

# **NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN 2011 – 2026 PART 1 EXAMINATION**

## **HEARING STATEMENT**

### **ISSUE 3**

#### **Supporting Economic Development, including retail and leisure**

March 2015



**Question 3.1:** The NPPF confirms the importance that is to be attached to building a strong competitive economy, including support for a prosperous rural economy (e.g. paragraphs 19 and 28). Has the Council attached sufficient weight to achieving these objectives? If not what more should be done?

- 1.1 The Council has attached sufficient weight to achieving the objectives set out in the NPPF to build a strong and competitive economy, including support for a prosperous rural economy. Stimulating economic growth and supporting the recovery of the local economy is one of the Council's corporate priorities.
- 1.2 The spatial approach to economic development is set out in paragraphs 6.8 to 6.13 of LP1. For the four main towns the three elements are:
- identifying and bringing forward key strategic sites;
  - identifying and bringing forward mixed use regeneration sites on the edge of town centres; and
  - improving town centres as the main focus for retail and leisure development.
- 1.3 The strategy of accommodating strategic levels of growth in the four main towns brings together employment opportunities with the vast majority of proposed housing development to support an enlarged workforce. This strategy for the four main towns will deliver more sustainable and self-contained settlements to support the building of a strong, competitive economy.
- 1.4 Growth at the four main towns will support a sustainable and prosperous rural economy across the District. In rural areas local communities have the opportunity to bring forward additional employment opportunities through neighbourhood plans. In the countryside, policies in LP1 also:
- encourage the re-use of existing buildings for employment purposes (Policy 29);
  - support the expansion of existing employment sites (Policy 30);
  - support the provision of tourist accommodation in rural areas, including on farm diversification schemes (Policy 31);
  - support equine-related developments (Policy 32); and
  - permit occupational dwellings where these are required to support agriculture and other rural businesses (Policy 33).
- 1.5 The Workspace Strategy 2012 Update (SED005) demonstrates that North Dorset has more than sufficient employment land to meet its employment needs, as summarised in Figure 6.1 of LP1. This shows that 49.6 hectares of employment land are available against an identified need for 26.2 hectares to 2026.
- 1.6 All employment sites identified in the 2003 Local Plan were assessed through the Employment Land Review (ELR) (SED011) to determine whether they were fit for purpose. Some of those sites were identified as being potentially suitable for mixed

use regeneration. Sites close to the town centres of all four main towns have been identified for mixed-use regeneration. The key strategic employment sites at the main towns were also identified as being ‘fit for purpose’ in the ELR, as they meet the needs of the market and are sustainably located. The Council has also worked with landowners, developers and other partners to bring forward the key strategic sites, as discussed in the Council’s response to Q3.3 and the issues statements for each of the four main towns.

### Question 3.2: Does the Plan do sufficient to encourage the regeneration and enhancement of the main town centres (NPPF paragraph 23)?

- 1.7 The Plan does sufficient to encourage the regeneration and enhancement of the main town centres, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 1.8 One of the key elements of the Council’s spatial approach to economic development in relation to the main towns, as set out in Policy 11, to continue to improve town centres as the main focus for retail and leisure activities. Policy 12 defines the hierarchy and network of the main town centres and also identifies zones of influence from wider retail catchments. In this respect, Blandford and the south of the District look towards Poole, whereas the three other main towns look north towards Salisbury and Yeovil.
- 1.9 Policy 12 sets out the Council’s approach to the definition of town centres, primary shopping areas, and primary and secondary shopping frontages, which encourages neighbourhood plans to take the lead on shaping their town centres for regeneration and enhancement. The existing primary and secondary shopping frontages as set out in the 2003 Local Plan will be retained until reviewed by a neighbourhood plan or through the Local Plan Part 2 (LP 2).
- 1.10 The Joint Retail Assessment indicated that an increase in retail floor space could be brought about by reducing levels of shop vacancies, but given the historic nature of the four main towns in North Dorset, there is limited scope for additional retail development within town centres.
- 1.11 Policy 12 sets out that the focus for main town centre uses should be within the town centres where redevelopment, change of use and the upgrading of facilities should respect the historic character of the towns. Additional provision of employment and / or retail uses could also be made on the mixed use regeneration sites adjacent or close to town centres identified in Policy 12. These include:
- the Brewery site, Blandford St Mary (where the extant planning permission is for housing and employment uses);
  - the Station Road area, Gillingham (which has the potential to provide about 7,500 gross square metres of retail floorspace and where consent for retail development is currently being implemented);

- the Station Road area, Sturminster Newton (much of which has already been regenerated, but still has the potential to provide about 1,250 gross square metres of retail floorspace); and
  - the land between the town centre and Christy's Lane, Shaftesbury.
- 1.12 Policy 12 also supports the provision of markets and additional cultural, recreation and community facilities in town centres or edge-of-centre sites.
- 1.13 In summary, the Council's approach to meeting identified needs including encouraging regeneration and enhancement of the main town centres, as set out in paragraph 6.68 of LP 1, is:
- to seek to reduce vacancy rates in town centre shops and encourage their occupancy, particularly by comparison good retailers;
  - to encourage the implementation of existing planning permissions for additional retail floorspace, particularly in Blandford and Gillingham;
  - to identify locations in existing town centres and sites for mixed-use regeneration on the edge of centres to meet future needs; and
  - to work with local communities to take forward proposals for town centre enhancement and growth through neighbourhood planning or other local, community-based initiatives.

**Question 3.3: Are the employment and mixed use sites listed in policy 11 justified and available? Has consideration been given by the Council to allowing a residential use in appropriate circumstances?**

- 1.14 The employment and mixed use sites listed in Policy 11 are justified and available, and consideration has been given by the Council to allowing a residential use in appropriate circumstances.

**The Brewery, Blandford**

- 1.15 Each of the four main towns has at least one key strategic employment site. Of the key strategic sites listed in Policy 11, only the Brewery Site in Blandford was considered to be appropriate to allow residential use as part of a mixed use scheme. The Brewery was identified as an allocated employment site in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). It was considered to require further investigation in the ELR (SED011) for its potential to be released for mixed use regeneration through the plan preparation process.
- 1.16 Residential use was considered appropriate on part of the site in view of the potential to convert the historic brewery buildings and the close links (via a footbridge) to the town centre. The site now has planning permission for a mixed-use scheme including 195 homes, a new brewery complex and about 3 hectares of new / redeveloped B-Class employment land and buildings. The consent has been partially implemented through the construction of the new brewery complex.

### Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford

- 1.17 Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford covers 4.8 hectares on the northern edge of the town and was identified as an allocated employment site in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030) alongside significant areas of residential development also off Shaftesbury Lane. Part of the site is being developed as the Glenmore Trading Estate and units are currently being marketed. Much of the rest of the site has planning permission for a new Asda supermarket and further employment units leaving no significant potential for residential use. The site is suitably located for employment use in terms of transport links and relates well to existing industrial and commercial development on the other side of Shaftesbury Lane on the Blandford Heights Industrial Estate.

### Land south of Brickfields Business Park, Gillingham

- 1.18 Land to the south of Brickfields Business Park, Gillingham covers 11.7 hectares and is allocated for employment use in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). The site remains 'fit for purpose' as it meets the needs of the market and is in a sustainable location, as demonstrated in the ELR (SED011). The site is owned by Sigma Aldridge, a global life sciences company, which has a presence on the existing Brickfields Business Park. Outline consent (2/2011/0749) was granted for a new UK headquarters building (B1 use) for the company on part of the site, but this has now lapsed. The company are now actively engaged with the consortium of developers taking forward the 1,800-home Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation (SSA) in the preparation of a master plan for the development of the employment land as part of the SSA.

### Land south of the A30, Shaftesbury

- 1.19 Land south of the A30, Shaftesbury covers 7 hectares and is allocated in the 2003 Local Plan. The site was granted outline consent (2/2006/1022) for employment purposes in May 2011 and forms part of a larger scheme, extending north of the A30 including over 800 new homes (i.e. the 'land east of Shaftesbury' site). The permission has now lapsed but the technical capability of the site has been tested. The site remains 'fit for purpose' as it meets the needs of the market and is in a sustainable location, as demonstrated in the ELR (SED011). The site is available and is currently being marketed. The landowner is currently in pre-application discussions with the Council to renew the permission and to produce a Master Plan for the site. The Council is also in pre-application discussion with two potential developers.

### North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton

- 1.20 North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton extends to 6.3 hectares and is allocated (Policy SN6) in the 2003 Local Plan as an employment site. A design and development brief (MTC011) was produced by SturQuest, the local community

partnership, in 2012, which was also endorsed by the Council. The brief includes proposals such as a 'food-based' cluster on the frontage of this site. The planning permission (2/2012/1614/PLNG), which has since been granted includes a masterplan for the site, and in 2013 key pieces of infrastructure were installed on site to create serviced plots.

- 1.21 The Business Park is a joint venture between landowners Dorset County Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and the District Council. The project to install the infrastructure, which is complete, was awarded an £800,000 loan by Dorset's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) through the Government's Growing Places Fund. Serviced plots are now being actively marketed by Goadsby.

### Mixed Use Regeneration Sites

- 1.22 In addition to the key strategic employment sites listed above, the Council has identified a number of sites for mixed-use regeneration close to existing town centres. The regeneration of these sites, together with proposals to support and enhance North Dorset's town centres, will help to meet the needs for office and non-B Class employment uses. In addition to **The Brewery at Blandford**, as listed above, the sites identified for regeneration for mixed use development including residential use, and listed in Policy 11, are:

- **Station Road area, Gillingham.** This site was allocated for employment use in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). The site was reviewed in the ELR (SED011) and assessed as a site with potential for mixed-use regeneration, including residential use given its highly sustainable location at the edge of the town centre. A recent planning application 2/2013/0990 for two retail units on the site has just completed development;
- **Station Road area, Sturminster Newton.** Much of the site, as identified in the ELR, has already been redeveloped with a mix of uses including employment uses in the retained Creamery building, a new care home and social housing development. The Creamery site was developed in accordance with the community-led development brief for the wider Station Road area (MTC012).
- **Land between Shaftesbury Town Centre and Christy's Lane.** Much of this site is in public ownership and is also identified as a site for mixed-use regeneration, including residential use, in LP 1.

**Question 3.4: The sites listed in policy 11 are measured in hectares but the overall target is for 3,630 new jobs. What is the correlation between hectares and job provision and should it be made clearer, particularly for ease of monitoring?**

- 1.23 There is no straightforward correlation between jobs and the hectarage of employment land proposed in policy 11. This is because the number of jobs created will depend on the types of employment (or other) uses that are built. Office

developments typically have low site coverage with buildings, but high worker densities within the buildings. In contrast warehousing typically has much higher levels of site coverage, but lower worker densities within the buildings. Ultimately the number of jobs created will depend on the mix of uses that is built out. For this reason it is considered more appropriate to monitor the delivery of employment land, rather than job growth.

- 1.24 The Workspace Strategy 2012 Update (SED005) sought to identify the need for employment land from projected job growth and concluded that 26.2 hectares of employment land were required to meet the need for projected job growth to 2026.
- 1.25 More recently, the Council has undertaken a rudimentary 'bottom up' check on the figures to inform the preparation of the Dorset LEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SED014). This analysis, set out in Appendix 1, assumes a 50 / 50 office / warehousing split and is based on gross external floor areas and various assumptions about extant (or in some cases now lapsed) consents.
- 1.26 This rudimentary analysis should not be seen as a projection of the jobs that will be provided on the key strategic sites, as different assumptions would give different results. However, it nevertheless provides a basic 'reality check' that the key strategic sites have sufficient capacity to accommodate the overall level of job provision envisaged.
- 1.27 Appendix 1 shows that the key strategic sites at the four main towns have the capacity to accommodate 4,491 jobs, against a predicted need for 3,360 jobs by 2026. The capacity of these sites to deliver jobs is the main reason why identifying and bringing them forward is one of the key elements of the Council's spatial approach to economic development set out in paragraph 6.9 of LP1. It also provides the rationale for promoting the sites in the Dorset LEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SED014).

## Appendix 1: Methodology for Calculating Likely Job Generation on Key Strategic Employment Sites in North Dorset

### Sites Areas

The area of each employment site in North Dorset (and the area of land available for employment purposes) is set out in Appendix D of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study – Employment Land Projections Update 2012 – see Page 68 onwards of the following link -

<https://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=176561&filetype=pdf>.

### Plot Ratios – Translating Site Area into Floorspace

The first stage in calculating the likely job generation on a site is to try and establish the proportion of an employment site that will actually be developed with employment generating uses (i.e. excluding other uses such as car parking, landscaping etc.). This proportion varies both by District and by the type of employment use (i.e. office, industry, warehouse, mixed). Completions and commitments data for each District in Dorset during the period April 1994 to March 2010 has been used to estimate the likely level of coverage on sites to be developed in the future. These figures have been taken from Appendix C of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study – Employment Land Projections Update 2012 – see Page 62 of the following link -

<https://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=176561&filetype=pdf>.

For North Dorset the figures are:

Office	0.23
Industry	0.27
Warehouse	0.62
Mixed	0.22
Total	0.29

### Worker Densities - Translating Floorspace into Jobs

Workers in different 'typical' employment land use classes have different floorspace requirements. Uses such as warehousing (B8) typically have the lowest densities (or largest requirement in terms of square metres per worker) with office (B1) the highest densities. The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study – Employment Land Projections Update 2012 uses figures from the Employment Densities Guide 2010, produced by Drivers Jonas Deloitte for OffPAT and HCA – see Page 18 of this link -

<https://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=176561&filetype=pdf>.

These figures, which have been used across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, are:

Office 12 sq m per FTE

Other Business Space 36 sq m per FTE

Warehousing 70 sq m per FTE

Most sites in North Dorset have B1 / B8 consent and on the basis of a 50/50 split, these figures have been applied in relation to each employment site in North Dorset, as set out below:

### The Brewery, Blandford St Mary

Total Site Area	8.2 ha
Available Employment Land	3.0 ha
Assumed Office Floorspace	1.5 ha x 0.23 = 3,450 sq m
Estimated Office Employees	3,450 / 12 = 287
Assumed Warehouse Floorspace	1.5 ha x 0.62 = 9,300 sq m
Estimated Warehouse Employees	9,300 / 70 = 133
<b>Total Jobs Estimate</b>	<b>287 + 133 = 420</b>

### Land off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford Forum

ASDA Store Consent – Estimated Jobs	300
ASDA Employment Consent – Estimated Jobs	70 - 110 (90 average)
Glenmore Employment Consent Floorspace	5,134 sq m
Estimated Office Employees	2,567 / 12 = 214
Estimated Warehouse Employees	2,567 / 70 = 37
<b>Total Jobs Estimate</b>	<b>300 + 90 + 214 + 37 = 641</b>

### Brickfields, Gillingham

Jobs from Sigma Aldridge HQ consent	250
Remaining Available Employment Land	9.4 ha
Assumed Office Floorspace	4.7 ha x 0.23 = 10,810 sq m
Estimated Office Employees	10,810 / 12 = 900
Assumed Warehouse Floorspace	4.7 ha x 0.62 = 29,140 sq m

Estimated Warehouse Employees	$29,140 / 70 = 416$
<b>Total Jobs Estimate</b>	$250 + 900 + 416 = 1,566$

### Land South of the A30, Shaftesbury

Total Site Area	7.0 ha
Available Employment Land	7.0 ha
Assumed Office Floorspace	$3.5 \text{ ha} \times 0.23 = 8,050 \text{ sq m}$
Estimated Office Employees	$8,050 / 12 = 671$
Assumed Warehouse Floorspace	$3.5 \text{ ha} \times 0.62 = 21,700 \text{ sq m}$
Estimated Warehouse Employees	$21,700 / 70 = 310$
<b>Total Jobs Estimate</b>	$671 + 310 = 981$

### North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton

Total Site Area	7.1 ha
Remaining Available Employment Land	6.3 ha
Assumed Office Floorspace	$3.15 \text{ ha} \times 0.23 = 7,245 \text{ sq m}$
Estimated Office Employees	$7,245 / 12 = 604$
Assumed Warehouse Floorspace	$3.15 \text{ ha} \times 0.62 = 19,530 \text{ sq m}$
Estimated Warehouse Employees	$19,530 / 70 = 279$
<b>Total Jobs Estimate</b>	$604 + 279 = 883$

### Estimate of Total Jobs Generated on Key Strategic Sites in the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1

The Brewery, Blandford St Mary	420
Land off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford Forum	641
Brickfields, Gillingham	1,566
Land South of the A30, Shaftesbury	981
North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton	883
<b>Total Jobs Estimate Key Strategic Sites</b>	<b>4,491</b>