged between 15 to 29 years of age compared to 18% in the South West) and comparatively more people in late working age between 45 to 64 years old (36% compared to 27%). The other age ranges are broadly similar to the average seen across the South West.

The population is in generally good health, better than the national average (there are fewer people with long-term health problems or disabilities that limit their day-to-day activities).

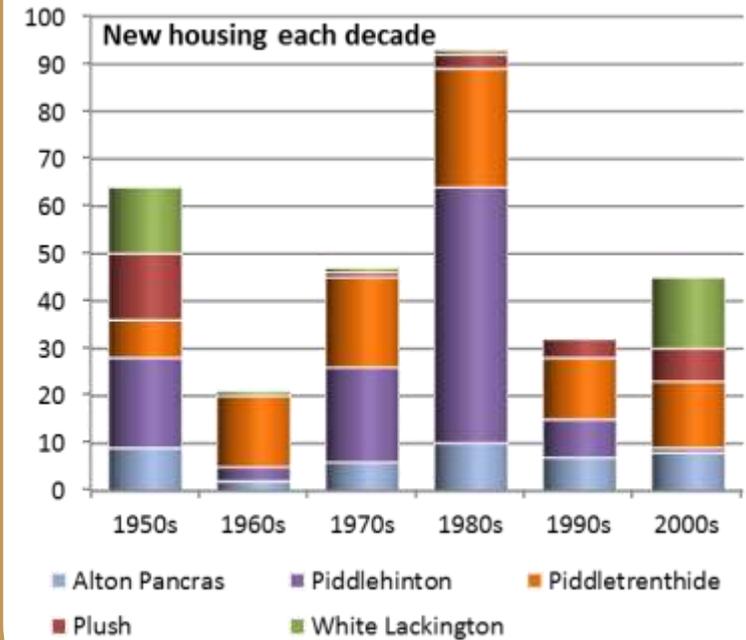
People in the Valley relate very much to the settlement they live in first and foremost, rather than seeing themselves as part of single community that includes all the settlements in the Valley.

**Housing and Businesses**

Over the past 50 years the number of homes built in the Valley averaged between four and five a year, with particular boom periods in the immediate post war years and in the 1980s. The amount of new housing has been much lower in the last 15 years with only 23 new homes built in that time.

The average house price in the Valley for the last 5 years was £363,000 (based on 92 recorded sales), with properties in Plush and Piddletrenthide being more expensive than Piddlehinton or Alton Pancras. This compares to average house prices in Dorset and (more locally) Dorchester of around £260,000.

over **90%** farmland, **3.3%** woodland  
**17** sites of local nature conservation interest  
 over **80** Listed buildings or structures  
**24** scheduled monuments  
 over **1,200** people in the Valley  
 more people are aged **45 to 64** years than between 15 to 29 years of age



According to the 2011 Census, 8.0% of homes had no usual occupants (they were vacant or second homes). This varies between the three parishes, being notably higher in Piddletrenthide parish (10.2%), and lower in Alton Pancras (1.4%). Just over 5% of households present at the time of the Census had another home elsewhere in the UK.

House sizes are also larger than average, with comparatively more four and five bedroom homes, and fewer one and two bedroom properties. The parish plan results suggest that a mix of small single (1 bedroom) properties, small family and larger family homes are wanted.

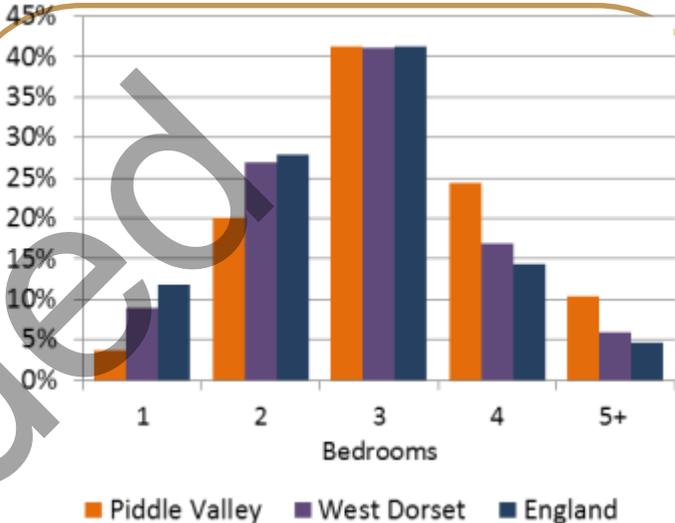
Arguably housing supply has not kept up with demand in recent years, particularly for smaller and more affordable housing. The area is generally noted as having a high comparative degree of need compared to other rural parishes in West Dorset. At the time of writing there were 23 households on the housing register wanting to be housed in, and with a local connection to, the Valley. This figure is likely to be a significant under-estimate of need, as about half of all households that were previously on the housing register did not re-register under the new system in early 2015, but may well do so when they realise they have been omitted.

Over the past 20 years there has been an overall decline in the number of shops and small businesses operating in the Valley. In contrast, the tourism and leisure industry has grown, reflected in the increasing number of bed and breakfast and second homes in the Valley. Enterprise Park provides the largest cluster of employment with some 41 employment units (when surveyed in late 2012) and businesses there employ over 200 people.

According to the 2011 Census, about 12% of workers work at or mainly from home (much higher than the national average and slightly higher than the district average). Of those in work, most people work in wholesale and retail trade, including motor repairs, education and social work. This is not dissimilar to the national picture. Public administration is also a main source of employment (Dorchester is a major centre for this type of work), and also agriculture and forestry (accounting for 10% of those in employment).

**Broadband**

Latest news (early 2015) is that superfast broadband should be available by this Spring in Piddlehinton and parts of Piddletrenthide (although how effective this will be in reaching Plush isn't known), and in Alton Pancras in summer 2015. Unfortunately the Enterprise Park area isn't at present going to be covered, but this will hopefully change.



houses prices nearly **40%** higher than Dorchester

fewer **shops**

more **holiday accommodation**

**1 in 8** people work from home

**public sector** and

**agriculture jobs**

higher than typical

**superfast broadband** is coming...

### Traffic

The main north-south transport route along the Valley (the B3143) is used for school runs, farm vehicles, shopping trips and business deliveries. The lack of pavements, poor visibility at many of the access points, winding and limited width of the road (sometimes constrained further by on-street parking) and the relatively high number of vehicles that have been caught speeding, all give rise to understandable local concerns about road safety, even though at the time of writing this is not reflected in recorded accidents.

Although there are community facilities and work opportunities in walking distance of most people in the Valley, it is fair to say that most households have and will use a car. There is public transport (including a school bus), which about a third of local residents say they use, but the service is not always frequent or convenient.

### Flooding

Due to its geology and topography, parts of the Piddle Valley are prone to flooding from time to time. The flooding is a result of run-off from the upper slopes and high groundwater levels during prolonged wet periods. Although a flood alleviation scheme was constructed in 2004 that now protects over 50 homes from flooding in Piddletrenthide, there are still properties at risk. The flooding problems are also exacerbated by sewage contamination when groundwater levels are high enough to seep into the sewer through cracks and openings in the sewer pipe walls and manhole covers.



# What this plan intends to achieve

## Aims

### Green spaces

To protect the gaps between the different settlements which help keep their separate identities

To look after the wider, open countryside, particularly the higher rolling landscapes which are largely undeveloped and offer important long distance views

To protect the important green open and wooded spaces within and around the settlements, and to protect important views and links to the wider countryside

### Rural character

To protect dark skies and prohibit light pollution from new developments

To protect and enhance the animal and plant biodiversity within the Valley, including the Piddle River and its characteristic chalk river habitats

To avoid adding to the current groundwater problems and help provide solutions where possible for reducing surface water run-off from the surrounding slopes resulting in damage to properties

To ensure that, where building takes place, sewerage provisions are fit for purpose and that no buildings are constructed that would exacerbate existing problems until a solution exists

### Flooding problems

To avoid adding to the current traffic and parking problems and reduce the problems where possible

### Traffic problems

To ensure new buildings are located and designed to complement or add the local character of the valley and their immediate surroundings

### Good design

To help make buildings environmentally sustainable and where possible use recycled materials

### Modern technology

To support leading edge communication with underground connectivity

### Business and community

To support changes to farms that would reduce the amount of large farm vehicles and tractors driving along the roads through the valley

To keep, and if possible extend, the range of community venues that bring people together. These include the halls, churches, school, shops, pubs and sports and recreational facilities.

To provide more opportunities for people to work locally, including working from home or new live-work units

To allow some open market housing, to provide opportunities for local people to down size, and to help bring in new people to the Valley to ensure a thriving community into the future

To provide in perpetuity more low cost housing for local people within the valley. This will help local people stay or return to the valley who couldn't otherwise afford to buy or rent here

### Housing

## Vision

The Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect the characters of its settlements, the beauty, history and wildlife of the valley, and the quality of life for its residents while prioritising development of local housing for local people

## Spaces and places protected from development

There are various features in the Piddle Valley that are special to local people. There are local green spaces and views that have real meaning or significance to most people, which in the Local Plan do not have a specific 'designation'. So this Neighbourhood Plan identifies these spaces for protection. This Neighbourhood Plan also recognises the importance of the open, undeveloped expanses of the chalk uplands and the gaps between the settlements. Development that has taken place in these locations goes against the established forms and 'jars' in the landscape. Other features, such as local wildlife areas and historic buildings, are generally well protected through the Local Plan policies, but this plan highlights specific considerations relevant to this area.

Some community buildings or spaces are really important, as without them the place would not function the same. The Piddle Valley works well as a community – people are rarely strangers as they meet in places like the school, the community halls, the village greens and recreation grounds or simply passing each other by on their way to and from their daily business. There are many activities going on where friends can be made. At least 30 clubs or groups run every year using the recreation grounds, pubs and village halls. Although some activities aren't necessarily tied to a particular building or space (for example, post office services can run from shops or pubs, play equipment can be moved from one site to another), they do need a suitable venue to survive. If there isn't a suitable venue in the local area where such activities can take place, then people will have to go much further afield or go without. So this plan lists those community facilities and current venues so that the impact of any changes are fully considered when the long term availability of such venues is threatened.

### Local green spaces and views

Within the Valley the variety of open spaces, both public and private, greatly enhance each settlement and contribute to their character. Some of these can be designated as local green spaces through the Neighbourhood Plan process. This designation gives a high degree of protection similar to green belts. It should only be used for spaces that are demonstrably special to the local community and hold a particular local significance. Each green space must be local in character (and not extensive) and reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. Their designation should last beyond the plan period (and therefore should not unduly limit future options for the settlement to grow). 15 such local green spaces (shown hatched green on Maps 2 - 5) have been identified in the Valley.

Settlement	Location	Space	View
<i>Alton</i>	Land east of The Old Rectory	✓	
	Area below the Millennium Seat	✓	✓
<i>Pancras</i>	Area around the church	✓	
	Land south of Mulletts		✓
	Millenium Green and fields	✓	✓
<i>Piddle-hinton</i>	Land around the war memorial	✓	
	Land around St Mary's Church	✓	
	Land south of St Mary's Church		✓
	Land around All Saints Church	✓	
	Green area off Church Lane	✓	
<i>Piddle-trenthide</i>	Land south of Southcombe Farm		✓
	Land opposite the Manor House	✓	✓
	Piddle Valley School playing field	✓	
	Land around former Church of St John the Baptist	✓	
	'Jock's Paddock' opposite the Brace of Phesants	✓	
<i>Plush</i>	Land at Plush Bottom	✓	
	Land opposite Lower Farm	✓	✓
	Cricket grounds	✓	
	Land around Jersey Farm House		✓
<i>White Lackington</i>	Land opposite Banks Cottages		✓

**Policy 1. Local green spaces**

Local green spaces, as shown on the Proposals Maps, are to be protected from development that would detract from their undeveloped character.

Views from within the built-up areas that are particularly noteworthy are marked by the bright green dashes on the Maps 2 – 5 (with the open side indicating the view’s direction). It is important that the scale and siting of new development in these areas does not spoil these views, which are generally extensive and undeveloped in character. Views of the river, which is so important to the form and character of the Valley, are limited and could be improved.

**Policy 2. Significant views from settlements**

Development that would noticeably detract from the character or enjoyment of significant views, as indicated on the Proposals Maps, will not be supported.

Opportunities should be taken to improve or create new views of the river Piddle (and its tributaries) from public rights of way.

The chalk downlands are distinctive because of their open and undeveloped nature. Development on these downlands and the slopes leading up to them can be very intrusive. For this reason, development on the valley slopes and higher ground should normally be avoided, as it significantly detracts from the landscape character of the area.

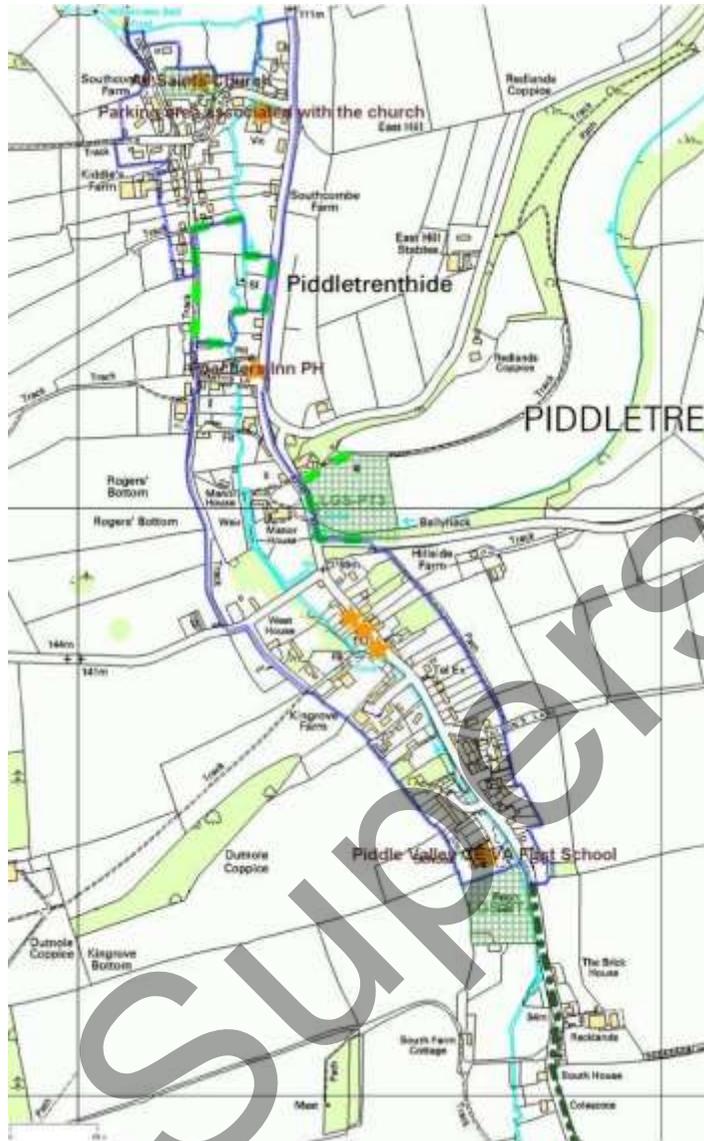
**Policy 3. The open and undeveloped chalk downlands**

Buildings or structures that would be visibly prominent or incongruous within the chalk downlands or on the valley slopes leading up to the chalk downlands will not be permitted, particularly where likely to be seen on the skyline or visible from public places.

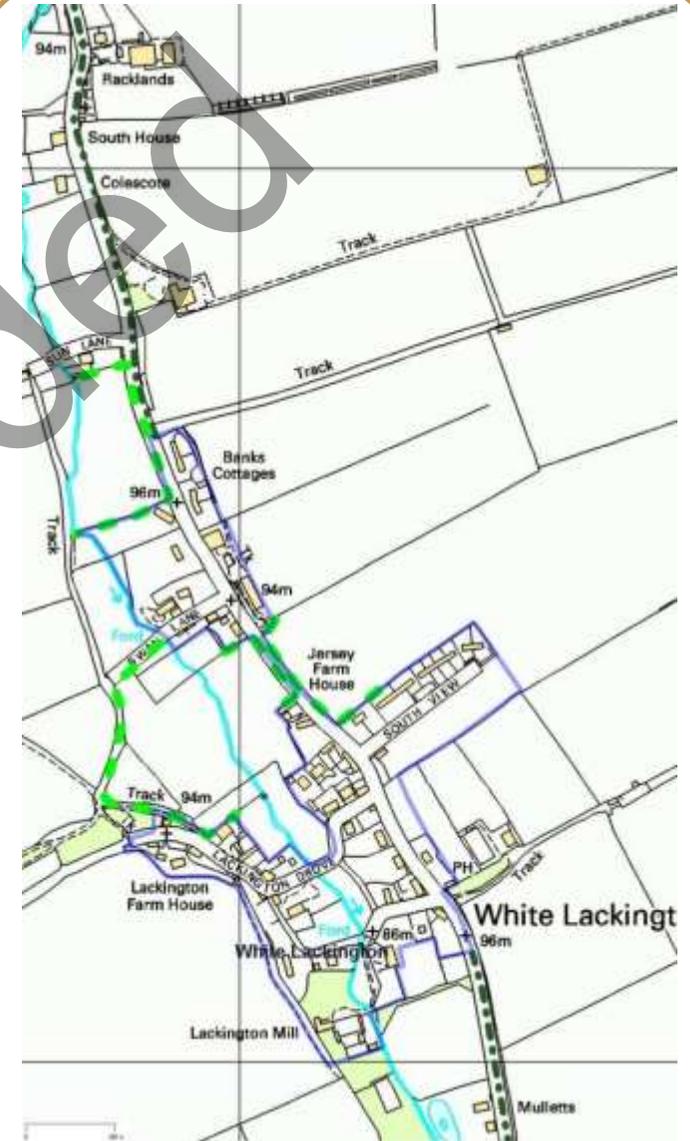
-  Community facility
-  Important open gap
-  Significant view
-  Local green space



Map 2: Alton Pancras



Map 3: Piddlethrethide



Map 4: White Lackington

-  Community facility
-  Important open gap
-  Significant view
-  Local green space

## Gaps between settlements

The Valley is not one continuous settlement, but rather a number of distinct settlements, each of which have their own history and community spirit. It is important that the gaps of countryside between each community are not nibbled away through gradual development, to the extent where it is difficult to distinguish one community from another. The gap between the settlement boundaries which define the main built-up parts of Piddlehinton and White Lackington is very short (about 300m), as is the gap between White Lackington and Piddletrenthide (which is about 650m). Development is highly unlikely to be acceptable in these locations – either side of the dark green dashed line in Maps 3 - 5. Where possible the removal of existing, redundant structures in these gaps would help strengthen them.

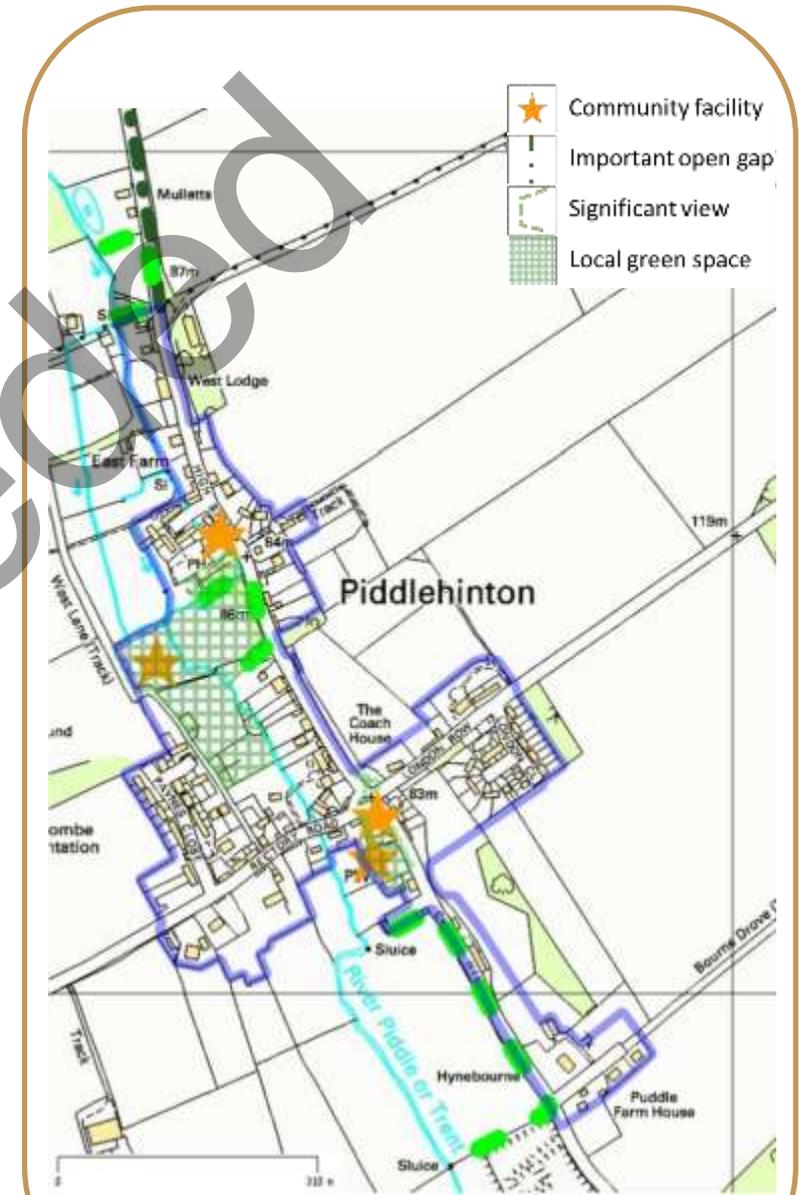
### Policy 4. Important gaps between settlements

Development that would reduce the openness of the short gaps separating the settlements of Piddlehinton, White Lackington and Piddletrenthide (as shown on the Proposals Maps) will not be permitted. Removal of redundant buildings and structures in these gaps should be secured where possible.

## Features of local wildlife or historic interest

The River Piddle is a natural chalk river which supports the most sensitive of aquatic communities and deserves to be protected against changes that could harm it. The river flow starts at Alton Pancras, and is augmented by springs in Winter. The Upper River Piddle supports a diverse range of species: from larger more visible mammals and birds (such as otters, kingfishers and egrets) to smaller mammals (such as the water vole populations), fish (including migratory eels) and invertebrates that feed the fish. The wildlife in this important habitat can be threatened by changes to the water quality (for example influences such as silt from highway and track runoff, nutrients from farming), and even domestic cats preying on the animals). In some sections of the Valley, the river has been canalised and diverted, which reduces its biodiversity value. The Dorset Wildlife Trust is working with some landowners to enhance biodiversity by improving the course of the river and bankside planting.

Woodlands are another important feature of both landscape and wildlife interest, and a **project** is outlined in the next section that may help ensure that these valued areas are actively maintained in the long term.



Map 5: Piddlehinton

As a matter of course all planning applications for development on sites over 0.1ha in size, or involving the conversion or demolition of rural barns / farm buildings or similar structures, must be accompanied by a biodiversity appraisal prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist. However we would encourage this approach on smaller sites, particularly where development proposals could help bring about wider benefits to improve river or woodland habitats.

**Policy 5. Improving wildlife areas**

Development proposals should, where relevant and reasonable, take opportunities to enhance biodiversity and contribute to wildlife and habitat connectivity in the wider area, through (for example) providing buffer areas to protected habitats, including new biodiversity features within the development and measures to improve the biodiversity of the River Piddle and its tributaries.

The richness of this area in terms of its historic buildings and other features underlies what makes it special to so many people. Development therefore should be designed and located to respect and where possible enhance this heritage. The Conservation Area Appraisal for Piddletrenthide and Piddlehinton describes in some detail the historic characteristics of the core areas of these two settlements, and more detailed descriptions of the Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments can be found online ([www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/)). The County Council hold further information on their Historic Environment Record, with mapped sites plotted online ([explorer.geowessex.com](http://explorer.geowessex.com)).

Local characteristics, such as materials, styles, scale, are considered in the design policies later in the plan, to make sure that new development complements the old, and the area continues to be locally distinctive.

Opportunities for protection, enhancement and greater understanding or appreciation of the historic environment, should be properly considered as sites come forward for development.

**Policy 6. Features of historic interest**

Buildings and other features of historic interest are important assets to the Valley and must be protected for future generations, in line with national and adopted local plan policies.

Where historic buildings and features are within the same site as a development proposal, their repair (if needed) and retention should be secured.



## Important community facilities

As recently as 2011 the Valley's village stores (and post office) was threatened with closure, but fortunately was saved by a local landowner. Its closure would have been a sad loss. Some community facilities have shut – for example the European Inn closed in February 2011 (although four pubs still remain in the Valley). The former church of St John the Baptist, at Plush, was declared redundant in 1988, but happily continues to be used by the community as a concert venue. Community facilities do rely on generating sufficient income from local people to sustain them – use them or risk losing them.

Under the Community Right to Bid, the local community can nominate community buildings and facilities to be registered as an 'asset of community value'. Once registered, the sale of a facility can be delayed to allow community groups to prepare a bid to buy and run that facility. Planning policies can work alongside this, by ensuring that a change of use is not permitted without due consideration. The fact that a community asset is listed as an 'asset of community value' in itself can be a material planning consideration.

The list of community facilities in the box on the right (marked by stars in Maps 2 - 5) includes those that the Parish Council would be minded to nominate under the Community Right to Bid, if they were likely to come under threat. As such they should be given special protection through planning policies. These facilities will need to be able to adapt to remain fit for purpose for future generations, as needs and expectations change. For example, the Parish Plan has identified a need for better leisure facilities, especially for teenagers.

### Policy 7. Important community facilities

Community facilities are important to local residents and should be retained where possible. Every effort should be made to work with the local community to investigate potential solutions before conceding that the loss of one of these important community facilities is not possible. Proposals will be supported that allow such facilities to be modernised and adapted for future needs.

The wider network of public footpaths and bridleways is also a valued community facility allowing both local residents and visitors to the area to enjoy access to the countryside, and providing an off-road link between the settlements. This network of routes is protected in the Local Plan, which makes sure that the routes are not severed or made less attractive overall as a result of new development. Other legislation exists that makes sure these rights of way remain open and well maintained.

### Community Facilities

<b>Alton Pancras</b>	Field east of The Old Rectory St Pancras Church
<b>Piddlehinton</b>	Millennium Green Piddlehinton Gym in Enterprise Park Piddlehinton Rugby club and pitch in Enterprise Park Piddlehinton Village Hall St Mary the Virgin Church Thimble Inn PH
<b>Piddletrenthide</b>	All Saints Church (including car park) Memorial Hall Piddle Inn PH Piddle Valley CE VA First School (including playing field, play area, tennis court) Poachers Inn PH Village Shop and PO
<b>Plush</b>	Brace of Pheasants PH Former church of St John the Baptist Cricket ground Jock's Paddock

The Parish Plan highlighted that there is an appetite for a large, modern community hall that could cater for larger events including sports and leisure uses (to complement and not replace the smaller village halls in each settlement). This would need to be taken forward as a **project** by the local community. A possible site at Piddletrenthide for such a facility has been identified in this plan, but its delivery will depend entirely on local community support for such a project, to develop the business case and raise the necessary funds (see Policy 15: Kingrove Farm, Piddletrenthide).

## Known issues that may prevent development

There are places where development would be difficult to contemplate, because of existing problems such as flooding or traffic. These issues are often the first ones raised when people comment on planning applications. So these policy areas are covered in more detail in this section. Other common concerns, such as the impact on neighbours' living conditions (including noise, smells, privacy and daylight issues), are generally well covered by the policies in the Local Plan.

### Flooding and sewerage

The flooding and sewerage problems experienced in the Piddle Valley are a real concern for a significant number of residents and businesses. The feeling of local people is that development must not in any way make this situation worse, and wherever possible, any potential to alleviate the current problems should be explored.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets strict tests to protect people and property from all forms of flood risk, whether this is from over-flowing rivers, directly from rainfall on the ground (surface water), rising groundwater, or overwhelmed sewers and drainage systems. It makes clear that we should not allow development (such as new homes) in areas at risk of flooding. It also considers the need to ensure development does not increase flood risk elsewhere, and talks about taking opportunities to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding where possible through new development.

The 2008 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for West Dorset recognises that the Piddle Valley is exposed to a number of flood risks, and this is confirmed by the Wessex Water Inflow Management Plan of 2013/14. The main policy for the Piddle Valley area in the 2012 Frome and Piddle Catchment Flood Management Plan issued by the Environment Agency is to take action to store water or manage run-off in locations that provide overall flood risk reduction or environmental benefits. The Environment Agency wants to work closely with all their partners to improve the co-ordination of flood risk activities and agree the most effective way to manage flood risk in the future. Dorset County Council are the Lead Local Flood Authority, and as such are the statutory consultee for the consideration of surface water management, and responsible for investigating flooding events affecting people's homes. Wessex Water are responsible for the public water and sewerage services in the area.

## Ideas to reduce flooding problems...

- *improve ground / soil permeability* – for example by replacing non-porous surfacing with porous surfacing, or planting trees in locations where the roots help water penetrate the soil more easily
- *increase floodwater storage* – for example by installing different types of rainwater storage such as water butts, swales / ponds / ditches, and by removing debris and silt from the river and other water courses
- *improve the sewerage network* – for example by providing additional capacity or by improving the lining of the pipes to reduce levels of ingress from other sources
- *reduce run-off from the surrounding hills* – for example by providing high level water diverts on tracks

The feasibility of options to reduce flood risk continues to be investigated, and actions taken - for example, Wessex Water have scheduled work to complete the sealing of all serious ingress points in the Valley sewers during 2015 -2016.

This Neighbourhood Plan does not look to build development within the known flood risk areas. It should also be noted that inclusion within the settlement boundary does not mean that development will be permitted if the development itself will be at risk from flooding or would increase flood risk elsewhere. In most cases where new built development is proposed, further information will be required to assess the actual risks on and off-site, and the opportunities to alleviate the current problems, before a decision can be made.

**Policy 8. Reducing Flood Risk and Sewerage Inundation**

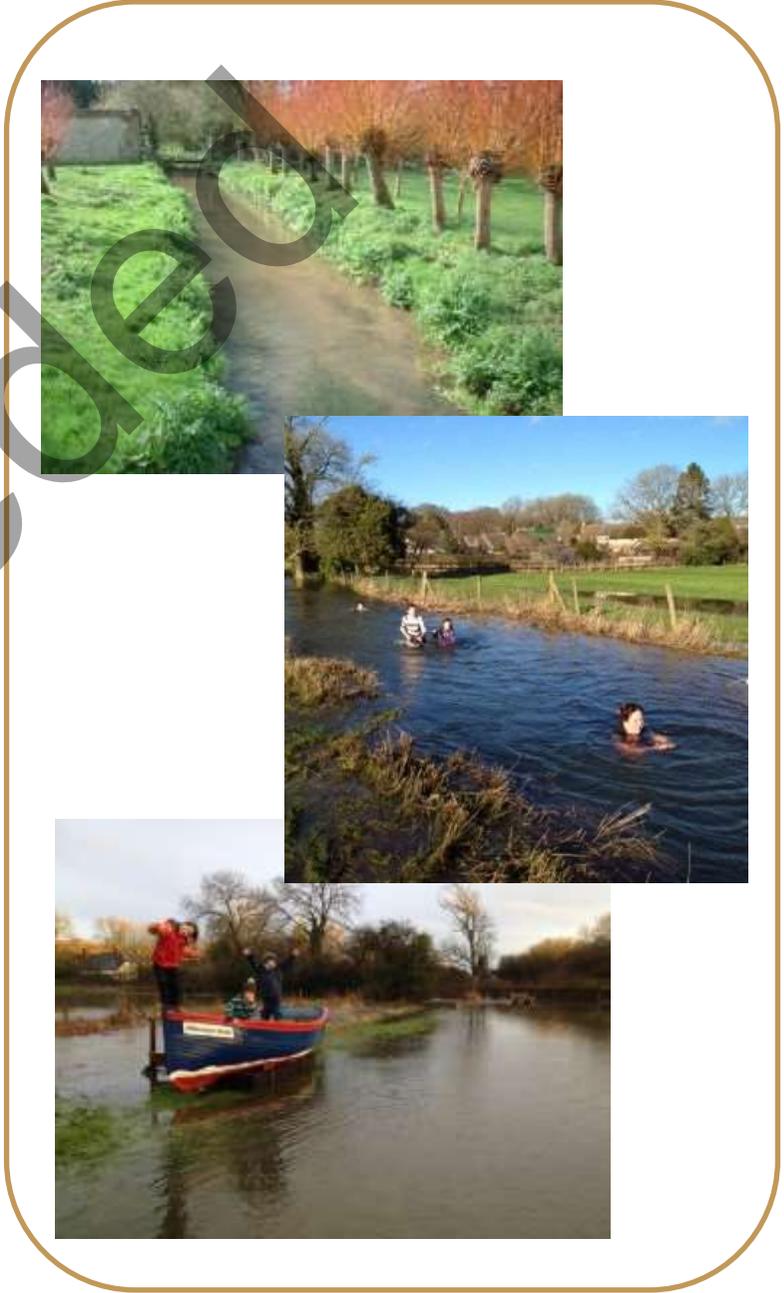
The need to avoid exacerbating current or adding new flood and sewerage problems is an over-riding objective for this plan, and development will not be allowed where it is likely that it would be at risk from flooding or sewerage inundation, or increase these risks to properties on that site or elsewhere.

All proposals for new buildings connecting to the public sewerage system will need to demonstrate that they provide appropriate mitigation to stop any groundwater inundation leading into the sewers from that development. Until such time that a groundwater management strategy has been agreed for the Valley, the appropriate level of mitigation will need to be demonstrated through an independent drainage plan for that site prepared by a suitably qualified drainage expert.

A flood risk assessment will be required for all proposals that are within 200m of either the flood risk zones 2 and 3 or indicative surface water flood risk areas (as shown on the Environment Agency maps). This should clearly assess the opportunities to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding below current levels, including:

- improvements to ground / soil permeability,
- increased floodwater storage,
- improvements to the sewerage network, and
- alleviating run-off from hills

and where these are feasible and appropriate, these opportunities should be taken.



## Traffic and road safety

Road safety was the main concern mentioned by two out of three responses to the Parish Plan questionnaire in 2008. The 2013 School Travel Plan survey also found that many adults and children would prefer to walk or cycle to school but find this difficult due to the volume, speed and type of traffic that uses the local roads during peak times. Traffic surveys taken in Piddlehinton, Piddletrenthide and Alton Pancras in 2011 and 2013 back up these concerns, as they clearly show the extent of speeding and number of heavy vehicles on the Valley roads.

The Local Plan policy does not allow development that would have a significant detrimental effect on road safety. Development should not be permitted if there is no safe means of access or if it would increase the number of people walking along a particularly dangerous stretch of road where there is no pavement. Some types of development can bring increased lorry or other large-scale traffic, which although not necessarily giving rise to road safety issues does detract from the rural character of the lanes in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Much of the means for managing existing traffic, such as speeding and the choice of traffic routes taken by large delivery lorries through the Valley, lies outside the control of the Neighbourhood Plan. However there are several *projects* that have been identified to address some of these concerns, as outlined in the box on the right.

The following policy attempts to ensure that the decision makers understand the strength of the concerns held, and that, as a matter of course, consideration is given to reducing speed and improving road safety wherever opportunities may exist.

### *Policy 9. Reducing road safety concerns*

Where development adjoins a public right of way, or is proposing a new access onto the highway network, the potential to improve road safety through

- the provision of safe and appropriate cycle and walking connections, or
- the design of development to encourage lower traffic speeds

should be considered and where reasonable enabled in the design.

On-street parking does cause congestion and potential hazards. In itself it can act as a speeding deterrent, but it adds to the road safety concerns where vehicles park dangerously or traffic continues to speed despite the limited visibility and narrowed nature of the road. The latter is generally the case in the Piddle Valley, and therefore it is important that sufficient

### Traffic and road safety projects:

#### *All-weather off-road pedestrian and cycle route along the Valley*

The idea with this project is to provide an alternative route to the first school and link with other community facilities – running from Piddlehinton to Piddletrenthide, with possible extension to Alton Pancras. Much of this route could be on the existing bridleway. This idea was supported by three-quarters of those responding to the parish plan questionnaire. The route would potentially be of a standard suitable for cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and people with buggies, prams or wheelchairs (but not motor vehicles). If there is enough support, this project could be taken forward by local people.

#### *Community Speed Watch initiative*

This project is already underway, but will need continued volunteer support if it is to remain successful.

#### *Alternative route for HGVs – the C12*

In the past the potential to upgrade the C12 to provide an alternative route has been looked into, but we know there are difficulties at the southern section and it therefore requires much more investigation and funding to achieve. If local people got together to campaign for this route, then the County Council may look at this project again.

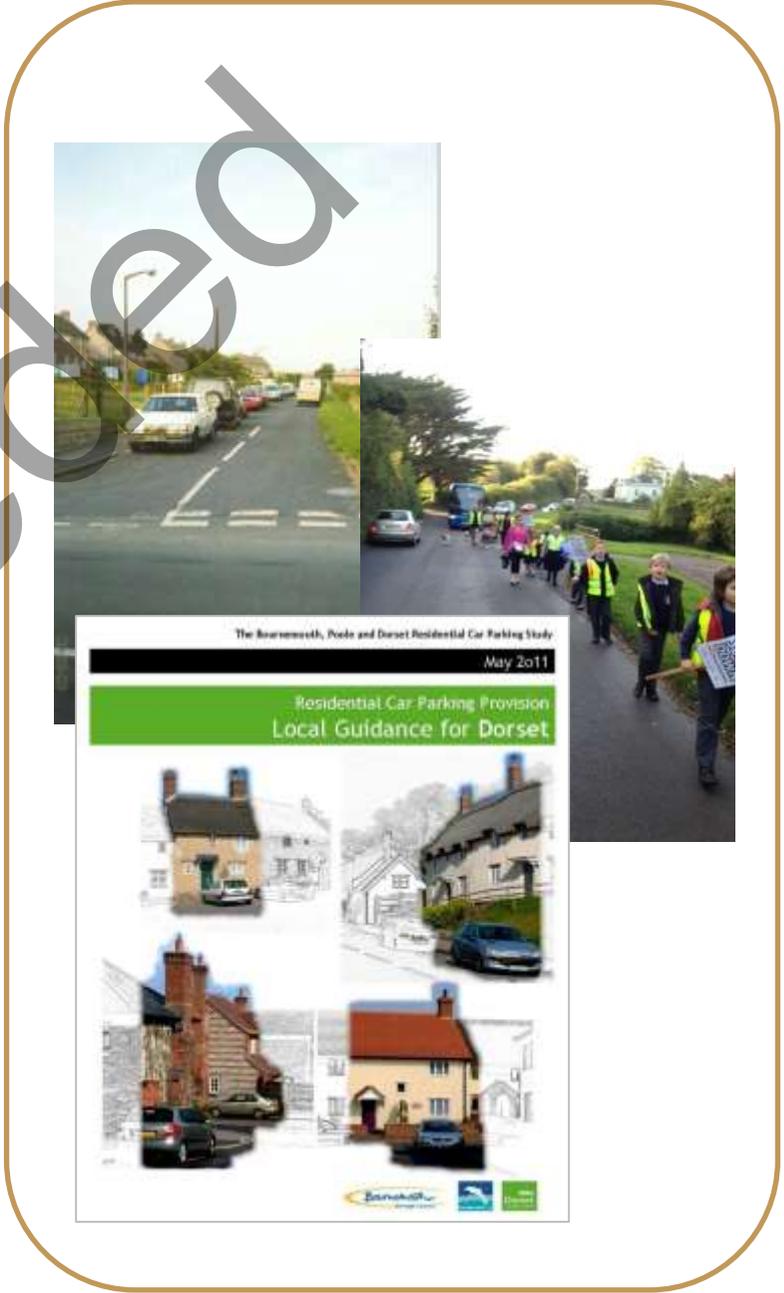
parking provision is made on the site, that is convenient and will be used in preference to possible on-street parking.

The following parking policy builds on the guidelines set out in the County Council's 2011 residential car parking study, which sets out the space requirements for new homes. For residential development, this equates broadly to 2 or more parking spaces per home. The parking spaces should be provided on hard standing, or in a car ports or car barns, or as garaging with an internal dimension of greater than 6m by 3m (each garage space is counted as providing the equivalent of half a space because of the evidence showing low use of garages for parking).

**Policy 10. Car parking requirements**

Development will be expected to provide sufficient parking on-site. In locations where there is a lot of on-street parking causing local problems, the parking for the site should be more convenient than parking on-street.

Superseded



## Locations for new development

This plan is about allowing the right sort of development to take place. As part of the process of preparing this plan, the working group considered and consulted the community on various sites, to work out where development could or should take place. As a result of this investigative work, this plan includes a policy about small-scale infill development within the settlements, as well as specific policies on four larger sites (in Alton Pancras, Piddletrenthide and White Lackington).

### Settlement boundaries

This plan takes a different approach to development boundaries than the Local Plan. The development boundary in the Local Plan only covers a part of Piddletrenthide and none of the other settlements in the Valley. In many ways, this doesn't make sense on the ground as many built-up areas are classified as countryside. The approach this Neighbourhood Plan has taken is to define settlement boundaries around the main built areas of Alton Pancras, Plush, Piddletrenthide, White Lackington and Piddlehinton. These are shown by the dark blue lines in Maps 2 – 5. These boundaries have generally been drawn along clear edges (made by tracks, field boundaries, woodland, rivers or other features) where the built form of the settlement gives way to the countryside.

Inside this settlement boundary is where it makes sense to look for locations for new development, within what people perceive to be an already built-up part of the Valley. However, just because a site is within the built-up area, it will not necessarily be suitable for development. The chapter before this one sets out a number of issues which could rule out development in certain locations. The character of the area is also likely to be a key determinant as to whether development may or may not be acceptable. The design aspects are dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

Small-scale infill development within the settlement boundary should be acceptable in principle. Initial site appraisals done while this plan was being prepared show there is scope for over 20 new homes to come forward during the plan period on small sites of under 0.2ha. Overly intensive or large-scale developments are likely to have an adverse impact on the rural village character, and therefore are not likely to be acceptable. Four large sites have been identified within or on the edge of the Valley's settlements, that should provide additional scope for development in a manner that is likely to be acceptable.

### *How much housing will get built in the Valley?*

This plan is likely to deliver on average about four new homes every year. This means about 60 new homes should be built over the next 15 years, which is considered to be an appropriate level of development for this area, given past build rates, housing needs and environmental constraints. This will be through a mix of housing on small infill sites within the proposed settlement boundaries, and on identified larger sites.

We expect about half of these homes should continue to be affordable housing specifically for local people.

The Local Plan also allows new homes on farms and other rural-based businesses where there is a specific need for someone to live on that site, and this policy still stands (although the need for such housing in the valley has actually decreased in recent years, so it is unlikely many homes may be built specifically for this purpose).

### *How much employment will get built?*

It is difficult to work out how much demand there will be for new business premises. If anything, the trend has been towards more people working from home, and the policies in this plan allow this to continue. However in order to provide some flexibility the policies in this plan support new employment development in a number of ways:

- within a settlement,
- through the re-use or replacement of existing buildings, or
- through development at the main sites of Enterprise and Bourne Park
- as part of a farm diversification scheme or similar rural enterprise

**Policy 11. Development within the settlement boundaries**

Sites within the settlement boundaries (as shown on the Proposals Maps), will be considered to meet the need for new homes, businesses or community uses. Development sites will generally be limited to small, well-defined plots of under 0.2ha, that would enable infill of up to three buildings, in a gap in a built-up frontage or in a manner otherwise well related to the street scene. Large sites with a developable area of 0.2ha or greater in size may be considered if brought forward as rural exception sites for local, affordable housing, or for employment or community uses. A masterplanned approach will be required, to make sure the proposals are comprehensive and provide an overall enhancement to the character of the area.

Open market housing will only be supported on a large site in order to cross-subsidise the provision of affordable housing, and provided the site has either been identified in this plan as a rural exception site or the site is on previously developed land, and in either case will comprise no more than 40% of the total dwellings. The provision of any open market housing will need to demonstrate that no grant funding will be required to deliver the affordable homes, and the affordable housing must be built at the same time or before the open market housing is built. Restrictions will be applied to ensure that the affordable housing remains affordable to local people in perpetuity.

Any development within the settlement boundaries will need to be in accordance with all other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and relevant policies in the adopted Local Plan, in particular:

- the protection of important local green spaces and significant views
- the avoidance of visually prominent development extending up the valley sides
- the protection of important wildlife habitats and corridors
- the protection of important sites or features of historic importance, including their setting
- the avoidance of areas subject to flooding or sewerage problems, or where development would increase such risks to other properties
- the provision of safe access by car and sufficient off-road parking
- the existence or practicality of pedestrian access routes to the facilities in that settlement
- the protection of residential amenity
- the sympathetic design in keeping with the character of that settlement

**A masterplanned approach...**

A masterplan is more than just a phasing plan. It considers the opportunities to enhance the site in terms of access, flood risk, biodiversity potential, landscape and historic character and local community needs, and integrates these into the proposed mix, layout, design and phasing arrangements.

It ensures that a comprehensive, rather than piecemeal, approach is taken to a sites' redevelopment.



Outside of these settlement boundaries is considered to be countryside, which is important in terms of local character. Opportunities for new homes, businesses or community buildings will therefore be very limited, but can come forward through:

- the reuse or redevelopment of redundant rural buildings (in line with Policy 19),
- new buildings for agricultural or forestry (in line with Policy 18),
- rural workers' accommodation (in line with the relevant policy in the Local Plan),
- employment at Enterprise or Bourne Park (in line with Policy 17)
- farm diversification scheme or similar rural enterprises (in line with the relevant policy in the Local Plan)

If very exceptional circumstances are put forward to justify the provision of new buildings in the countryside that do not fall within the above categories, then the proposal should clearly demonstrate that there is a local need for the development that cannot be met through developing available sites within the settlement boundaries.

#### **Policy 12. Development outside of the settlement boundaries**

Outside of the settlement boundaries the policy approach is focused on the need to respect the more undeveloped character of the countryside. Opportunities for new homes, businesses or community buildings will therefore be limited to those cases where a rural location is essential, or where the proposal is in relation to an existing developed site.

#### **Rural exception sites**

In November 2014 the Government announced that, due to the disproportionate burden of developer contributions on small-scale developers, sites for 10 new homes or less need not provide any affordable housing on site. In rural areas such as the Piddle Valley, where the emphasis may be on infill development within existing settlements, this severely limits the opportunity to provide affordable housing. However, this change in national policy does not affect rural exception sites where up to 100% affordable housing can be secured.

As a result, this Neighbourhood Plan identifies four locations as rural exception sites which, subject to there being demonstrable local need for affordable housing, will support the delivery of affordable homes for local people. Local employment and community uses may also be incorporated into these schemes. It is not anticipated that the level of open market housing will need to be more than 40% of the total housing built on each site.

#### **Rural exception sites:**

Local affordable housing is housing for people with a local connection to the Neighbourhood Plan area (through their family, work or because they currently or have previously lived here), who cannot afford open market housing.

Rural exception sites are sites for local affordable housing in locations where open market housing would not normally be allowed under general planning policies. To justify making this exception, there must be a clearly identified local affordable housing (up-to-date evidence on this will need to be submitted with the planning application). This housing may be provided as low cost housing for sale (where the re-sale price is kept below market value through a legal agreement), rented housing (where the rents are kept at least 20% below unrestricted market rents), shared equity properties (where people buy part and pay rent on part) as well as social rented housing managed by a housing association. The type of housing will depend on what the people in need require and can afford.

In all cases the affordable homes will be kept affordable, even if they are re-sold or re-let. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed where there is necessary to help bring forward the scheme.

#### **Community Land Trust**

Another **project** is to set up a Trust to manage the affordable housing so it is managed by local people, for local people. This Trust could also manage other community assets as opportunities arise.

### **Land at Austral Farm, Alton Pancras**

*Summary: There is potential to provide a mix of housing and small artisan / craft-type business units in this central site within Alton Pancras. The scheme should retain and reuse the attractive historic farm buildings that are a key characteristic of the village.*

Land ownership of Austral Farm has recently changed hands, and the new landowner has yet to take stock of the future requirements for the farm, and how it relates to Alton Pancras. However due to the size and development potential of the site it is being treated as a rural exception site, to make sure any scheme is comprehensively considered and able to deliver some affordable housing in this location.

The site relates closely to a cluster of important Listed buildings (the Manor House, St Pancras Church and Austral Farm House) within the Conservation Area. The older farm buildings were part of a model farm dating back to 1861. Although the older farm buildings themselves are not Listed they are of local character and worthy of retention. Any scheme should respond to the unique character and interest of this site and the adjoining Listed buildings. The site lends itself to a mix of small 'craft' or home business workshops and housing units, incorporating a mix of affordable and open market homes. As well as the reuse of the characteristic farm buildings, the more modern structures on the northern part of the site could be replaced, and a modest scale of infill development allowed in the area between the farm and Boldacre. The provision of some open market housing will help ensure that the standard of design is sufficient to enable a mixed use development to come forward in this sensitive location.

#### **Policy 13. Land at Austral Farm, Alton Pancras**

The site (as shown on the Proposals Maps) is identified as a rural exception site to provide a mix of affordable and open market homes and small business units (either stand-alone B1 office / workshops or as part of flexible live-work units).

The proposals should be heritage led to respect the setting of the nearby Listed buildings and secure the long term retention and use of the model farm buildings. Any new buildings should be modest in scale and not detract from these heritage assets. The design and layout will also need to be informed by a full flood risk appraisal, and incorporate suitable measures to reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

The layout of any vehicular access or parking areas within the site should be rural in character. Street or security lighting would not be appropriate in this location.



Map 6: Austral Farm

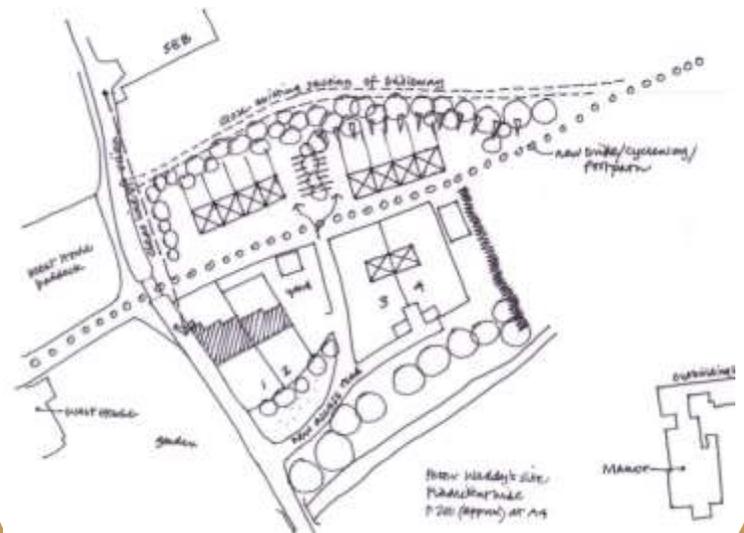
**Land at West Cottage, off Cerne Road, Piddletrenthide**

*Summary: there is scope to build up to 10 new homes of modest sized proportions in this location, to help provide affordable housing for local people. Some open market housing is likely to be needed to help fund access improvements, and improved landscaping and flood management.*

The land in the grounds of West Cottage is underused and provides a possible site for future housing in Piddletrenthide. It lies on the edge of the Conservation Area, and West Cottage itself is of local historic interest. The river (which can flood) runs further east in front of the existing cottage.

West Cottage is described in the conservation area appraisal as “an early C19 small country house with a plain tile roof, rendered walls and timber French windows in bays. Ornate grounds are enclosed within a high boundary wall”. The appraisal also notes the importance of the setting of such “larger, polite (clearly designed) houses set in landscaped grounds”. Any development would need to respect West Cottage and the rural character of this part of the Conservation Area. It should not have a wider impact (for example on the setting of the Manor) as it is well contained by existing planting, which needs to be maintained. Limiting any built development to not project further forward than the front face of West Cottage (keeping the appearance of the landscaped grounds to the front), and no higher than 1½ storeys in height, will help mitigate any adverse impact. Opportunities should also be sought to reduce flood risk beyond the site by improving the storage of flood water in this location.

Creating safe access for vehicles and pedestrians to and from the site is tricky but potentially achievable. The existing access from West Cottage is dangerous, with no clear view up or down the road as the driver emerges from the property. The road has no pavement and there are a number of pinch points where the road is not wide enough for large vehicles to pass safely, and no easy refuge for a pedestrian with child buggy. This is also an issue at the junction with the B3143, where vehicles pass extremely close to the Listed building (Brook House) on the corner. The solution to these problems lies in creating a new vehicular access from the site north of the existing house, opposite the track that goes to West House. The hedge embankment would need to be replanted back from the road (by about 3m) to provide better visibility all round, whilst maintaining the rural character of the road as it descends into the settlement. A pedestrian crossing point and improvements to the track opposite (which emerges onto the B3143 at the rear of the Piddle Inn) would provide an alternative safe path for pedestrians going to and from the shop and other facilities in Piddletrenthide, and could potentially form part of the all-weather off-road pedestrian and cycle route along the Valley.



**Policy 14. Land at West Cottage, Piddletrenthide**

The site (as shown on the Proposals Maps) is identified as a rural exception site to provide up to 10 homes in total.

Vehicular access will be provided off the Cerne Road to the rear side of West Cottage. The hedge bank will be replanted to provide sufficient forward visibility whilst maintaining the rural character of this lane. The development will require the provision of a pedestrian crossing point over to the track running behind West House and connecting to the B3143 at the Piddle Inn, and suitable upgrades must be made to this track to create a safe alternative pedestrian route into Piddletrenthide. These improvements will need to be in place before any new homes are occupied. Provision should also be made for a suitable public footpath / bridleway link through the site to form part of the proposed all-weather off-road pedestrian and cycle route along the Valley.

The hedgerow boundaries and landscaping around the site will need to be strengthened, and arrangements for their long-term maintenance agreed, to protect the setting of West Cottage and other Listed Buildings in the vicinity.

The layout of any vehicular access or parking areas within the site should be rural in character. Street or security lighting would not be appropriate in this location.

The design and layout will be informed by a full flood risk appraisal, and incorporate suitable measures to reduce the risk of flooding downstream. Any built development should not intrude forward of the front façade of West Cottage, it should be modest in size and not more than 1½ storeys in height, and respect and be sympathetic to West Cottage as a locally important historic building. Opportunities to enhance the historic interest of West Cottage through suitable repairs or renovation work should be secured.



Map 7: Land at West Cottage

### **Land at Kingrove Farm, Piddletrenthide (rear of the Piddle Inn)**

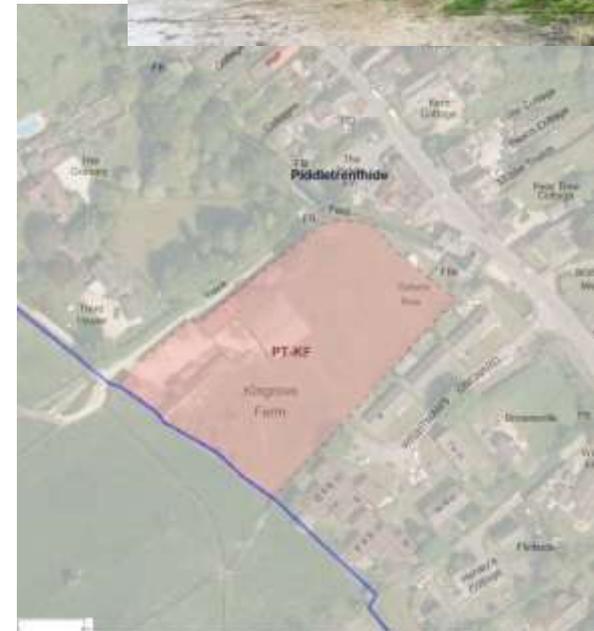
*Summary: there is scope to build up to 8 new homes in this location, to help provide affordable housing for local people. Some open market housing may be needed to help fund the new access and appropriate flood management measures. The farm buildings may be re-used (and the more modern buildings replaced) for employment or other community uses. The lower-lying land closer to the B3143 will remain undeveloped.*

Back in 2005 the Inspector for the 2006 Local Plan concluded that land at Kingrove Farm in Piddletrenthide was a sensible location for new development, given that it was within easy walking distance of the village centre, and not particularly prominent in wider views.

The existing access to the site (off the track from the road to Cerne Abbas) is not suitable for additional vehicular traffic. Therefore access would need to be via Wightman's Orchard (which is in separate ownership and often full of parked cars). By creating this access, the site's wider potential is also unlocked. As well as affordable housing, the site has the best potential to deliver a new, large community hall for local residents. The latter would require parking for at least 20 spaces – ideally more (depending on scale and likely usage), which potentially could be used outside its hours of operation as parking for local residents.

The site is partly within the flood plain, and therefore any development will need to be guided by a detailed flood risk appraisal. Any housing or similarly vulnerable uses would have to be located clear of any flood risk area, and new built development is therefore likely to be limited to the south-eastern corner of the site on the rising land. Areas subject to flood risk closer to the main road nonetheless provide an opportunity for other uses and could be managed for outdoor recreation, wildlife interest and better flood management. Such open areas should be overlooked by the new development to provide a degree of natural surveillance.

The layout and design of the site would need to consider any impact on the setting of the Listed buildings that are visible from the site (primarily along the main road). The height of the new development on the rising land will also need careful consideration to make sure us isn't unduly prominent, and the existing hedgerow boundary should be retained and strengthened. The existing farm buildings - the aisled barn, the farm building on the south-west boundary and the other buildings attached to the barn on the north-east side are of local historic interest. The re-use of these historic farm buildings (and potential replacement of the more modern buildings), for workshop / studios or community uses (including a modern community hall), would provide a really good mix of uses on this key site. A comprehensive, masterplanned approach is therefore suggested, particularly as the development of the site



Map 8: Kingrove Farm

may need to be phased (as funding for the community facilities is likely to be reliant on fund-raising and should not necessarily delay the delivery of the affordable housing).

**Policy 15. Kingrove Farm, Piddletrenthide**

The site (as shown on the Proposals Maps) is identified as a rural exception site to provide up to 8 homes in total.

The reuse and (where appropriate) replacement of the farm buildings may be considered for small-scale employment or community uses, with space reserved for the provision of a new community hall (and associated parking) of a sufficient size to accommodate sporting activities such as indoor badminton. If there is no demand for these facilities despite significant marketing and community consultation over a minimum period of 12 months, their re-use / replacement to provide further affordable and open market housing may be considered.

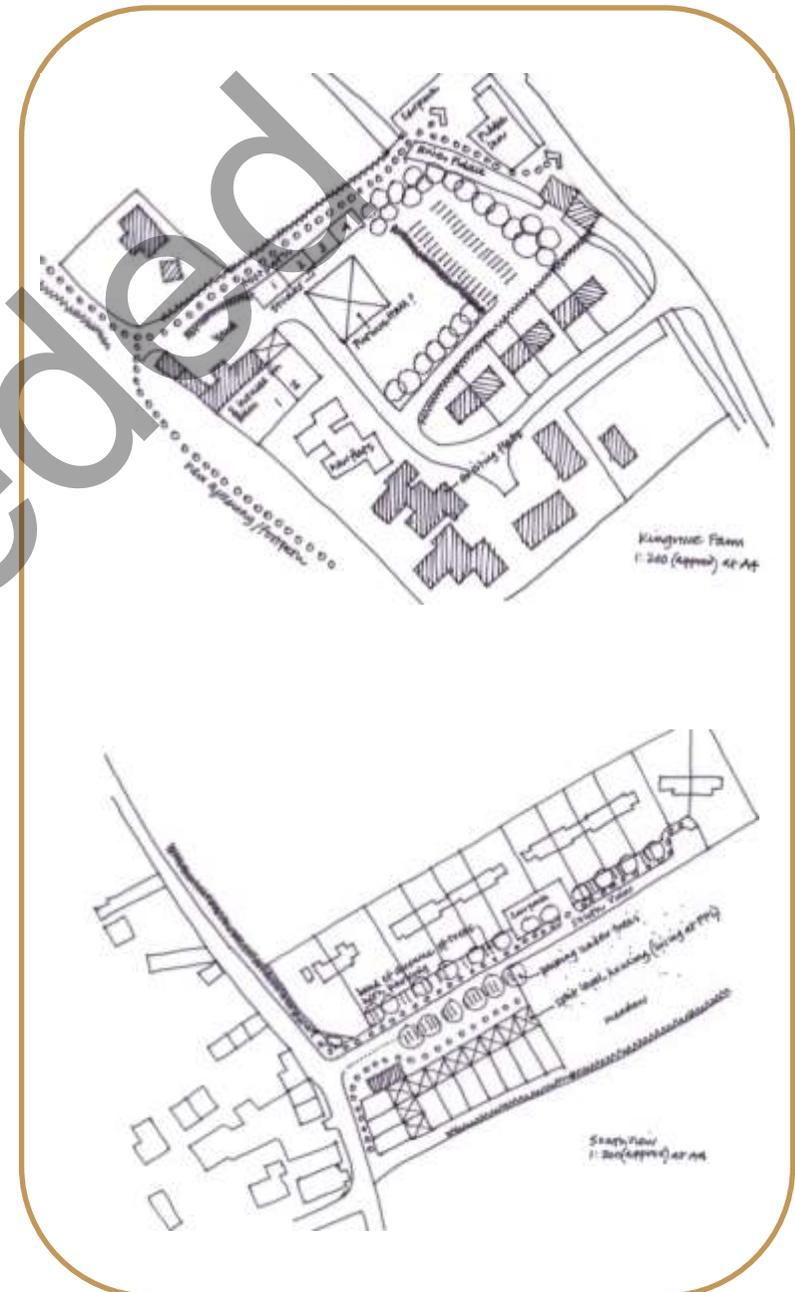
Vehicular access will be provided off Wightman’s Orchard. Opportunities to relieve the on-street parking congestion in Wightman’s Orchard should be secured if these can be reasonably accommodated on the site.

The design and layout will be informed by a full flood risk appraisal, to avoid developing in areas at risk from flooding and to incorporate measures to reduce the risk of flooding downstream. The potential impact on locally historic buildings, the amenity of nearby residents, and wider visibility of the development from the wider countryside will also strongly influence the design, scale and layout of the development and associated landscaping. Open spaces which should remain free of built development as a result of these factors should be designed to provide wildlife, flood management and, where appropriate, community recreational opportunities as part of the comprehensive design. Arrangements will need to be agreed for the hedgerow boundaries and landscaping in and around the site to be maintained in the long term.

**Land south of South View, White Lackington**

*Summary: there is scope to build up to 10 new homes in this location, close to the road on the lower ground, to help provide affordable housing for local people.*

South View in White Lackington has a row of houses on the north side, but no development on its southern side. The field facing the existing houses provides a potential site for new



housing that wouldn't appear out of place. The site was previously considered for development (in 2004) but rejected on landscape and highways grounds. The key to unlocking this site depends on achieving a scheme that would overcome these objections.

The ground is sloping, and development set back from the road on the higher ground would be visible in wider views, and more costly (from ground engineering works). These higher costs would limit the potential to deliver affordable housing in this location. It should be possible to build on the lower ground (in the area closest to the B3143) without undue wider landscape impacts. The other main issue for the site was the road width of South View. Because of the high amount of on-street parking here, the road is effectively reduced to a single carriageway, with what is a rather sub-standard turning head at the end. Any new housing that would increase the number of cars using South View would therefore need to widen the road sufficiently to provide space for vehicles to pass, taking into account the propensity for people to park on-street outside their homes. In reality these constraints mean that development is only likely to be feasible on the more level area of the site closest to the main road. The new buildings should therefore relate more in scale to the terraced homes on opposite side of the B3143.

**Policy 16. Land at South View, White Lackington**

The site (as shown on the Proposals Maps) is identified as a rural exception site to provide up to 10 homes.

The design and layout should ensure that built development does not creep up the slopes, which should be appropriately landscaped particularly on the eastern and southern boundary, to ensure development is not visible from wider views. The height of the new buildings should noticeably exceed the terrace of existing homes facing onto South View on the western side of the B3143.

The access and parking arrangements for the new homes will need to ensure that there is adequate access to the new development and that on-street parking problems are not exacerbated in the nearby roads.

**Large employment sites near Piddlehinton**

Piddlehinton Camp, a large site south of Piddlehinton, was built during the Second World War to house troops in the preparations for D-Day. It is of historic interest as it is one of less than 25 of an original 1,100 camps from the Second World War with substantial remains to survive.



Map 9: Land at South View



## Farming in the Piddle Valley

There are dairy, pig and arable farms in the area, so a mix of crops and animals. Over 90% of the land in the Valley is farmed. Since the 1940s farming has changed considerably, with the modernisation and mechanisation of farming practices. Many farms have merged, becoming larger businesses, and the machinery and farm buildings have also got bigger in size. The number of farm labourers needed has reduced. These changes have and will continue to have a really major influence on the character of the Valley. It is important that farms remain profitable businesses, as farmers are responsible for managing much of the countryside.

Many farms are now over 80 hectares in size. Where farms have merged, the farm buildings and fields used are not always in one place or in the best place for that farm's operations. Farms are likely to continue to restructure and this will without doubt lead to proposals for new farm buildings. Large buildings can have a major visual impact, and even small units can have a detrimental impact if they result in more tractors and farm vehicles using the roads.

Agricultural buildings are part and parcel of the countryside, and therefore it should not be necessary to hide them from sight. However they do need to be integrated as part of, rather than prominent additions to, the landscape. On this basis skyline development should always be avoided. The visual impact may be softened further by the choice of materials / colours used, landscape screening, or by using the topography (for example by being set into a slope – although care will need to be taken that such works do not compromise a site of potential archaeological interest). Consideration should also be given to clustering a new building with existing buildings, if the design and scale are appropriate (given that some of the older buildings may be of local or higher historic interest) and that in doing so this does not compromise the operational efficiencies of the farm. Evidence of the viability of the farm should also be provided.

### **Policy 18. New farm buildings**

The provision of new agricultural buildings to improve the operational efficiency and long-term viability of farms and reduce the number of farm vehicle movements along the adopted roads in the Valley will be supported, subject to ensuring the siting and design does not lead to an unacceptable impact on landscape character, heritage, wildlife or residential amenity.

Where new agricultural buildings are proposed where there are redundant buildings within that farm holding (or the proposals will mean that existing buildings will become redundant), opportunities to remove those redundant units should be considered.

### **Agricultural permitted development rights:**

Permitted development rights mean that, if a farm is 5 hectares or more in size, the farmer generally has the right to erect, extend or alter an agricultural building provided that

- it is not within 25 metres of a road,
- the ground area does not exceed 465m<sup>2</sup>
- if it is within 400m of someone else's home, it will not be used for livestock or to store slurry or sewage sludge.

In certain cases, including the erection of new buildings or where significant changes are proposed, details of the buildings' design, materials and siting may need to be submitted for approval, so that the planning authority can consider the effect of the development upon the landscape, heritage and wildlife interests. They also need to have regard to the operational needs of agricultural businesses and the need to avoid imposing any unnecessary or excessively costly requirements on the farmer.

More limited rights, including extensions and alterations adding not more than 10% to the content of the original building, are available to smaller farms (those between 0.4 and 5 hectares in size).

Although permitted development rights introduced in 2014 allow the conversion of redundant farm buildings to housing (subject to specific criteria), these do not apply to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which covers much of this area.

## Redundant farm buildings

The potential for redundant farm buildings to be converted to other uses is another possible source of new housing. In principle, the re-use of attractive rural buildings that are genuinely redundant should be encouraged, provided that the building is not too isolated, or in an area which is otherwise protected, including the important open gaps and elevated, open ground where the addition of lights and residential garden would be clearly visible in wider views. Other issues relevant to new development (such as flooding, road safety etc) will also apply.

The reuse of redundant farm buildings for uses other than farming or forestry-related operations is not considered appropriate for buildings of no architectural merit, such as more utilitarian, modern sheds. Where these are genuinely redundant, and have been in situ for many years and would not otherwise be removed, their replacement may be considered.

### *Policy 19. Re-use or replacement of redundant farm buildings*

The residential, community or business re-use of a redundant agricultural building outside a settlement boundary that makes a positive contribution to the local character will be supported, provided that all of the following tests are met:

- the building is not in an isolated location,
- the building is not in an important gap,
- the building is not in an elevated or open location where the addition of external lighting, garden, parking areas etc would be clearly visible in wider views,
- the proposals would respect the fabric and appearance of the building and its setting in the wider landscape.

The replacement of a redundant agricultural building that detracts from the natural beauty of the area may be supported subject to the above tests and the following:

- the building has been in existence prior to 2000 and is shown to be genuinely redundant, and
- the proposed replacement building would provide an overall enhancement and its silhouette is no greater in height than the building it is replacing.

Where a large part of a farm complex is redundant (of 0.2ha or greater in size), a masterplanned approach will be required.

Any such development will need to be in accordance with all other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and relevant policies in the adopted local plan

### *What do we mean by too isolated?*

Generally speaking, a building would be considered to be in an isolated location if:

- it was more than 200m one of the five main settlements in the Valley (unless it was well related to an existing cluster of housing) or
- it would require lengthy new connections to access roads or utility services



## Type and design of new development

### Understanding the character of the main settlements in the Valley

The settlements of the Piddle Valley are different in character, as a result of their historic development.

#### *Alton Pancras*

This linear village nestles on the valley floor of the River Piddle, which rises here and flows southwards through the Valley. Its housing is based on two early farm settlements, Barcombe to the north, Austral central and south, with an area of green open countryside dividing the two on its east side. It still retains the feel of a farming, working community, with the attractive 19th century brick and flint buildings farm buildings part of the street scene.

There is a range of building styles spanning four centuries, from thatch to redbrick. A small 1990 development of 10 houses at the northern approach compares with a row of traditional-style thatched cottages from the south, some being modern replicas of their neighbouring originals. The middle of the village has a mix of housing styles. A row of three whitewashed dwellings with thatched roofs is aptly named The Terrace, while opposite is a row of eight substantial houses with large gardens built by Dorchester Rural District Council in 1956. Adjoining to the north, four bungalows built in the 1960s, replaced four dilapidated thatched cottages.

The church and the Manor House adjoin each other on the west side of the B3143 as you head further south. Both are approached by a narrow path from the main road in spacious grounds, and although not prominent to passing traffic (as they are set back from the road and partly screened by mature trees) these two buildings are important in the history and character of the settlement.

The road leading south leaves the village past one of the original thatched cottages and with open, undulating hills on both sides, heads for Piddletrenthide.

Development in the village should be of an interesting mix of individual or small groups relating to the main road, rather than residential estates. The future of the farm buildings, if they become redundant, provides an obvious opportunity for the village to grow. The gaps and green open spaces linking to the river should be retained as these provide important breathing-spaces on the west side.



**Plush**

Plush is a rural hamlet of about 30 houses, about a mile and a half north of Piddletrenthide at the base of a steep sided valley on a narrow unclassified road. A tributary of the River Piddle flows through the hamlet and into the river at Piddletrenthide.

Entering the village from the south the visitor can glimpse the distinctive early mediaeval lynchets, which hint at the settlement’s ancient origins. Also on the south side of the hamlet lies Plush cricket ground, with its attractive pavilion. Spectators here have a fine view of the surrounding countryside.

The settlement itself is largely hidden within a fold of the hills amongst areas of woodland and fine mature beech trees. The core to the hamlet is a central green space on the sharp bend where the famous hostelry, the Brace of Pheasants, welcomes the visitor. The pub overlooks this green, while the Plush Stream circles its far side before running down the valley to join the River Piddle. The dominant property is Plush Manor is set in spacious grounds below Plush Hill. The former church is home to the Plush Music Festival which is held over several weekends throughout the summer and attracts visitors from far and wide.

Over half of the houses are listed as of historical or architectural interest. They are informally arranged along the rural lanes that twist through the settlement. The houses have large gardens and these together with the village green give the hamlet an open and loose-knit environment. Buildings are constructed of brick, flint and brick or rendered walls with roofs mainly of thatch or slate with a few tiled roofs. More recent development on the site of a former orchid nursery fully reflects the materials used in the older houses. They are attractively designed and sit easily with the more established houses in the hamlet. .

Until relatively recently the hamlet was surrounded by three dairy farms. These have now been absorbed by neighbouring farms to form viable units for the future. The attractive redundant farm buildings at Harveys Farm, directly adjacent to the hamlet, calls for a new use to ensure they are kept in a good state of repair.

Future development should be sensitive to the nature of the hamlet and reflect the materials used in existing buildings.



### ***Piddletrenthide***

Piddletrenthide is a long linear settlement divided into smaller clusters by open undeveloped areas which offer views of the river Piddle and the surrounding countryside. It is important that these open spaces are retained to preserve the character of the village and avoid continuous ribbon development through the valley.

The northern cluster marks the core of the old village around the beautiful All Saints church with its fine west tower. Church Lane leads from the valley road across the river to Egypt where there are several newer houses. There is a mix of styles of housing with both old and new but mostly with large gardens and an open feel.

Low density frontage development on the western side of the main road leads south to the junction with Smiths Lane where the popular Poachers pub is situated. There are some older cottages running west from the valley road. The Manor House with its grounds forms a break in the development and there is a fine view opposite the house to the east.

The main part of the village has a higher density of development and consists of a mixture of older cottages (two dating back to the sixteenth century) 18th and 19th century housing, the former school and late 20th century cul de sacs on either side of the road. The Post Office and the Piddle Inn are in this cluster and both are valuable assets to community life. There is a variety of building materials including brick and flint, cob and predominately rendering with tiled, slated and thatched roofs.

The modern well designed first school is set back from the road and access is across the river via two arched bridges. There is a small children's play area and the school playing field which gives an open aspect to this part of the village.

### ***White Lackington***

The settlement of White Lackington developed at the crossroads of an important east/west drove road and the valley road and has a simple nuclear form centred on the former Fleet Farm.

The settlement here contains a mixture of older housing, Lackington Mill, former farmhouses, the now converted 19th century European Inn and a number of houses built during the last decade. The line of former council housing, called South View, stretches east from the main road up a shallow combe. Development to the north and south has begun to erode the open space between the different settlements.



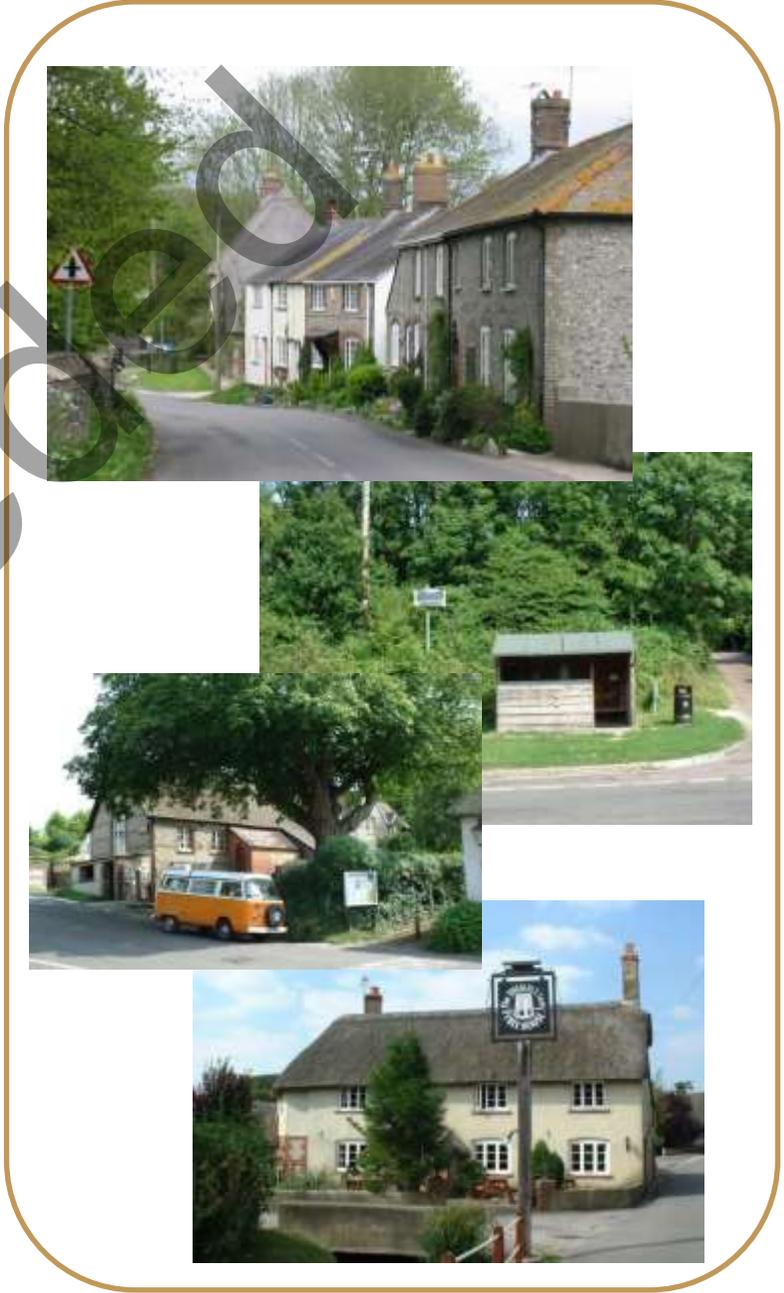
**Piddlehinton**

Piddlehinton is a long established settlement, which developed as a bridging point over the Piddle River. The main crossroads junction still forms the centre of the village. Close to the crossroads stands the War Memorial on a grassed island, together with a water pump and a commemorative tree.

The valley road north of the crossroads is known as High Street and contains a number of larger properties including the Thimble Inn, and a small modern cul-de-sac, White’s Close, on the western side. The eastern side of the road is less developed, probably due to the sharp rise in gradient from the road, but a characteristic high sided lane, London Row, heads towards another modern cul-de-sac, London Close, with a range of affordable and owner occupied houses.

To the west of the crossroads, Rectory Road has a mixture of older cottages with more modern infill and the large Old Rectory. This, with the beginnings of Church Hill to the South, forms the Conservation area, containing 10 listed buildings including St Mary’s Church, with 13th century origins, and the Village Hall (unlisted). At the western end of the village a modern development, Payne’s Close, extends northwards in a cul-de-sac. Alongside the Piddle River and to the south-west of the Thimble Inn, the Millennium Green forms a valuable recreational and natural open space. A bridleway, West Lane, extends from Rectory Road, alongside the Millennium Green, through White Lackington to Piddletrenthide, linking the settlements.

The River Piddle meanders through the village and although there is no longer a working mill there are white egrets, herons, kingfishers, ducks, and the occasional otter on the water meadows, with buzzards soaring above. Sluice gates for flooding the meadows are still to be found at various points along the river. The agricultural use of the sloping hillsides around the village is mainly arable, but also includes beef cattle, sheep and two pig farms, plus grazing for horses.



### *Detailed design and building materials*

Chalk and clay have been used for humbler buildings to make cob for cottage and boundary walls, with flint and brick used for more significant buildings. Field stone was locally quarried for laying coursed or uncoursed random rubble walls for larger houses while dressed stone, often banded with flint, as at Whites Dairy House in Piddlehinton, has been used for the Parish Churches and surrounding cottages in Piddletrenthide and Piddlehinton. Mixtures of different materials have added a richness of variety, most commonly flint banded with red brick and ashlar or facing stone with brick and render. Examples are the former Village School and Pear Tree Cottage and Middle Thatch in Piddletrenthide. However artificial stone blocks and flint panels have not blended in well.

Bricks were produced here from the early 18th century and were still locally available from Broadmayne until the 20th century. They can be recognised from their buff to red colour with carbon spots on the surface. From the early 19th century brick was often considered of inferior appearance and limewashed or even rendered and incised with course lines to represent stone blocks. Unusual old purple brickwork with red dressings may be seen at Alton Pancras Manor House contrasted with yellow ashlar stonework.

The use of lime in building was universal until the early 20th century when production of cement (which is duller in appearance) became common. Lime lets materials breathe by absorbing and evaporating rainwater and allows movement without cracking in the heat and cold of the changing seasons, and is therefore more sustainable.

Structural timber framing is not common but green oak is often used for beams, lintels over openings and for external cladding.

In terms of roofing, Purbeck stone slates may still be seen at eaves and for wall cappings but the traditional straw thatch is evident everywhere, sometimes replaced in modern times with water reed. Thatch is relatively expensive with outer layers needing to be renewed every 25 years or so. Slate from Wales and Cornwall became common with the introduction of the railways in the 19th century. Clay tiles were used less commonly and cheaper, concrete versions were adopted during the 1960s and 70s. The latter has not blended in successfully with the local materials. Plain clay tiles and double pantiles can be seen in Piddlehinton. Other natural materials such as lead and zinc are also found in the Valley.

Windows and doors used to be made in oak or other hardwoods, and often limed or painted. Softwood and UPVC plastic alternatives used in recent years have not blended in well, partly due to their colour and bulkier look.



## ***Sustainable designs***

The government is driving improvements to the energy efficiency of new buildings through changes to Building Regulations (rather than having different standards in different parts of the country).

Flexibility in designs are also a key consideration, to enable a building to readily adapt to the needs of its future occupiers (as changes can be very costly if not considered in the initial design). Again, basic requirements are being delivered through changes to Building Regulations at a national level. The difficulties upgrading the broadband capabilities in the Valley (requiring significant public investment) highlight this as a real concern that is best addressed through early design choices where possible.

This drive for more sustainable designs ultimately make homes and businesses more affordable to run, and this Neighbourhood Plan encourages developers to go beyond the building regulations requirements when they can.

### ***Policy 20. The character and design of new development***

Development, including extensions and porches, should have regard to the character of the surrounding area to which it relates, in terms of the plot size, density, scale and massing, and not significantly change the character through over-intensive development.

The design should be sympathetic to the form, style and colour of nearby existing traditional buildings. It should respect but not necessarily copy the style of existing buildings. Imaginative designs using well-chosen materials that weather well will be supported.

Traditional building materials such as stone, flint, brick, slate, timber and lime mortar and render are appropriate. The use of modern materials may also be appropriate because of their character (in relation to contemporary building designs) and sustainability credentials.

To be fit for the future, the ability to adapt housing to allow people to work from home is supported. Where possible, ducting (that can accept fibre optic cabling or its future equivalent) should be provided to the public highway or other suitable point of connection.

## **Housing types and sizes**

The Local Plan sets out the requirement for affordable homes as part of open market housing sites, and this approach is to be applied to the Piddle Valley area. It is intended that, with the mix of small infill and large exception sites, nearly 50% of all new homes will potentially be

### **Sustainable design projects that could be taken forward by local people**

#### ***Domestic Heating / Energy Reduction Project:***

establish a resource to advise on domestic energy saving based on reducing the energy required (e.g. by improving insulation), reducing energy consumption (e.g. by replacing inefficient heat sources) and by adopting renewable or low carbon energy sources

***Solar Panels Project:*** produce guidance for residents and businesses on how to site solar panels on domestic and business properties so that they are discrete and sympathetic to their surroundings.

***Hydropower Project:*** set up a River Piddle hydropower scheme to generate power for the Piddle Valley VE CA First School.

***Woodland Fuel + Bi-products Project:*** establish a co-operative scheme for existing woodland users (landowners / pheasant / game shoots) to manage currently unmanaged woodlands through a 7-10 year management cycle, allowing individual ownerships to remain in place, supporting local full time employment generation with reintroduction of coppicing and new planting for longer term sustainability, enabling fallen timber to be utilised for wood fuel with logs and bi-products available for purchase in the Valley and reuse of redundant storage facilities for products and equipment.

local, affordable housing. The types and size of these homes will be guided by the most recent information on local affordable housing needs.

The Local Plan also includes a policy requiring that, wherever possible, housing developments should include a mix in the size, type and affordability of open market dwellings proposed, taking into account the current range of house types and sizes and likely demand in view of the changing demographics in that locality. This remains relevant to this area.

### External lighting

Lighting is often added to a building or area for security or recreational purposes. Although these are obvious benefits, such lighting diminishes the enjoyment of our 'dark skies' which are a valued feature of the Valley.

The cumulative impact of continued unchecked addition of lighting schemes is a concern. As such, where development may give rise to future pressure for external lighting, a planning condition should be added that will mean that such a change will require consent (to remove that condition). Where external lighting is proposed, applicants will be expected to justify why it is necessary and how it minimises potential light pollution from glare and spillage. This approach also applies to the consideration of street lighting and lighting in parking courtyards, and such lighting should not be made a highways requirement.

#### *Policy 21. External lighting*

Approval for external lighting schemes will only be supported where it is the minimum needed for security and operational purposes and does not give rise to unnecessary light pollution from glare and spillage. Where such schemes are likely to have a significant adverse impact on local landscape character, the benefits of the lighting scheme must be shown to outweigh any adverse effects.

Where development may give rise to pressure for external lighting, a planning condition will be necessary to ensure that the impact of such a scheme in future is properly considered.



#### *When does lighting require planning consent?*

Not all lighting proposals require planning consent, as the lighting itself does not constitute development, and the erection of the light fittings do not in general alter a building's appearance to any significant extent.

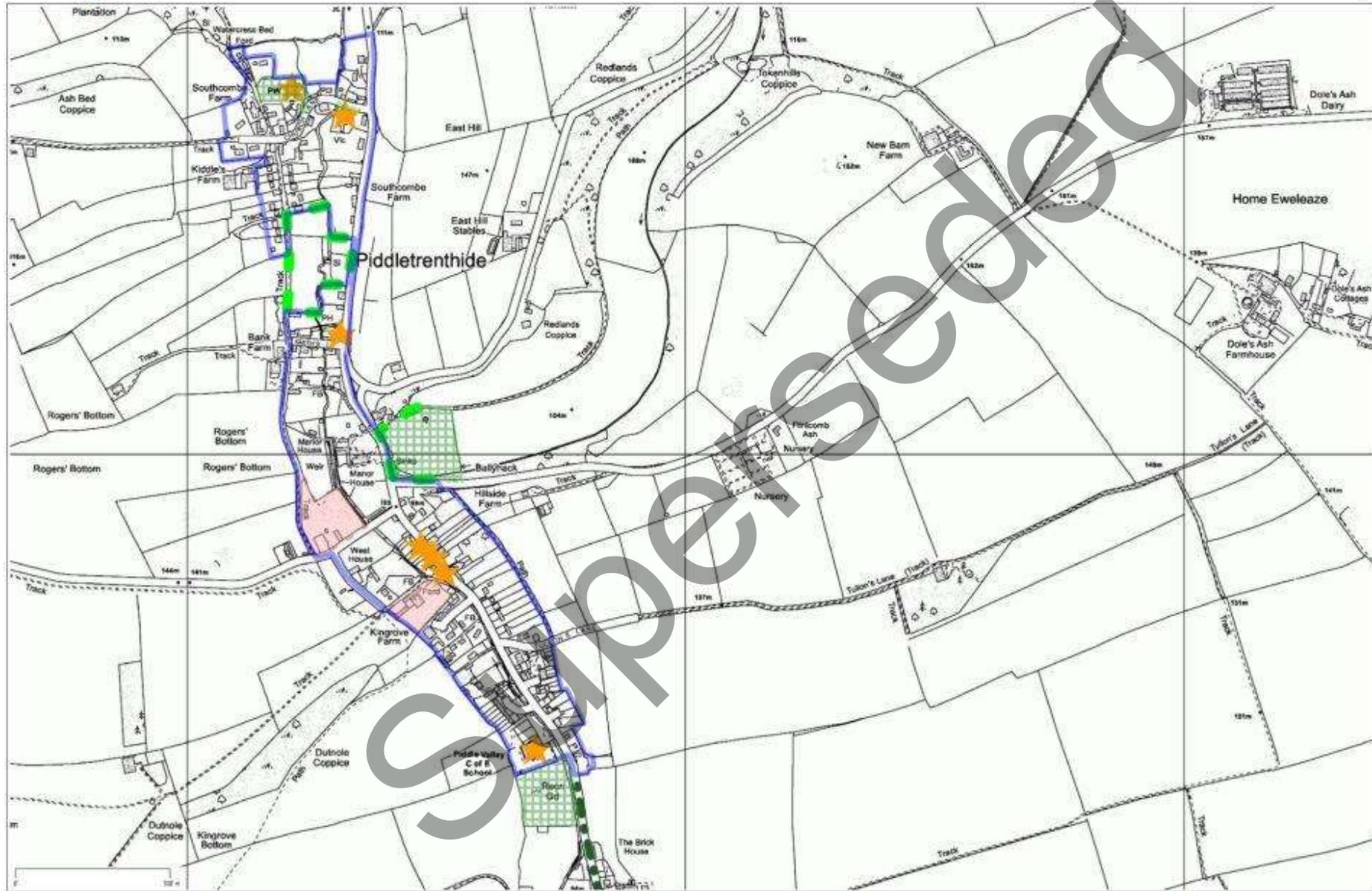
However, planning conditions can be included to prevent such a change without permission.

If the building is a Listed building, Listed building approval is always required.



- KEY
-  Settlement boundary
  -  Rural exception site
  -  Community facility
  -  Important open gap
  -  Significant view
  -  Local green space

### Piddletrenthide



- KEY
-  Settlement boundary
  -  Rural exception site
  -  Community facility
  -  Important open gap
  -  Significant view
  -  Local green space

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### White Lackington

Piddle Valley CP 



- KEY
-  Settlement boundary
  -  Rural exception site
  -  Community facility
  -  Important open gap
  -  Significant view
  -  Local green space



- KEY
- Settlement boundary
  - Rural exception site
  - Community facility
  - Important open gap
  - Significant view
  - Local green space
  - Enterprise Park and Bourne Park

# Appendix B: Major Environmental Constraints



Parish Online

**Major Environmental Constraint**  
SSSI, Ancient woodland, AONB, Flood Risk

**Piddle Valley CP**

-  Dorset AONB boundary
-  Flood risk area
-  Scheduled monument
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Ancient woodland

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