

Cerney Valley Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan Vision

Recognising the Cerney Valley is a special place to live in and visit, we aim to retain this status, by protecting our environment and communities, whilst seeking to encourage change which will enhance the appeal of the area, as well as its sustainability.

**Produced on behalf of the Cerney Valley Parish Council
by the Cerney Valley Neighbourhood Plan Working Group**

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Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan

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Executive Summary

This first Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan has been developed following a series of initiatives designed to gather the opinions of residents living in the Parish. These views have been invaluable in establishing what people who took part in the consultation process want for the future of the area over the next 10 years, which can be summarised as follows:

- The Cerne Valley is a special place to live, work and visit. People want to keep it that way, protecting the environmental qualities of the Valley, whilst enhancing the communities they live in.
- One of the area's strengths is its sustainable nature. It is accessible to surrounding towns, having access to an enviable range of services and facilities for a rural location, whilst being a safe place to live, work and visit. The aim is to enhance the sustainability of the Valley.
- There is an appetite for small scale housing development of high quality and sustainable in design, whilst being in keeping with the local historic character and distinctiveness of the area.
- In Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone, other than in exceptional cases, future development should be within the respective Defined Development Boundary (DDB) to support the continued vibrancy of the villages and protect the open countryside. There will be a minor extension to the Cerne Abbas DDB in its North and West corners to create some additional opportunities for new development. A DDB will be adopted for Godmanstone and density levels set for in-fill building.
- There is a requirement for a range of new housing stock to meet the needs of the communities in the Valley. More affordable housing would be attractive to young people with families and people with limited incomes. Well designed quality housing will continue to both enhance the attractiveness of the area to live in and its sustainability. A growing need for additional smaller sized houses for retired people to downsize to has been identified, which would feed the "sustainability cycle" in terms of change of ownership benefits.
- Two locations in Cerne Abbas have been identified where small scale housing development could take place. There are other locations in both Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone which could also be suitable.

- There is support in general terms for the conversion of historic farm buildings to residential and/or business purposes, subject to design being in sympathy with the area and the planning application meeting the required standards.
- The risk of flooding is a concern to residents of both Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone. Future planning applications will have to address and meet these concerns.
- A new school building to replace the one currently used by the Cerne Abbas First School is recognised as being a priority by residents. The school is an integral part of the community which attracts families into the area. Land owned by Dorset County Council at Simsay, in Cerne Abbas, has outline planning permission for a new school to be built. The Plan requires that this land be safeguarded for this purpose for the next 10 years.
- The Plan identifies green spaces and community facilities existing which will be protected.
- Future development must not harm the Valley's landscape, geological assets, built heritage, archaeological sites and wild-life habitats.
- People recognise that tourism is important to the Valley economy, and value existing businesses. The Plan seeks to support those businesses and attract new enterprises thereby maximising employment opportunities.
- The Plan identifies a number of new facilities which the communities would like added to existing community facilities e.g. a cycle path, village centre parking in Cerne Abbas and speed reduction measures in Godmanstone. Some of these facilities could be funded in full or part from monies generated through the Community Infrastructure Levy to support new development.

Introduction

The Cerne Valley is a very special place. So say its residents, who are determined to keep it that way. This simple message has come through loud and clear as a result of the local consultations which have led to the publication of this, the first Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan.

People not only appreciate the environmental qualities of the Valley, but consider they have a duty to protect them for future generations who choose to live in, work in and visit the area. They want to keep and, if possible, improve the range of community facilities such as the school, doctors' surgery, local shops and public houses. People recognise that local businesses and tourism is important to the Valley economy. They want to support those existing businesses whilst attracting new enterprises, providing they are in keeping with the special qualities of the area. Importantly, people see the need for modest growth in housing, provided it is controlled, designs are in keeping with the character of existing villages, and the sustainability of the Valley is enhanced.

In particular, additional housing should meet the needs of people who wish to live in the area. Affordability, especially for young people looking to establish homes and send their children to the local school, presents a big challenge. At the other end of the age spectrum, older people who currently live in the Valley and who wish to down-size without leaving the area are looking for housing which will meet their needs.

This Neighbourhood Plan (hereinafter called the Plan) aims to reflect all of these issues and many others highlighted by those who chose to contribute to it. The consultation effort in preparing the Plan has been considerable and is detailed in the document entitled "Statement of Consultation". Whilst the Plan is in general conformity with the principles of the West Dorset District Council (WDDC) Local Plan, it importantly looks to ensure that over the next 10 years from the date of the Plan being adopted, the views of people living in the Cerne Valley have a legal status in the planning process, as intended by the Localism Act 2011.

Vision for the Cerne Valley

Recognising the Cerne Valley is a special place to live in and visit, we aim to retain this status by protecting our environment and communities, whilst seeking to encourage change which will enhance the appeal of the area, as well as its sustainability.

The Plan represents an important ingredient in achieving this vision, but its ambitions will only be realised if it is interpreted and acted upon by the Cerne Valley Parish Council, West Dorset District Council and other key stakeholders, who will also need to have regard for the following Strategic Objectives:

Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Objectives

- To aim to satisfy the diverse housing needs for all by meeting the changing demographic and social requirements.
- To ensure any new development is built within Defined Development Boundaries and accords with density levels, where defined.
- To keep housing development to small scale and designed to a high quality which is sustainable, reflecting the local character and distinctiveness of the area.
- To preserve the sustainability of the area by retaining and, if possible, enhancing local services and facilities.
- To protect and enhance the natural and built environment of the Valley, including its landscape, geological assets, built heritage, archaeological sites and wild-life habitats.
- To support the local economy through its existing businesses, by encouraging new enterprises and facilities which enhance commercial effectiveness and employment opportunities.
- To reduce the vulnerability to impacts of climate change, particularly flooding.

Overview of the Cerne Valley

The Cerne Valley includes the parishes of Cerne Abbas, Godmanstone, Nether Cerne and Up Cerne. These four parishes define the area overseen by the Cerne Valley Parish Council (Appendix 1). These communities are situated between Dorchester and Sherborne straddling the A352, which connects these two towns. It covers a geographical area of about 6,250 acres (2,500 hectares). The River Cerne rises in Up Cerne and Minterne and flows down through the Valley and onwards to Dorchester.

The Cerne Valley lies in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (DAONB). Within the Valley itself there are Conservation Areas, nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with some of the latter also designated as internationally important “Special Area of Conservation” (SAC). At the Dorset County level there are also Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) which cover the majority of Priority Habitats and Species not covered by other designations. SNCIs are not protected by any specific legislation, but should be considered in any planning decision as they provide vital links between the SACs and SSSIs.

Within the Valley there are a considerable number of historic buildings, listed buildings and an archaeological heritage dating from the Bronze Age. Particular examples of these include the remains of the Benedictine Abbey of Cerne Abbas founded in 987 AD, the 15th century medieval houses in Abbey Street in Cerne Abbas and the 13th century churches at Cerne Abbas, Godmanstone and Nether Cerne. The Valley is best known for the iconic Cerne Giant, owned and maintained by the National Trust.

Comparison between the 2001 and 2011 Census information reveals the following information:

Cerne Abbas	2001	2011	Change
Residents	741	784	+ 5%
Dwellings	387	429	+10%
Godmanstone	2001	2011	Change
Residents	171	156	-9%
Dwellings	72	77	+7%

In the region of 80% of properties are owner occupied with the remainder being privately or affordable rented. After the Second World War there was a significant surge in new homes being built, particularly during the 1960s. A map of Cerne Abbas illustrating housing development particularly since the war can be found by reference to Appendix 2 and a similar map for Godmanstone by reference to Appendix 3.

With the benefit of hindsight, some of the houses built since 1950 have not been designed to a standard which is in keeping with the local character of the Cerne Valley. This Plan recognises this fact and affords an opportunity to control future building to ensure this important factor is considered during the planning application process.

Overall these figures indicate there has been growth in both population and dwellings over the past 10 years, which is proportionate to the demography of the Valley. Indeed, over the past 25 years, on average in the region of 4 new homes a year have been built in the Cerne Valley. Such a rate of new housing growth represents the pace of change which would be acceptable to most residents in the Valley over the next 10 years.

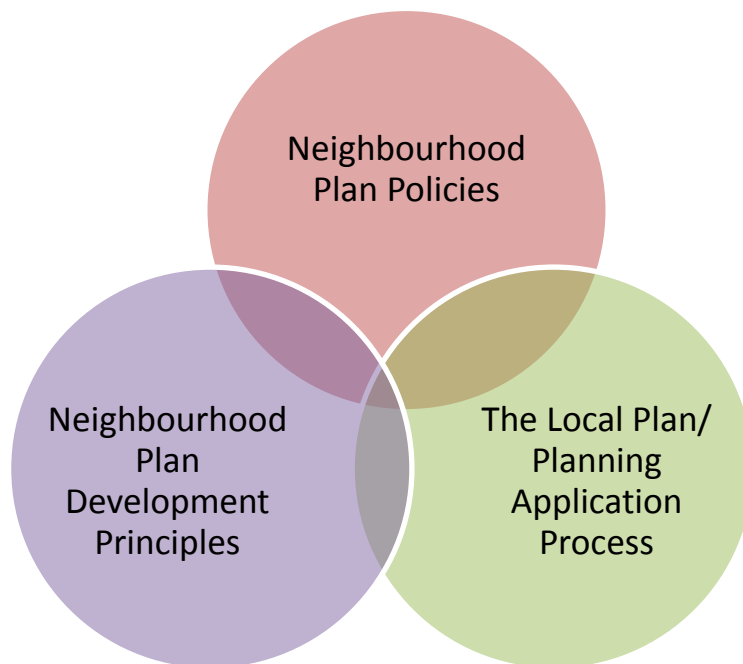
Housing

Housing Objectives

- To identify locations where new housing can be built.
- To ensure the majority of new housing is built within DDBs.
- To meet the housing needs of a diverse range of people wishing to live in the area, including the building of more affordable housing and smaller homes suitable for retired persons to downsize to.
- To ensure new development is small scale, conforms to any defined density level, is designed to a high quality and is sustainable.
- To ensure housing is built in keeping with the local character and distinctiveness of the area.
- To support the conversion of barns and redundant farm buildings into residential, holiday letting and business accommodation.

Delivering the Housing Objectives

The Housing Objectives will be achieved by the control exercised by the inter-relationship between the following key factors;



Housing Policies

Policy 1 Other than in exceptional cases e.g. affordable housing delivered through rural exception sites, future housing development in Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone should be within the Defined Development Boundaries described in the Plan.

The advantage of this policy is that Defined Development Boundaries (DDBs) are, in effect a planning tool for guiding, controlling and identifying the limits of development for an individual village. DDBs prevent undesirable building sprawl at the extremities of village boundaries and, in the case of the two villages in question, are likely to restrict building to small scale developments. Whilst there is a presumption in favour of building within DDBs, it does not amount to a guarantee and each application must satisfy planning requirements. Exceptional cases could also include the conversion of existing rural barns and similar rural buildings into accommodation and small scale extensions by alterations to existing homes.

Policy 2 All applications for new development should demonstrate high quality of design, use of materials and detail, which reflect local distinctiveness; also having regard to prevailing scale, massing and density and the development principles as set out on page 10 of the Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan.

This policy is intended to reflect the concerns of the community as they relate to new build development being in harmony with the character of the location they are being constructed in. People feel that, in the past, planning decisions have not always given sufficient regard to these local factors. In addition, any new housing site development should require an arboricultural assessment, with the intention of identifying opportunities for preserving existing significant trees and new tree planting in keeping with the Dorset AONB Landscape Character Assessment. Such an assessment should produce a landscape implementation plan as an integral part of the planning application and should also apply to any business planning applications.

Policy 3 The Defined Development Boundary for Cerne Abbas will be retained and extended in its North and West corners as indicated in the map in Appendix 4.

Cerne Abbas has an existing DDB and consultation with residents of the village has established the majority would prefer future new development to occur within this boundary, in the form of in-fill development. It is worth noting that the current DDB is largely contiguous with the village conservation area, but has been expanded in recent years to enclose areas of modern housing development.

The Parish Council acknowledge that attempting to achieve a balance between the aims of restricting future development within the DDB over the next 10 years whilst, during the same

period of time, achieving modest growth in building new houses will be challenging. Against this background, the Parish Council has decided to make a minor adjustment to the DDB in the North and West corners of the village as indicated in the map in Appendix 3.

Any future development should have regard to the existing policies for the safeguarding the area's position within the DAONB and other relevant policies contained in the Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy 4 **Defined Development Boundary for Godmanstone will be adopted and used in relation to future planning applications. The village should have incremental growth in character with its history and therefore proposals for new development will be need to demonstrate that they reflect the character and density of the existing settlement as a whole.**

The future of development in Godmanstone has been subject to considerable debate and consultation with the residents of the village. Following a number of meetings, it was decided to create a DDB for the village and its extent is outlined in the map in Appendix 4.

In defining the DDB, residents were keen to ensure they protected the current character of the village whilst allowing the potential for some limited growth during the life of the Plan. The eastern side of the boundary skirts along the flood plain of the River Cerne, effectively making future development on that side of the A352 road most unlikely and undesirable. On the western side of the main road the newly defined DDB does create potential for some limited in-fill development of low density.

In considering the appropriate levels for new-build housing in the village, the community wishes to see slow, incremental growth rather than crammed in-fill development. Current density levels have also been taken into consideration. At the time of preparing the Plan there were 63 houses in the proposed Godmanstone development boundary over an area of 21.86 acres. This equates to 2.88 houses per acre. Plots vary considerably in size. Having regard to this information, and as a result of the decision to establish a DDB, it has been determined that future new build in the village will not exceed 3 dwellings per acre or part acre plot, (see Development Principles, page 10). Therefore, if a property already exists upon an acre plot, this density test would imply that no more than two additional properties could be built in the case of that acre site. In the case of an acre plot with no house built upon it, a maximum of three houses could be built.

However, it should be noted the determination of housing density is set against the principle outlined in this Plan. Ultimately the application of the density principle will have to be determined against the merits of each planning application; it is not intended to be definitive but rather more a guiding principle. This approach would obviously need to be applied proportionately in the case of applications to build houses on part acre sites.

Policy 5 Planning applications for quality conversions of historic farm buildings, including barns, in rural areas should be favourably considered for residential and/or business uses, providing that the proposals are consistent with protecting the character and landscape quality of the Dorset Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In a rural locality which is dominated by its AONB status, future housing development opportunities that do not impact upon the wider landscape are limited. Conversions of old barns do, however, provide opportunities for new accommodation and re-use of buildings that could make a positive contribution to the local character of the area.

Against this background the Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan proposes that the conversion of barns, other than those in isolated areas with no nearby built development, be considered for both residential and business purposes, subject to the acceptability of the proposed development.

Development Principles

As previously stated, but worthy of restating in the context of housing in the Valley, the Parish is located within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In addition there are Conservation Areas, SSSI's, SACs, SNCIs, protected Historic Buildings and Flood Risk Zones. The protection and management of these assets were constantly and continually raised in the consultation process.

Additionally, consultation has established there is no appetite for large scale developments, considered to be inappropriate and possibly damaging to the character of the Valley. In the main there is cautious support for small scale, controlled housing development over the next 10 years, with a preference for in-fill building within DDBs.

Against this background, a number of Development Principles have been defined which are designed to underpin and support the Strategic Objectives and Policies of the Plan, whilst also reflecting the wishes of the residents of the Cerne Valley.

Development Principles

- All new-build houses will be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework, Building Regulations and be constructed to minimum standards in accordance with Code 4 of the Governments "Code for Sustainable Houses".
- All new-build houses must also be constructed to a quality design and of materials which are sympathetic to the character of the environment they are to be built in. This character is described in the relevant conservation area appraisals and landscape character assessments.
- The height and density of development should be reduced where the sites are more prominent. New-build housing in Godmanstone should not exceed the density level of three houses per acre as a general guide.
- Any application to build open market housing where the numbers exceed three should meet the WDDC target of including a minimum of 35% of affordable Housing. The most recent housing needs assessment indicates 14 affordable homes are needed in the Cerne Valley.
- There should be a presumption in favour of the construction of affordable housing, provided applications accord with the principles contained within the Plan.
- Where this is not possible, a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing should be required for any shortfall that cannot be delivered on the site.
- No planning application should be approved if it compromises the status of the Valley as it applies to being part of the DAONB and its other designated areas of conservation.
- No planning application should be approved in Flood Risk Zones (unless it is part of a flood defence scheme) where it would increase the risk of flooding.
- Any new building should be designed to minimise surface water run off to reduce flooding risk.
- Existing significant green spaces and trees (as identified through an arboricultural assessment) should be preserved and new trees planted with any new development.
- Developers will be responsible for ensuring Environmental Impact Assessments are conducted as part of all future planning applications, when appropriate.
- Planning applications should require existing and planned utilities such as electrical and telephone cables to be put underground where reasonable and practical.

General

In developing the Plan a number of potential sites in Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone were identified where development could take place. Some of these locations have come to light as a result of land owners indicating they wish to apply for planning permission to build new properties in the future. Other pockets of land have been identified as having development potential, notwithstanding the fact landowners have not indicated a preference to develop at this time. In general terms this Plan has not sought to identify preferred sites and is content to allow the planning process to judge each application on its merits, including compliance with the Plan. In the case of two sites in Cerne Abbas where small scale housing development could take place, comment has been made based upon community feedback.

The provision of affordable housing and smaller homes should be considered for inclusion under any planning applications for an open market housing site development. Where this is not possible, a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing elsewhere should be required for any shortfall that cannot be delivered on the site. The provision of affordable housing may be possible elsewhere by the identification of a 'rural exception site', a recent example being the development called Simsay Fields to the east of Cerne Abbas. The small nature of this development has contributed to its success and acceptance into the rural community. Replicating this elsewhere in the village environs is an option, but an appropriate site is not obvious at present, if potentially building sprawl at the extremities at the DDB boundaries is to be avoided.

In promoting these potential developments within the Cerne Valley, with their proximity to important historical and other sites, care will need to be taken to ensure that they do not impact adversely on these sites, as set out in the Strategic Objectives above.

Cerne Abbas

Although there are a number of locations within the DDB where in-fill development of housing could be considered, the consultation has only identified two locations where landowners have indicated they may wish to progress applications for small scale housing development. There are however other locations within the DDB which might be suitable for small scale development or single construction projects if the owners of the land decide to seek planning permission in the future.

Location 1 is the land lying to the west of the Village Hall. In the past this plot has been identified by WDDC as an "Excluded Site" (Appendix D of the WDDC "Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment"). WDDC consider building on this plot would create an "Unacceptable impact upon the landscape - trees would be compromised by development; they form an attractive gateway to the village". This concern is of course legitimate but, with careful design, could be overcome by retaining or replacing existing trees whilst preserving the landscape around the area of the Giant. If satisfactory plans for development could be achieved which overcome these concerns and address flood inundation issues, there is a real opportunity to offer a tangible further advantage to the village. The village hall is well used by local clubs and societies, but lacks an illuminated pavement to the hall from the north end of Duck Street. Any application to develop housing on this site should, as a condition, include an illuminated pavement as described. Such a provision would provide an alternative safe route for foot passengers wishing to use the village hall as well as providing an alternative route from the vicinity of the Giant and picnic car parking area adjacent to the Hall. Such a development would be greatly welcomed by residents of the village. However, the design of the illumination and pavement should be such that the rural nature of the location is preserved and enhanced.

Location 2 is the site currently occupied by the owner of R.L. Trim in Acreman Street. This land is currently a location where a small business operates. There is a residential property on the site as well as workshops and offices. The owner would like either to develop housing on the site or move the operational and office space to the rear of the footprint occupied by the business, thereby freeing up land at the front of the area for a small scale housing development. Such a development would sit inside the newly defined DDB and has some appeal as residential properties do already exist to the south and west of this location. The owner has indicated that if the site was developed entirely for housing he would wish to pursue the option of relocating his business to a smaller, modern site in the area. That said, there are some significant planning obstacles which would need to be overcome including change of use and/ or business access issues. However, if these issues could be addressed, the Valley would particularly benefit from the application of the requirements of Housing Policy 2.

Cerne Abbas First School. There is considerable community support for a new Cerne Abbas First School to be built at a site on Simsay, but its future is still uncertain due to current funding constraints. If the new school is built at this site it could open up the potential for a small scale development of a mixture of open market and affordable housing of a range of sizes next to the school.

However, consultation has indicated a significant resistance to any further encroachment on Simsay at this stage. Extending the DDB to facilitate further development does remain an option to be considered at a future date, although it is noted there would be some opposition to losing existing green space currently enjoyed by the community.

Any future development in this area would also need to include appropriate traffic management arrangements to address both pedestrian and traffic movement in what is already a very constricted area of the village.

If a new school is built at Simsay one further issue to be considered is the development potential of the present school site, including the playing field area owned by the Dorset County Council on the other side of Duck Street. Dealing first with the playing field area, consultation has indicated this is a valued community asset both as a play area for children and as a valuable village green space. Any proposal for developing housing on this site would necessarily be subject to potential flooding considerations, given its position as a “High Flood Risk Zone” as defined by the Environment Agency. As regards to the present school buildings, these would be suitable for conversion to homes, subject to careful conservation design being achieved.

One example of potential in-fill development which was highlighted during consultation was Mill Lane, part of which has fallen into an unfortunate condition. Any future planning application which satisfies the “local character and distinctiveness of the area” standard would be welcomed by residents of the village.

The condition of two Grade 2 listed former shop premises in the Market Square was also highlighted during the consultation process. These premises (within the Conservation Area) have not traded successfully for a number of years. One shop was originally a Post Office, but this business has transferred satisfactorily to the Village Shop. The condition and appearance of these properties continues to be both a blight upon the streetscape as well as being a major concern for the residents of the village. Whilst restoring these properties to successful trading units would be the preferred outcome, the likelihood of this being achieved is remote, given economic trends. Against this background any planning application for the conversion of these premises to residential properties of a design in keeping with the historic nature of this location within the village should be approved.

Godmanstone

The Smiths Arms was previously a well known tourist attraction which was allegedly the smallest public house in England. The premises does not currently trade as a licensed premises but is used exclusively as a residential property. When the property eventually changes hands any application to restore it to a trading public house would enjoy the support of the majority of the village and would be a benefit to the economic prosperity of the area.

Nether Cerne and Up Cerne

Both of these hamlets are in the heart of the Cerne Valley countryside. There are seven properties in Nether Cerne and eight in Up Cerne. The history of development in these locations suggests that, other than an occasional “one off” application to build a house or convert an existing building, the prospect of further building at these locations is likely to be very limited. Further development in these hamlets would have to be subject to planning considerations which ensure the environment is protected and proposals were in total sympathy of the area.

Development outside DDBs

In keeping with the wishes of the residents of the Valley, the Plan places a high degree of emphasis upon any future housing development being contained within the DDBs. That said, it is acknowledged there may be the occasional planning applications for development which fall outside of DDBs. In addressing this issue the Plan is content to endorse the WDDC Local Plan policy relating to “Other Residential Development Outside Defined Development Boundaries”, subject to the merits of each planning application and the development being in keeping with the rural locality in question.

Environment

Environment Objectives

- To ensure future development does not compromise the Valley's landscape, geological assets, built heritage, archaeological sites and wild life habitats.
- To otherwise protect and enhance the Valley's environmental assets.

Policy 6 Future planning applications must consider all flood risk issues, including surface water, flood zones and flood inundation areas, to ensure there is no adverse impact on local flood risk through development.

Water Resources and Flooding

The River Cerne runs through the entire length of the Parish covered by the Plan. Prior to 1986 it regularly flooded, particularly causing problems in Cerne Abbas village centre. During that year, a flood defence reservoir opened which allows sluices to regulate water flow during periods of heavy rain fall. This system provides defence against serious flooding at a mathematical probability of 1:100 years.

Although this system offers welcomed protection and flood control, localised flooding associated with the river still occurs at times of very heavy rainfall. Parts of both Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone are at flood risk, mainly due to surface run-off water from land and problems associated with inadequate or poorly designed drainage systems.

Many of the problems associated with aspects of flooding and the potential contamination of water resources are outside the scope of planning and therefore the Plan. There are however a number of considerations which should be applied to future planning applications which could alleviate the threat of flooding and reduce the risk of contamination of water resources:

1. No new building (other than that related to a flood defence scheme) should be approved within the Flood Risk Zones where these would increase flood risk.
2. New developments, either within designated Flood Risk Zones or adjacent to them, should manage surface run-off to reduce flood risk. The presumption of permeable surfaces to drives and paths should be incorporated into planning applications.
3. Proposed extensions and improvements to existing properties within the Flood Risk Zones should not be approved where these would increase flood risk.
4. Future developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems in planning applications.
5. Development within designated Groundwater Protection Areas should only be permitted if there is no significant risk of pollution.

Landscapes and Sites of Geological Interest

National planning policy places a great emphasis upon the protection of the landscape and scenic beauty of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The thrust of this policy is reinforced by the Local Plan which in particular states:

- a) Development which would harm the natural beauty of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (DAONB), including its characteristic landscape quality and diversity, uninterrupted panoramic views, individual landmarks and sense of tranquillity and remoteness, will not be permitted.

- b) Development should be located and designed so that it does not detract from and, where reasonable, enhances the local landscape character. Any development that would otherwise have an adverse impact on the landscape, seascape or geological interest of the area will only be acceptable if the impact will be adequately mitigated.

Given the recognised status of the Cerne Valley as within the DAONB and with its other designated areas of conservation, the adherence to these planning principles will be a huge source of reassurance to the Valley residents. During the consultation phase of the Plan one overwhelming message was the value people put upon the exceptional landscapes and geology of the environment within which they live, and the responsibility they feel for protecting and enhancing the area for the benefit of future generations of residents and visitors to the Valley.

Wildlife and Natural Habitats

The Cerne Valley lies within the ‘Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase National Character Area, one of 159 distinct natural areas identified by Natural England’. The higher ground to either side of the valley boasts uninterrupted views of the surrounding landscape such as open down lands, ancient field patterns, woodlands, hedges and tree thickets. Looking down on Cerne Abbas the imposing figure of the Cerne Giant adds much character to the area. The chalk downland is designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), European protected sites of international importance.

A number of farms in the area are members of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which encourages less intensive forms of farming. Examples of how this is enhancing the landscape are reverting arable land to ley and permanent grassland to restore habitats to their natural state and the maintenance of traditional landscapes from laying hedges, coppicing and scrub removal.

The Local Plan places great emphasis upon protecting designated wildlife sites, both upon a national and international scale, to protect species from any future development that could adversely affect them, including Natural England’s Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Cerne Valley has a diverse range of habitats and species, many of the latter being ‘Priority Species’, as identified by the NERC Act, 2006. Habitats include Giant Hill, Black Hill and the ancient woodland at Up Cerne. The water meadows near Lower Barton Farm in Cerne Abbas are subject to a Priority Habitat action plan. In addition the chalk grasslands support a rich ecosystem; species such as short hardy grasses, herbs and clover providing a habitat for insects including butterflies, all kept in balance by grazing animals. The species-rich grasslands can contain up to 40 different species of flowering plants per square metre, some of which are rare and close to extinction.

The River Cerne is one of only 161 chalk streams in England (and England has the majority of the world's resource). It is an extremely important habitat for trout, salmon, eels, invertebrates, otters and water voles. Any opportunity to improve or indeed protect this habitat, which has suffered historically at the hands of man, should be explored fully during any relevant planning application.

Treescape

The treescape of the Valley is a dominant feature of the landscape and contributes to the overall beauty of the area. Outside the villages the treescape has varied little in recent history; however, with the exception of a few locations the same cannot be said within the village areas. There are essentially no "street trees", private gardens playing host to most tree coverage by virtue of the environmental responsibility exercised by individuals. This form of civic responsibility should be encouraged, but cannot generally be enforced unless tree preservation orders are in place.

The DAONB Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has identified the distinct combination of trees and other landscape elements that combine to create the distinct landscape of the Cerne & Sydling Valley. Ensuring that any changes are in keeping with local landscape character is a key policy of the Local Plan and the DAONB LCAs are a useful tool in helping achieve this.

Any new housing site development should require an arboricultural assessment, with the intention of identifying opportunities for preserving existing significant and veteran trees and new tree planting in keeping with the LCA. Such an assessment should produce a landscape implementation plan as an integral part of the planning application. This would be particularly relevant to Cerne Abbas Location 1 as described previously and Location 2 given its present industrial use.

Private landowners should be persuaded to nurture existing trees and to implement successional planting programmes, if necessary by statutory bodies promoting coverage of quality trees in the Valley through the application of legal instruments.

Conservation Areas

The Local Plan clearly sets out the duties of Councils for designated areas, with powers granted under the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Councils have a duty to designate areas of special architectural or historic interest as Conservation Areas and make sure that their character and appearance is preserved or enhanced. This will include trees within the Conservation Areas which are protected and trees outside these areas which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The implication of the designation is that greater control is to be exercised over new housing and other development matters subject of planning consent.

This Plan seeks to maintain Conservation Areas. However, modest development of a character in keeping with its surroundings would be acceptable if the balance of advantage lay with improving the overall impact on the location and landscape.

Issues associated with this subject are reflected in more detail in the "Housing" section of this Plan.

Renewable Energy Schemes

The “Vision” for the Valley as articulated in the Plan includes protecting and enhancing the area. Central to this ambition is having regard for the Valley status as within the DAONB and its other conservation designations. Residents have indicated they would strongly resist any proposal for large scale and intrusive renewable energy schemes. Examples of such schemes would include wind turbine and solar panel farms, as well as exploration for or the production of shale gas (“fracking”). Should any such proposals be forthcoming, their potential impact will need to be considered and require as a minimum an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). In general, however, the presumption should be that such energy schemes are unacceptable in the Cerne Valley.

Smaller scale renewable energy proposals are potentially easier to integrate, but could also have an adverse effect on the local environment. Any planning applications for smaller scale renewable energy proposals should only be considered if the technology is suitable for the location, and the scale, form, design and materials used can be satisfactorily assimilated into the local landscape or areas of historical importance. The technology should also minimise harm to the residential amenity by virtue of noise, vibration, overshadowing, flicker, or other detrimental emissions.

Community Infrastructure

Community Infrastructure Objectives

- To protect and maintain existing and valued community assets.
- To guarantee important local green spaces are protected for now and future generations.
- To exploit opportunities to develop new village community facilities.
- To support the building of a new Cerne Abbas First School.

Policy 7 Land in Simsay, Cerne Abbas will be safeguarded for the building of a new Cerne Abbas First School.

Outline planning permission has been obtained by the Dorset County Council for the building of a new Cerne Abbas First School to one side of Simsay, Cerne Abbas. The site is shown on the map in Appendix 3. Given the difficulty in finding appropriate funding and the available land for the school, it is important this site is not developed for any other purpose. In Community Infrastructure terms the building of a new First School is a priority. Currently the school, which has been recognised by Ofsted as being “Outstanding”, is experiencing considerable pressure upon accommodation and the number of parents seeking to send their children to the school. The school is, and should remain, as one of the most vital resources in the Valley and which will continue to contribute to the sustainability of the area.

Policy 8 No development will take place in areas designated as Local Green Spaces in this Plan except where such development demonstrably enhances the use of the space. In addition Community Facilities highlighted in the Plan must be protected, recognising their importance to the sustainability of the area.

Retention of Assets

The Local Green Spaces and Community Facilities are important assets which residents value and wish to keep both on environmental and sustainability grounds. The Local Green Spaces for Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone are indicated on the village maps (see map at Appendixes 4 and 5.). Both categories of assets are described in the tables below.

Green Spaces

- The Alton Lane playing fields in Cerne Abbas, used throughout the year for cricket and football by people of all ages
- The allotments behind Chescombe Close, Cerne Abbas, which both enhance the beauty of the village and are popular leisure facilities
- The green in Chescombe Close, Cerne Abbas, which enhances the living area
- The village green Church Lane, Godmanstone
- The river walk in Cerne Abbas, used by locals and visitors alike
- The small area of green at the junction of The Folly and Back Lane, Cerne Abbas, upon which is sited a red telephone box and a commemorative seat
- The entire garden area of Barton Lodge, thus protecting its impressive treescape
- The Memorial Garden to the south of St Mary's Church, Cerne Abbas
- The playing field in Duck Street
- The field to the south west of Cerne Abbas First School, adjacent to Wills Lane
- The area to the south of Cerne Abbas Village Hall known as Mill Mead

Community Facilities

- The Cerne Abbas First School, educating local children aged 5 to 9
- The children's play area, tennis court and adjoining playing field in Duck Street, Cerne Abbas, used by local children, their parents, pupils of the school and visitors
- Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone village halls, as hubs of community activities for social events and meetings
- Local shops, cafes/restaurants and public houses in both Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone, vital to the local economy and serving local people
- The village toilets in Cerne Abbas, a vital facility used by the numerous tourist visiting Cerne Abbas and local people
- The bus services to Dorchester, Yeovil and Sherborne, as vital links to the major surrounding towns for residents particularly those in employment in those areas
- The Doctors' surgery and dispensary in Cerne Abbas, another vital service catering for people from a wide rural area
- The flood defence system, which has done much to protect locations vulnerable to flooding in the Valley
- St Marys Church, Cerne Abbas and Holy Trinity Church, Godmanstone, as historic buildings and important centres of local worship

New Assets

The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations will give planning authorities the power to require developers to make a contribution towards facilities which will enhance the communities within which they seek planning permissions. Government has announced that, where a Neighbourhood Plan has been approved for an area, 25% of the individual levy will be available to that area, in this case the Cerne Valley. During the consultation phase of preparing the Plan several projects were highlighted by respondents which should be considered in conjunction with future planning applications. These include:

- **Cycle Path** between Godmanstone and Cerne Abbas. Cycling is one of the fastest growing leisure activities enjoyed by people of all ages. Its fitness and environment friendly benefits are well known. The A352 connects the two villages but is not a safe route for cyclists and unsuitable for the construction of a cycle route. A cross country route following the River Cerne has popular support amongst the residents of both villages and could ideally be extended to Charminster and Dorchester.
- **Village Centre Parking** in Cerne Abbas. The current public car park facilities for the village are situated at the Giant viewing area and opposite the village hall. Given their position at the northern fringe of the village, they are not immediately attractive to visitors to the village. As a result on-street parking in the village centre is a constant problem. If a suitable site could be found to develop a more central village car park it would not only address the parking problem, but also attract more visitors into the village and give a boost to the local economy. However no suitable site has yet been identified.
- **Coach Drop-off spaces**. Visitors to Cerne Abbas are good for the local businesses. Coaches do however represent a nuisance when they park in the narrow streets. A parking area just outside the village on the A352 dedicated to coaches, which meets the required design criteria, would allow them to drop off visitors in the village and park up there until passengers are ready to be collected.
- **Illuminated pathway to Village Hall** would overcome one of the disadvantages associated with the Cerne Abbas Village Hall. The hall is well used by local clubs and societies, but lacks an illuminated pathway. The provision of an illuminated pathway to the hall from the top of Duck Street would attract foot passenger use and reduce vehicle traffic particularly in the winter (see Housing Location 1 Cerne Abbas).
- **Speed Reduction measures in Godmanstone**. Godmanstone village straddles the A352 which is narrow in many places. There are no footpaths and therefore the speed of traffic through the village has been a constant concern for the safety of those pedestrians using the road. Any traffic management measures available to reduce the speed of road users along this stretch of the main road would be hugely welcomed by residents, examples of which would include reducing the speed limit to 20 mph or the introduction of 'psychological traffic calming' measures.
- **Superfast broadband**. Dorset County Council has a scheme to roll out superfast broadband to the county. In this internet dependent age, local businesses and increasing numbers of people working from home rely upon fast and reliable connections. Ensuring the provision of superfast broadband connectivity is essential to the future economic prosperity of the Valley and quality of life of people living in it, subject to technical implementation being in harmony with the valley environment.

Economic Considerations

Economic Objectives

- To support and help retain existing businesses within the Cerne Valley.
- To encourage new business growth in the Cerne Valley, recognising its strength as a tourist destination by virtue of its outstanding natural beauty, historical associations and enduring community appeal.

Policy 9 Planning applications relating to existing and new businesses which are in keeping with the Cerne Valley Economic Strategy should receive favourable consideration, subject to them being sympathetic to the character and distinctiveness of the area.

Planning Implications

To achieve this aim, future planning for the Cerne Valley should act as an enabler to allow the economy of the area to flourish. At the macro-economic level, relevant applications supported by the Parish Council which otherwise meet required planning criteria (including the Policies of this Plan and the Local Plan) should be approved by the WDDC . At the micro-economic level, the local communities through the Parish Council, supported by local businesses, must create a business climate and energy to achieve the strategic aim. However tourism will always remain a vital element of the Valley's economy and has the potential to grow further without damaging the environment which makes the Cerne Valley a special place to live, work and visit.

The overall economic strategy for the Cerne Valley is therefore;

- To support the expansion of “home based” activity, particularly using the benefits of superfast broadband access.
- Make it attractive to establishing new small businesses including rural based industries.
- Stimulate farm diversification where appropriate.
- Encourage holiday accommodation in all its forms, where these are appropriate and do not have a significant negative impact upon the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cerne Valley.
- Challenge change of business use when requested, but always in the context of the best interest of the valley economy versus the future viability of that business.
- Promote a climate whereby derelict business properties are encouraged to be restored to a productive economic role, where this is possible.

Context

In economic terms, the strength of the Valley's natural and historic environment is an asset which already makes it an attractive tourist destination. The draw of the iconic "Cerne Giant", the River Cerne, historic buildings and the outstanding countryside does much to support existing retail businesses including the Cerne Abbas Village Post Office Stores, three public houses, a tearoom, craft shop, a farm shop, a caravan site and bed and breakfast accommodation. Other small businesses, including some run from home, provide much welcome local employment.

The rural economy is boosted by the important agricultural role provided by the nine farms, whose contribution towards sustaining the allure of the local countryside is vital. In addition businesses include wedding venues, a catering company and small manufacturing outlets and businesses run from home, provide much welcomed local employment. They also contribute to maintaining the landscape and character of the area.

This existing economic picture would be the envy of many similarly sized rural areas in the country, but not one the Cerne Valley wishes to accept as the status quo. The community is fully aware that many local businesses have been lost in recent years. They are alert to the potential for further erosions of the economy in the future if a passive mind-set is allowed to prevail.

Against this background the Plan is intended to not only support the existing valley economy, but to act as a catalyst to enhance economic development in the future. If this ambition is achieved, it will play an important role in not only sustaining the economy of the area, but also its social cohesion.

Progress v Protection

The long term economic strategy of the Cerne Valley should be to exploit the natural appeal through sustained local promotion and support to both existing and new businesses. In this regard the planning application process has an important role to play in facilitating the stated strategic aim of the Plan, but at the same time protecting the area from inappropriate business exploitation of the Valley to the detriment of the environment which currently exists.

Sustainability

In many ways the development of this Plan has endorsed the view and provided evidence that the Cerne Valley has many virtues which commend it as a model for rural sustainability. When considering the recognised three dimensions of sustainability, namely Social, Environmental and Economic, there is ample evidence to reinforce this claim without becoming complacent about the area's future.

One helpful piece of evidence has been provided by reference to a "Sustainability Checklist" (see Appendix 6) which illustrates there are very many more strengths than weaknesses in this regard. Where there are weaknesses or areas for improvement e.g. flooding vulnerability, building new houses with a view to energy conservation, the need for affordable housing and room for more economic growth, the Plan has endeavoured to highlight opportunities to address these shortcomings.

By doing so the Plan looks to enhance the sustainability of the Valley for the future, which is vital if it is to retain its status as a place that people wish to live, work and visit.

“The Way Ahead”

The Plan has been prepared following much consultation with the residents of the Cerne Valley. As such it reflects the view of people who took part in the consultation process as to how they would wish to see development take place within the Valley over the next 10 years. The Plan is therefore summarised by reference to its nine Policies, the Objectives and Development Principles outlined below:

The Neighbourhood Plan Vision	
	Recognising the Cerne Valley is a special place to live in and visit, we aim to retain this status by protecting our environment and communities, whilst seeking to encourage change which will enhance the appeal of the area, as well as its sustainability.
Overall Strategic Objectives	
	<p>To aim to satisfying the diverse housing needs for all by meeting the changing demographic and social requirements.</p> <p>To ensuring that any new development is built within Defined Development Boundaries and accords with density levels, where defined.</p> <p>To keep housing development to small scale, designed to a high quality which is sustainable, reflecting the local character and distinctiveness of the area.</p> <p>To preserve the sustainability of the area by retaining and, if possible, enhancing local services and facilities.</p> <p>To protect and enhance the natural and built environment of the Valley, including its landscape, geological assets, built heritage, archaeological sites and wild-life habitats.</p> <p>To support the local economy through its existing businesses, by encouraging new enterprises and facilities which will enhance commercial effectiveness and employment opportunities.</p> <p>To reducing vulnerability to impacts of climate change, particularly flooding.</p>
Housing	
Housing Objectives	<p>To identify locations where new housing can be built.</p> <p>To ensure the majority of new housing is built within DDBs.</p> <p>To meet the housing needs of a diverse range of people wishing to live in the area, including the building of more affordable housing and smaller homes suitable for retired persons to downsize to.</p> <p>To ensure new development is small scale, conforms to any defined density level, is designed to a high quality and is sustainable.</p> <p>To ensure housing is built in keeping with the local character and distinctiveness of the area.</p>

<p>Housing Objectives cont.....</p>	<p>To support the conversion of barns and redundant farm buildings into residential, holiday letting and business accommodation</p>
<p>Housing Policies</p>	<p>Policy 1 Other than in exceptional cases e.g. affordable housing delivered through rural exception sites, future housing development in Cerne Abbas and Godmanstone should be within the Defined Development Boundaries described the Plan.</p> <p>Policy2 All applications for new development should demonstrate high quality of design, use of materials and detail, which reflect local distinctiveness; also having regard to prevailing scale, massing and density and the development principles as set out on page 10 of the Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Policy 3 The Defined Development Boundary for Cerne Abbas will be retained and extended in its North and West corners as indicated in the map in Appendix 4.</p> <p>Policy 4 Defined Development Boundary for Godmanstone will be adopted and used in relation to future planning applications. The village should have incremental growth in character with its history and therefore proposals for new development will be need to demonstrate that they reflect the character and density of the existing settlement as a whole.</p> <p>Policy 5 Planning applications for quality conversions of historic farm buildings, including barns, in rural areas should be favourably considered for residential and/or business uses, providing that the proposals are consistent with protecting the character and landscape quality of the Dorset Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p>
<p>Housing Development Principles</p>	<p>All new-build houses will be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework, Building Regulations and be constructed to minimum standards in accordance with Code 4 of the Governments “Code for Sustainable Houses”.</p> <p>All new-build houses must also be constructed to a quality design and of materials which are sympathetic to the character of the environment they are to be built in. This character is described in the relevant conservation area appraisals and landscape character assessments.</p> <p>The height and density of development should be reduced where the sites are more prominent. New-build housing in Godmanstone should not exceed the density level of three houses per acre as a general guide.</p> <p>Any application to build open market housing where the numbers exceed three should meet the WDDC target of including a minimum of 35% of affordable housing. The most recent housing needs assessment indicates 14 affordable homes are needed in the Cerne Valley.</p> <p>There should be a presumption in favour of the construction of affordable housing, provided applications accord with the principles contained within the Plan.</p> <p>Where this is not possible, a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing should be required for any shortfall that cannot be delivered on the site.</p>

<p>Housing Development Principles cont....</p>	<p>No planning application should be approved if it compromises the status of the Valley as it applies to being an AONB and its other designated areas of conservation.</p> <p>No planning application should be approved in Flood Risk Zones or where there would be an added risk of flooding.</p> <p>Any new building should be designed to minimise surface water run off to reduce flooding risk.</p> <p>Existing significant green spaces and trees(as identified through an arboricultural assessment) should be preserved and new trees planted in the event of any future small scale development.</p> <p>Developers will be responsible for ensuring Environmental Impact Assessments are conducted as part of all future planning applications, when appropriate.</p> <p>Planning applications should require existing and planned utilities such as electrical and telephone cables to be put underground where reasonable and practical.</p>
<p>Environment</p>	
<p>Environment Objectives</p>	<p>To ensure future development does not compromise the Valley's landscape, geological assets, built heritage, archaeological sites and wild life habitats.</p> <p>To otherwise protect and enhance the Valley's environmental assets.</p>
<p>Environment Policies</p>	<p>Policy 6 Future Planning applications must consider all flood risk issues, including surface water, flood zones, flood inundation areas, to ensure there is no adverse impact upon local flood risk through development.</p>
<p>Community Infrastructure</p>	
<p>Community Infrastructure Objectives</p>	<p>To protect and maintain existing and valued community assets.</p> <p>To guarantee important local green spaces are protected for now and future generations.</p> <p>To exploit opportunities to develop new village community facilities.</p> <p>To support the building of a new Cerne Abbas First School.</p>
<p>Community Infrastructure Policies</p>	<p>Policy 7 Land in Simsay in Cerne Abbas will be safeguarded for the building of a new Cerne Abbas First School.</p> <p>Policy 8 No development will take place in areas designated as Local Green Spaces in this Plan except where such development demonstrably enhances the use of the space. In addition Community Facilities highlighted in the Plan must be protected, recognising their importance to the sustainability of the area.</p>

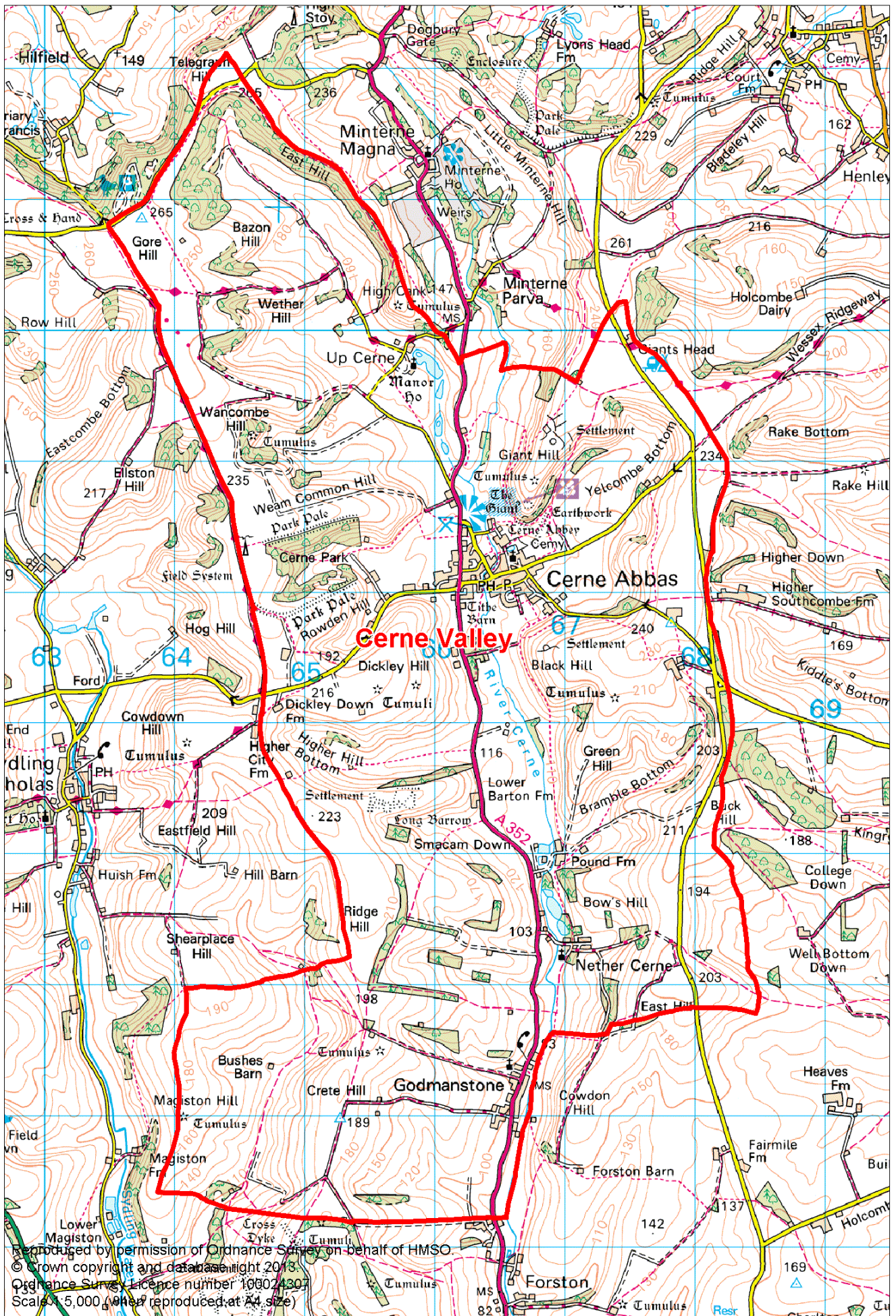
Economic Considerations

Economic Considerations Objectives	To support and help retain existing businesses within the Cerne Valley. To encourage new business growth in the Cerne Valley, recognising its strength as a tourist destination by virtue of its outstanding natural beauty, historical associations and enduring community appeal.
Economic Considerations Policies	Policy 9 Planning applications relating to existing and new businesses which are in keeping with the Cerne Valley Economic Strategy should receive favourable consideration, subject to them meeting planning requirements including being sympathetic to the character and distinctiveness of the area.

Appendices

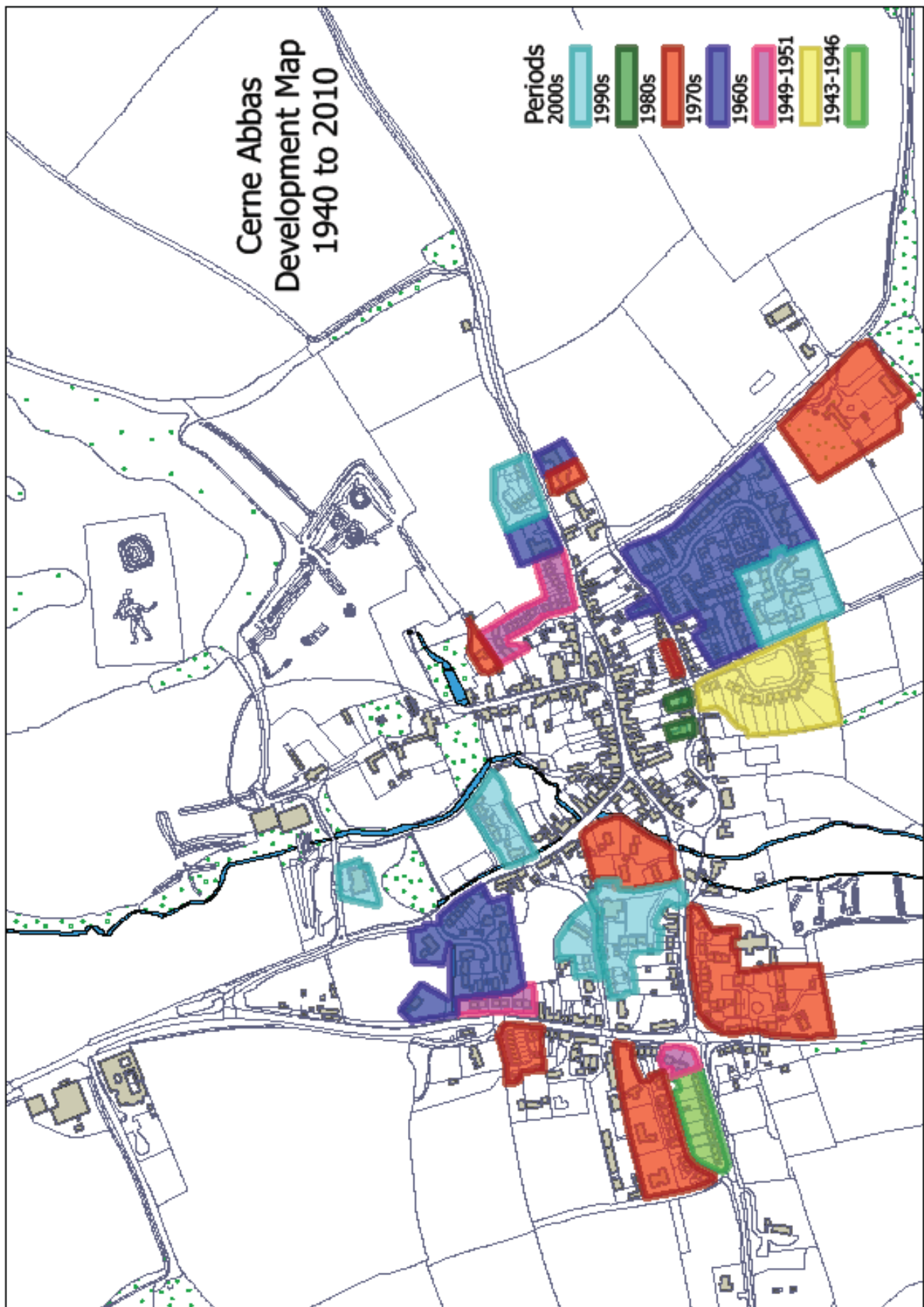
Appendix 1	Map of Cerne Valley Parish Council area
Appendix 2	Cerne Abbas historic development map
Appendix 3	Godmanstone historic development map
Appendix 4	Cerne Abbas policy map
Appendix 5	Godmanstone policy map
Appendix 6	Sustainability check list

Appendix 1: Cerne Valley Parish Council area



Appendix 2: Cerne Abbas historic development map

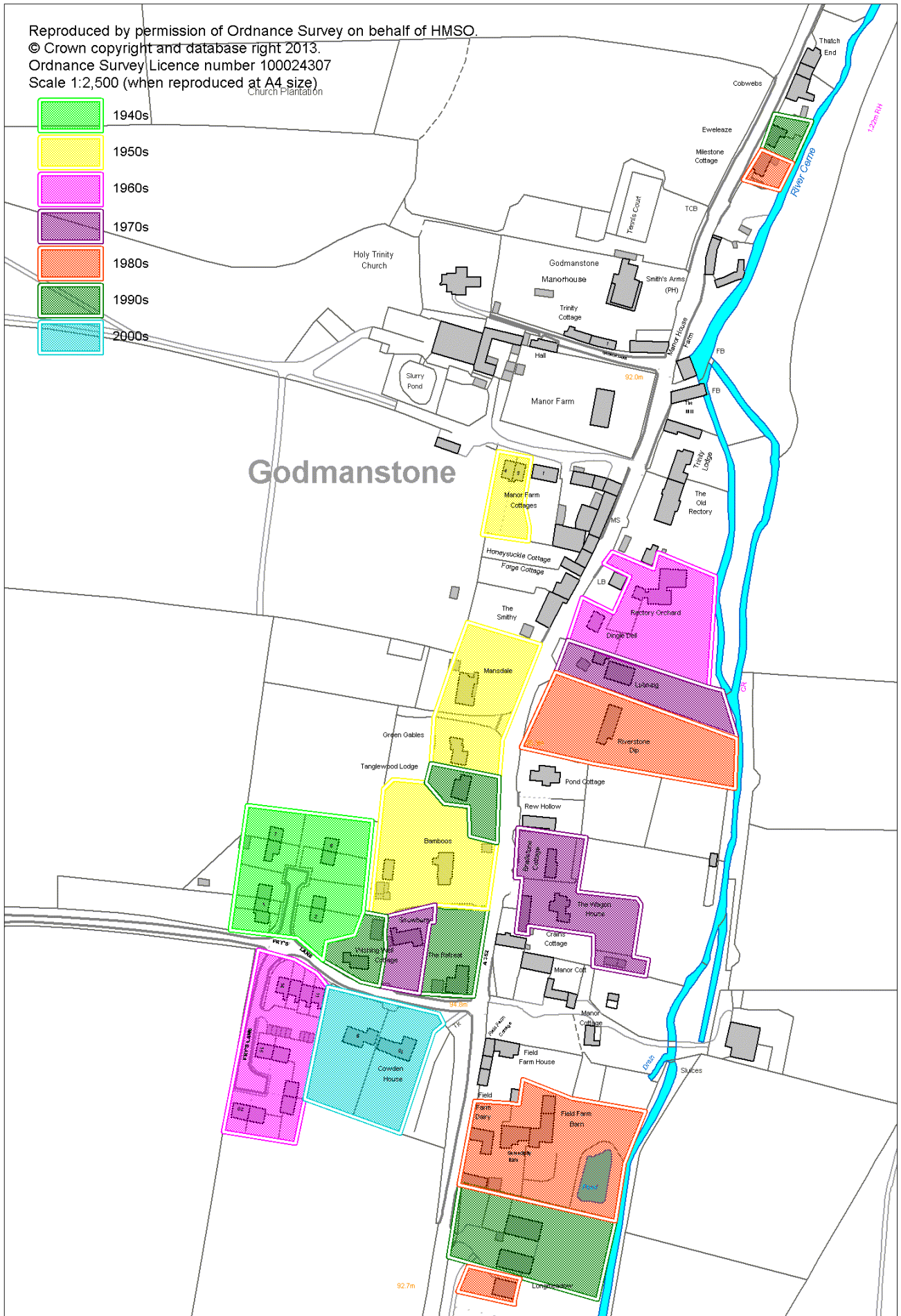
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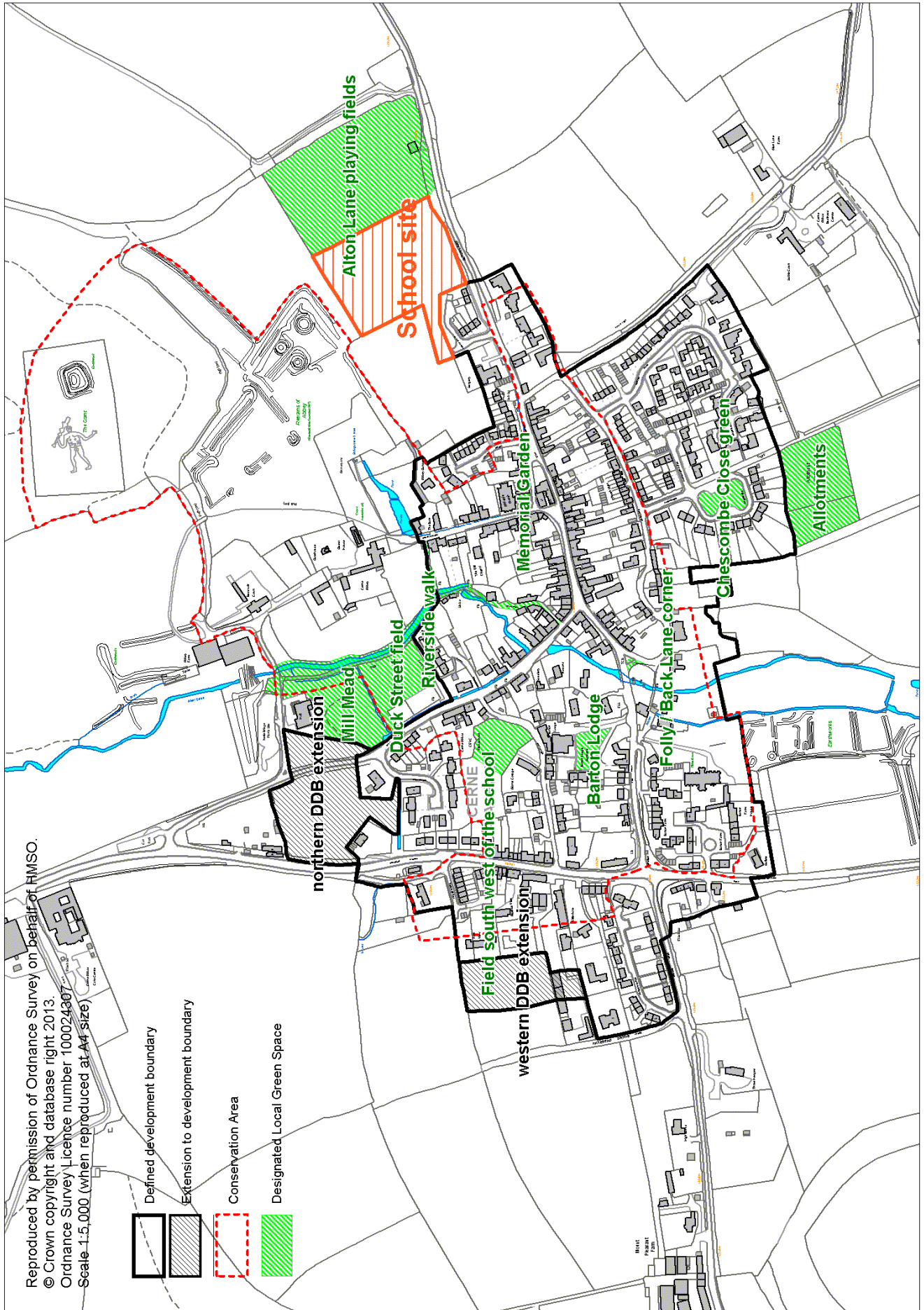
Appendix 3: Godmanstone historic development map

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- 1940s
- 1950s
- 1960s
- 1970s
- 1980s
- 1990s
- 2000s






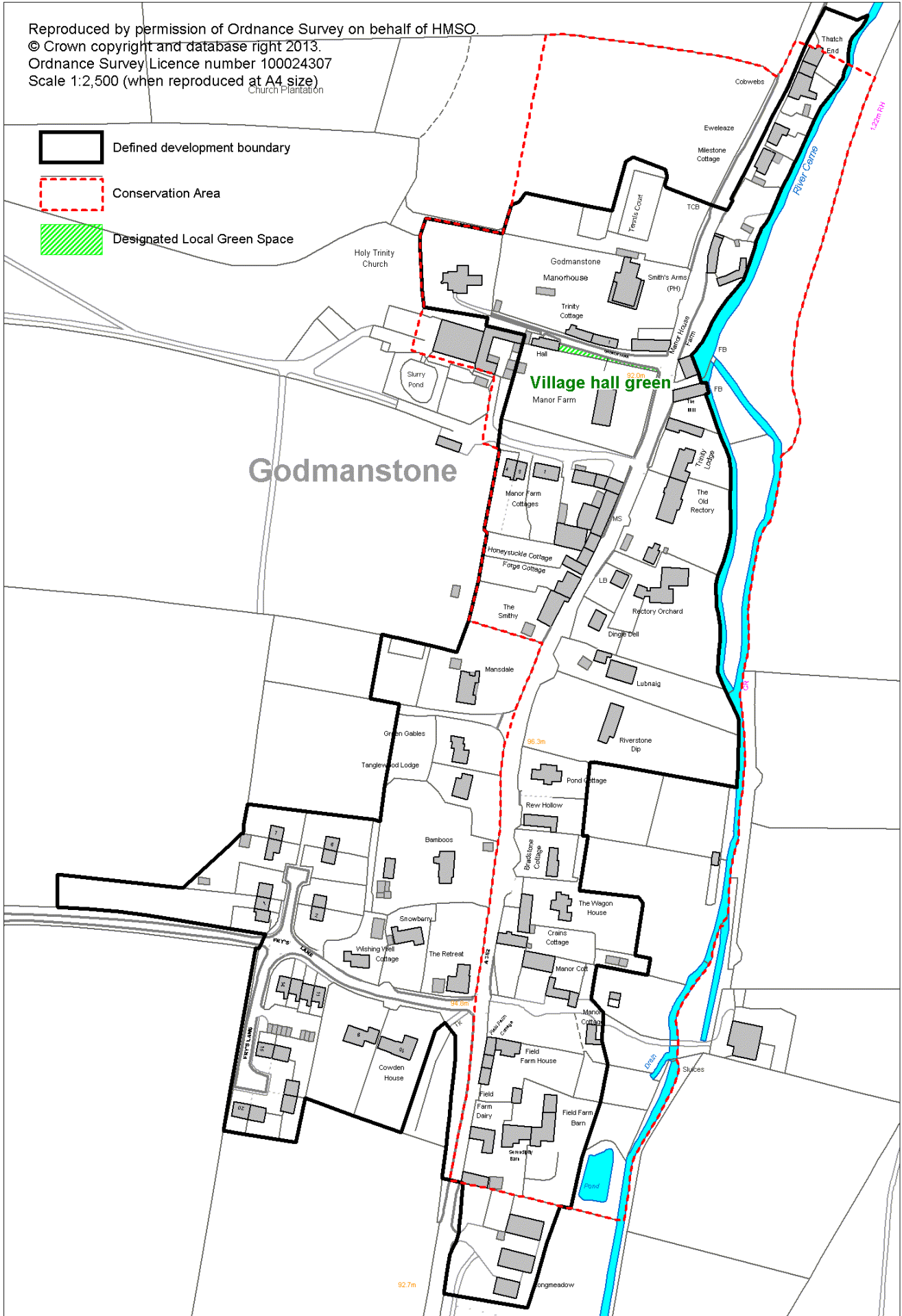
Appendix 4: Cerne Abbas policy map



Appendix 5: Godmanstone policy map

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 Church Plantation

-  Defined development boundary
-  Conservation Area
-  Designated Local Green Space



Appendix 6: Sustainability check list

Sustainability Objective	Decision-making criteria	Impact		Notes
		+ve	-ve	
1. To maintain or enhance features of historic and cultural importance	How will it impact upon archaeological sites, scheduled ancient monuments, conservation areas and listed buildings, in addition to other culturally important features?	+		Enhanced emphasis upon protection of these sites/areas.
	How will it impact upon the special character of the Dorset AONB?	+		Reinforcement of fact the Parish is a Dorset ANOB as well as highlighting other local features.
	How will it impact upon the distinctive qualities and features of the area?	+		
3. To reduce the contribution to climate change	How will it impact upon air quality and produce greenhouse gases?		0	The requirement to build new houses to high standards of design including energy, conservation etc.
	How will it impact upon energy and water conservation and efficiency?	+		
	How will it impact upon vulnerability to flooding, sea level rise and coastal erosion?	+		Heavy emphasis for future new builds not to compromise flood risk areas. Protection of agricultural land.
4. To reduce vulnerability to climate change	How will it impact upon self-sufficiency and resilience to climate change impacts?		0	
	How will it impact upon productive agricultural land, which provides local food security?		0	
	How will it impact upon soil quality, particularly productive agricultural land?		0	Preserve existing water quality.
5. To maintain or enhance soil and water quality	How will it impact upon water quality?	+		
	How will it impact upon habitats, species and sites of wildlife interest, and designated areas on the basis of ecological importance (such as SAC, SPA, SSSI and SNCI)?	+		Protection of current sites within the Parish.
	How will it impact upon the provision of new or improved wildlife habitats and corridors?		0	
6. To protect or enhance biodiversity, geodiversity and the quality of natural habitats	How will it impact upon sites of geological interest?		0	
	How will it impact upon access to essential services (such as health facilities), leisure facilities, community facilities, and cultural activities by sustainable modes of transport?	+		Important "Green Space" areas are highlighted and protected. Emphasis upon the identification, protection and enhancement of community assets which contribute towards the area sustainability.
	How will it impact upon access to recreational facilities, such as green open spaces, by sustainable modes of transport, promoting healthy lifestyles?	+		
7. To encourage the development of sustainable, safe and vibrant communities to improve quality of life	How will it impact upon human health?		0	
	How will it impact upon the amount of criminal activity, the fear of crime, and anti-social activity to create a safer community?		0	
	How will it impact upon economic activity or provide employment opportunities?	+		A business strategy is identified. Appropriate new business opportunities will be positively encouraged.
8. To encourage sustainable economic growth	How will it impact upon accessibility to training and education facilities?	+		
	How will it impact upon availability of decent, affordable housing?		0	
	How will it impact upon providing the appropriate type and amount of housing to meet the needs of the local community?		0	Presumption in favour of building new affordable houses to meet current needs.
9. To provide decent, affordable housing that meets the need of the local community	How will it impact upon the number of people that are homeless or in temporary accommodation?		0	