

Heritage and Character Study – Consultation Report August 2017

Purpose

This report summarises details of the coverage of the consultation and responses received with an outline of further actions. The report will be held on the Portland Plan website.

Content

1. Coverage and number of responses
2. Responses raising matters of material consideration and how these will be reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan.
3. Response received from the Local Planning Authority (in full)
 - Annex A – Copy of Notice of Consultation

Further actions

- Submission of areas of correction or additions to the authors AECComm for their consideration in regard to an updated report.
- Inclusion of items of material consideration with the Neighbourhood Plan development

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – August 2017

SECTION 1

Heritage and Character Study – Coverage and Response Statistics

The press release announcing the consultation period (Annex A) was published in the Dorset Evening Echo and appeared on the front cover of the July Edition of the Free Portland News. The Press Release was also promoted through local social media.

Social Media Hits – 2,587

Number of Web page views – 190

Number of Down loads – 49

Approximately – 50 people viewed the hard copy report

Although only 8 specific responses were received including the Local Planning Authority the absence of negative comments implies that generally people were satisfied with the content.

The study will remain on the Portland Plan Website

SECTION 2 – SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS RAISED

The table below includes the substantive matter(s) raised by consultees during the recent consultation and sets out how the draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP) intends to address the ‘issue’ or ‘opportunity’.

Substantive Comment:	Influence on the draft NP:
<i>This island has a freedom of movement you are unlikely to find anywhere else, quarries, coastal paths. Why put paths through?</i>	The draft NP will focus on improvements to existing footpaths rather than more paths, unless they have a functional value
<i>Planning application should be looked at in line with the 'Portland Heritage and Character Assessment' document.</i>	The 'Portland Heritage and Character Assessment' <u>if accepted</u> by the Town Council can be used to support its comments on planning applications. It will also underpin certain policies in the NP, which will, be used by the local planning authority to determine planning applications.
<i>The division into several Character Areas makes sense. Issues to be addressed and ‘sensitivity to change’ make sound recommendations. I particularly support the following:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates an understanding of the particular history of each area • reflect the scale, density and roofline of that particular settlement; • responsive to vernacular building materials, height, scale and massing. <i>I also support retaining gaps between each settlement.</i>	The NP will recognise the history and unique character of the different settlements and include policy intended to ensure they remain separate and different.
<i>It is good to see the emphasis on retaining the history and architecture. over-emphasis on building more houses currently without focussing on those that are empty. no reference to the sports field the car parks are essential to reducing the loss of gardens</i>	The matters raised i.e. empty property, recreation areas and public car parks will all be addressed in the NP
<i>The primacy of the Portland Conservation Area appraisals as a key reference in any planning considerations needs to be made clear.</i>	This will be emphasised in the NP and revised Heritage and character study or linked commentary document
<i>The issue of Permitted Development has not been addressed. In a Conservation Area. These relatively small changes can utterly change the historic character of an area.</i>	Permitted development rights can’t be changed by the NP. The plan could identify specific areas where WPBC would be encouraged to implement Article 4 directions.
<i>Houses on the Officer's Field development do not reflect the vernacular. It should not be used by developers as a precedent for other developments elsewhere.</i>	Design and character are matters to be covered by the NP.
<i>The importance and extent of nature conservation designations should have more emphasis. The whole of the island is a regionally important Geological and Geomorphological site.</i>	This will be given due regard by the NP to ensure all areas that need protection will be protected.

<i>Underline the opportunities that the required restoration of mineral sites offers to enhance character.</i>	The future of quarried areas is a policy area of the NP.
<i>The natural environment is important to the cultural associations and recreation /tourist potential, perhaps more emphasis on these opportunities.</i>	The NP will address the value of the natural environment to the social and economic well-being of Portland
<i>Recognise opportunities for cyclepath and bridlepath development</i>	The NP will help facilitate traffic-free routes. Where possible, by making use of existing tracks/routes
<i>The whole island is of archaeological importance</i>	This will be acknowledged by the NP.
<i>I consider it to be a locally distinct feature of Portland where open countryside areas extend into settlements and when the quarries are properly restored it will be a very positive feature.</i>	The need to protect the unique setting of the settlements is something that will be addressed by the NP.
<i>Portland is known for its sparse trees cover and therefore reference to more tree planting and retaining vegetated front gardens should be used more sparingly and indicate specific locations where relevant.</i>	This will be recognised by the NP.
<i>The importance of the Stone Pier in terms of the shipping of stone etc needs to be recognised.</i>	The NP will include a policy about the old piers.
<i>Chiswell has origins in fishing.</i>	Point noted.
<i>The wide-open spaces and extensive spectacular coastal views are key characteristics for LCA 02.</i>	The unique character will be recognised in any policy relating to the Port area in the NP.
<i>The 3 settlements of Easton, Weston & Wakeham, although they merge in places, there are features that differentiate them. The non-built-up character of this area is also an important part of the setting of the conservation areas at Weston and Wakeham.</i>	The need to protect the setting and character of settlements will be addressed in the NP.
<i>There is no Conservation Area at Southwell</i>	Respecting the historic areas will influence policy in the NP. NP could encourage the designation of Conservation Area at Southwell.
<i>Need to decide whether Southwell's heritage deserves additional protection such as a conservation area designation.</i>	The NP will address the need and the best way to protect the Island's heritage.
<i>LCA 5 – Portland Bill and The Jurassic Coast – the Jurassic coast designation goes around the entire coastline of the island perhaps you should re-name this area or amend the plan. Need to acknowledge the undeveloped character of the area and make the point that development here would be the exception.</i>	The Jurassic Coast designation will be given due acknowledgment in the content and policies of the NP.
<i>LCA 6 – Quarries and open space –should emphasise the importance of the openness and nature conservation and celebrate the Portland Quarries Nature park which is an exemplar project for GI management. Quarries are greenfield sites in the countryside, where development is generally restricted, any reference to development should be caveated as such and not treated the same as an area within a settlement.</i>	The PQ Nature Park area will be supported and its development influenced by policies in the NP

SECTION 3

WPBC COMMENTS ON PORTLAND HERITAGE AND CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

It is appreciated that it is a mammoth task putting together a Heritage and Character study for Portland however I feel there are a few omissions and some of the 'issues to be addressed' and 'character principles' are too generic. Principally it could go further in capturing more of the essence of Portland particularly the very special inter relationship between the natural and built environment. It tends to be focused on built character and in some of the character areas omits reference to large open areas, the undeveloped nature and views that create the unique character.

- Early on in the document there's a need to refer to the Portland Conservation Area appraisals. These are comprehensive in the detail and history and don't need to be replicated in the HCA however the primacy of these studies as a key reference in any planning considerations needs to be made clear.
- The planning policy context section could refer to Chapter 8 of WDWP local plan which sets out specific policies for Portland. In particular for; Osprey Quay, former Hardy Blocks, & Portland Quarries Nature Park.
The green infrastructure section is also relevant as it refers to the Portland Coastline designation, Areas of local landscape Importance and Important Open Gaps. The **policies maps background document** <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/jointlocalplan/west/weymouth> – may also be useful to refer to as it contains the reason/justification behind location of development boundaries and important open gaps.
- The importance and extent of nature conservation designations should have more emphasis. Some are mentioned but there's not a comprehensive list (see attached). In addition on page 12 designations are referred to as 'landscape' designations when there are also nature conservation and geological designations. The whole of the island is a regionally important Geological and Geomorphological site. Whilst you don't need to identify them all hi-lighting the sheer number stresses the very special natural environment and how important it is in shaping character. Particularly the wild, rugged, open, treeless character resulting from natural processes and quarrying. The constraint to development that the national and international designations create could also be made clearer.
- The document could also underline the opportunities that the required restoration of mineral sites offers to enhance character through long term management for nature conservation & public access.
- There is no reference to Heritage Coast which is an important designation.
- The natural environment is important to the cultural associations and recreation /tourist potential, perhaps more emphasis on these opportunities particularly that offered by South West / English Coastal path, water sports and other outdoor pursuits.
- Heritage Assets - archaeology is not mentioned at all when the whole island is of archaeological importance (see list of SAM's attached). It might also be useful to refer to WHS Management Plan in relation to Jurassic coast.

- In the standardised text for managing change reference is made to an 'historical development' section but I couldn't find one. Perhaps there could be a section at the beginning on heritage assets either after the nature conservation designations section or landscape character assessment section. Reference to archaeology could be made here and an overview of number and type of heritage assets on the island.
- The maps are not very clear or user friendly. Assets aren't shown in great detail and should perhaps be broken down to show less but clearer assets on a separate map.
- Key characteristics should aim for clarity and a distilled understanding that can help frame policy in the NP and inform a planning decision rather than raise further questions. For example – why is restoration of Portland Castle a key characteristic and how might the general point 'mix of maritime land uses ...and residential creates a diverse and functional urban settlement'
- In some of the issues to be addressed sections there is the phrase '*many of the development boundaries are adjacent to existing or previous quarries which draws the industrial character into the urban setting*' Implying that it is a negative feature that needs to be addressed. I consider it to be a locally distinct feature of Portland where open countryside areas extend into settlements and when the quarries are properly restored it will be a very positive feature. Perhaps a reference to restoration in the Character Management Principles would be useful here. My concern is that saying '*This can be achieved through physical boundaries including settlement gateways, landscape features and defined land uses.*' could be taken to mean development and this would put these areas under pressure. Maybe clarification that the openness is a positive feature to be retained would help clarify this.
- Similarly in the reference to the wall at HM Prison Grove as an 'issue to be addressed'. This is a defining feature of the area and a listed structure therefore – what is envisaged?. These types of phrases could be counter productive in trying to preserve character as they are open to different interpretations unless it is clarified through a narrative and policies in the NP.
- Reference is often made to retaining vegetated front gardens and trees although the historic character is described and shown in photos as dwelling being hard up to the pavement edge (eg The Verne) and well vegetated front gardens are not a defining characteristic. Portland is known for its sparse trees cover and therefore reference to more tree planting and retaining vegetated front gardens should be used more sparingly and indicate specific locations where relevant.
- LCA 01 - The main title should reflect the different settlements involved and so could consider 'Underhill, Chesil & Osprey Quay.' Text refers to A354 Portland Road but doesn't mention the environmental designations and therefore sensitivity of environment either side plus varying characters. Page 28 – there are important surviving military buildings, for example, the Edwardian, HMS Osprey administration /communications building or early 20th century NAAFI bakery situated by Castletown stone pier; the importance of the Stone Pier in terms of the shipping of stone etc needs to be recognised. Portland Port - very limited description of heritage assets included within the port.

- LCA 02 – The wide open spaces and extensive spectacular coastal views don't quite come through in the key characteristics. Portland Port land is not mentioned and this has a particular wild character because of the nature conservation designations and lack of public access. Although also includes some employment land.. High Angle Battery is part of a nature reserve with high level stewardship scheme in operation. It could be described as a visitor attraction rather than 'derelict'.
- LCA 03 – the key characteristic omits commentary on the 3 settlements of Easton, Weston & Wakeham, although they merge in places there are features that differentiate them. As well as the built-up areas there are also extensive non-built-up area bounded by Easton to the north, Wakeham to the east, Weston Street to the south and Weston to the west. This area has a variety of different uses including playing fields and quarries and provides the setting for the conservation areas at Wakeham and Weston. The photograph on Page 51 is of 'views across open green space from the Furlands towards Weston Street' which shows the open nature of this area. The Character Management Principles on Page 55 talks about retaining settlement boundaries and preventing the coalescence of settlements, but it could say a bit more about the importance of this non built-up area in helping to achieve this. The non built-up character of this area is also an important part of the setting of the conservation areas at Weston and Wakeham. Perhaps that could be given a bit more emphasis. The area shares characteristics with LCA 06: Quarries and Open Space, but is separated from this LCA by built development along Weston Street and at Wakeham. Its inclusion within LCA 03 enables the relationship between this open area and adjoining settlements to be discussed, so this is probably the most appropriate way to draw the character areas. However, it might be helpful under LCA 03 to say that this area shares many of the characteristics of LCA 06 and that many of the Character Management Principles for LCA 06 would also be relevant here.
- LCA 4 - The Character Management Principles for Southwell refer to new builds being responsive to vernacular building materials, height, scale and massing, particularly within the Portland Conservation Area. However, there is no Conservation Area at Southwell, as recognised on Page 63. Perhaps it should say '...within and around the historic core of the village'. Important views are not mentioned for example the views /panorama from the south towards old Southwell, north of the island and the mainland.
- Page 65 & 66 this study should be providing the evidence to decide on whether Southwell's heritage deserves additional protection such as a conservation area designation and if so include it as an '*issue to be addressed*'. Having done so the matter and preparation work should be a bullet point under *Character Management Principles*.
- Page 66, bullet point 3 is a management principle applicable across the island as well as Southwell. ; bullet point 12 should consider the a large number of non-designated assets have already been identified n the Appraisal of the Conservation areas of Portland.
- LCA 5 – Portland Bill and The Jurassic Coast – the Jurassic coast designation goes around the entire coastline of the island perhaps you should re-name this area or amend the plan. Need to acknowledge the undeveloped character of the area and make the point that development here would be the exception. Standardised text doesn't make this distinction. One of the bullets under 'sensitivity to change in relation to Portland Bill and the Jurassic Coastline is "The open agricultural land which provides the setting of Portland Bill and

prevents the coalescence of residential infill from Southwell". Since Southwell is the southernmost settlement on Portland, the coalescence (be it of settlements or of Southwell with buildings at the Bill, is not really an issue. Perhaps it could say something along the lines of "The open agricultural land south of Southwell, which provides the setting of the village and Portland Bill". The Character Management Principles for Portland Bill and the Jurassic Coastline refer to "Development within the nucleated settlements". Whilst there are some buildings and groups of buildings in this LCA, there are no settlements as such. Maybe it should say something along the lines of "Development adjacent to existing buildings or within or adjacent to existing groups of buildings should reflect the scale, density and roof line of adjacent buildings and demonstrate a strong relationship with the coast".

- LCA 6 – Quarries and open space – not very clear from the map exactly what area this refers to. In the positive aspects of character section 1st bullet says *Accessible green space in this area is characterised by disused quarries* which doesn't really emphasise the importance of the openness and nature conservation or celebrate the Portland Quarries Nature park which is an exemplar project for GI management. The PQNP designation including the Aspirational area should be marked on the plan and the SAM. In the issues to be addressed section the reference to 'scarred by centuries of quarrying' could be followed through into the Character Management Principles by reference to 'restoration' of the quarries rather than 'development' within the disused quarries. Quarries are greenfield sites in the countryside, where development is generally restricted therefore any reference to development should be caveated as such and not treated the same as an area within a settlement.

PORTLAND NATURE CONSERVATION AND SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT DESIGNATIONS

SAC's

Studland to Portland

Chesil & The Fleet

The marine environment is of outstanding quality and the waters surrounding Portland, including Portland Harbour are identified as a Sensitive Marine Area by Natural England in recognition of the important marine ecology.

SSSI's

Chesil Beach & The Fleet

Isle of Portland

Portland Harbour Shore

SNCI's

East Weare Camp SY67/027

East Weare Rifle Range SY77/028

Verne to Grove SY67/021

Verne Yeates SY67/019

Portland heights SY67/018

Grove Quarry SY67/025

France Quarry SY67/033

Yeolands Quarry SY77/032

Silklake Quarries SY67/026

Bottom Combe Quarry SY67/020

Pennsylvania Hotel SY67/024

Pennsylvania Quarries SY67/023

Portland Coastal Lawns Sheds SY66/011

Southwell SY67/031

Portland Bill Quarries SY66/017

Inmosthay Quarry SE

Weston Playing Field SY67/034

LNR

Verne Yates & High Angle Battery SY67/B005

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

East Weare rifle range

The Verne Citadel

RAF Portland, site of Rotor ear

Battery 180m E of the Naval cemetery

Portland Castle

Rufus Castle

Portland Open fields

Mesolithic sites near Culver Well

Jan Farnan

Planning & Urban Design Officer



ANNEX A - PRESS RELEASE -June 2017

Major Study Confirms Portland's Unique Character

As part of the work on the Portland Neighbourhood Plan, a study has helped identify what makes the different parts of the Island special today. On the Town Council's behalf, AECOM, a leading environmental consultancy, has taken a fresh look at the Portland in 2017. Their Character Assessment Report provides important, up-to-date, evidence to support the planning policies that will go in the Neighbourhood Plan. Government guidelines say neighbourhood plans should develop policies based on an understanding of the defining characteristics of an area. In doing so, policies can ensure that development responds to local character and history, and reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

The Character Assessment Report has identified six distinct 'character areas' on Portland. It has made recommendations about how development needs to be controlled in the interests of protecting or enhancing their unique character.

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between Portland Port and the Town Council the study document also now includes a separate commentary by the Port concerning their land holding which covers two of the 'character areas'. This should be considered as part of the consultation.

Before the Neighbourhood Plan policies are written, the Town Council is giving local people an opportunity to consider the Draft Character Assessment Report and contribute their own thoughts and ideas.

The Portland Character Assessment Report will be available on the Portland Plan website (www.portlandplan.org.uk) from **9th June 2017** and the consultation period will run until **9th July 2017**. You may make comment via the online form.

It will also be available via Portland Town Council's website www.portlandtowncouncil.gov.uk

Alternatively hard copies of the report will be available at the following locations during their opening times together with forms to make comments upon.

Portland Tophill Library, Straits, Easton, DT5 1HG

Portland Town Council Offices, 52 Easton Street, DT5 1BT

Osprey Leisure Centre, Castletown, DT5 1BD.

