

16. Policies and Proposals for Sturminster Marshall

Introduction

- 16.1. This Chapter of the East Dorset Local Plan sets out the particular policies and proposals which will apply to Sturminster Marshall during the period covered by the Local Plan up to 2011. General land-use policies towards all development in East Dorset are contained in Chapter 6, and general transport proposals in Chapter 7. These Chapters apply to Sturminster Marshall as they do to the rest of the District.
- 16.2. The policies and proposals in this Chapter will be used as a basis for development briefs where these are required and for development control.

The Character of the Area

- 16.3. Sturminster Marshall is the most westerly of the main settlements of East Dorset District. It is a large village, lying between the River Stour to the north and the A350 to the south west. The more northerly parts of the settlement fall within the flood plain of the river. The River Winterborne flows from the southwest to join the Stour just to the north of the village adding, in the past, to the local flooding problems. In 1993 a flood protection scheme was completed by the National Rivers Authority.
- 16.4. The southern parts of the village are on gently rising ground above the flood plain. The A350 which passes through this part of the village is a main route from Poole to Bristol and the north-west and creates substantial problems of noise, danger and pollution in this part of the village. The Structure Plan proposes a Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall Bypass, which will also bypass Sturminster Marshall. The A350 will then be diverted onto this new road. The Bypass will run northwards from the A31, passing west of the village, and thus falls outside the area covered in this Chapter. Proposals for its alignment are set out in Chapter 7 (see paras 7.20 - 7.26).
- 16.5. The former Somerset and Dorset railway runs parallel to the A350 through the centre of the village. Parts of this have now been redeveloped and the railway bridge in Station Road, has been demolished and replaced by a roundabout connecting to roads which follow the former railway track. Adjoining the railway line was a creamery and milk depot, which has now become the Bailie Gate industrial estate, covering about 7.8 hectares. Not all of the land within the estate has yet been developed. Despite this substantial source of local employment, in 1991 about half the workers in the parish commuted to work outside the District.
- 16.6. The northern part of the village, north of King Street and including the Market Place and the church, has been declared a Conservation Area. A statement of the character of this Conservation Area has been published. This will be taken into account by the Planning Authority in considering development proposals within the village.
- 16.7. In addition to St. Mary's Church and the industrial estate the village has a range of other facilities. Mains drainage was introduced in the early 1980s. Other facilities include a Methodist Church, three pubs, a post office, a hairdresser, a general store, a garage, County First School, village hall, and two areas of public open space at Churchill Close (2.4 ha), which provides sports pitches and a children's play area, and at Walnut Tree Field (1.3 ha), which provides an informal riverside open space. A small pay-and-play golf course has recently been developed off Moor Lane. The village is served by a relatively extensive bus service, connecting to Poole, Blandford and Wimborne.

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- 16.8. Recent growth has placed pressure on many of these facilities. The Sturminster Marshall Memorial Hall has recently been rebuilt to meet current demands. Increasing traffic, particularly Heavy Goods Vehicles from the industrial estate, has led to problems on Station Road and at its junction with the A350: Station Road has recently been improved by the Local Highway Authority by the provision of footways and local widening to overcome some of these. However, other problems remain. The school is at or above the capacity of the permanent buildings and will require further development to permanently meet future need. The use of the playing pitches is high, and until the recent redevelopment of the Memorial Hall, they have lacked changing facilities.
- 16.9. The Structure Plan for South East Dorset (1980) proposed substantial new housing in the village, "which should not normally exceed 10 dwellings per year", giving up to 200 dwellings over the period 1976 - 1996. A Consultative Draft Village Plan was prepared in 1978 in the light of the emerging Structure Plan. Although not carried through to deposit or adoption as a statutory local plan, this draft has been used as the basis for development control decisions since its publication.
- 16.10. The policy of development not normally exceeding 10 dwellings a year was carried forward into the First Alteration to the South East Dorset Structure Plan approved in 1990. Under these policies the parish, whose main population centre was the village, grew from 1,145 residents in 1981 to 1,492 in 1991. At 31st March 2000, there were outstanding planning permissions for 32 dwellings not yet built. These represent the substantial completion of the sites identified in the 1978 Draft Village Plan, although a few smaller sites remain and infill or redevelopment sites can be expected to continue to be brought forward.
- 16.11. The 1980 Structure Plan also established the South East Dorset Green Belt, which was shown in the Key Diagram as extending around and beyond Sturminster Marshall. The village was identified as an urban area and excluded from the Green Belt. The 1978 Draft Village Plan defined a policy envelope around the village, which formed the basis for the boundary of the area excluded from the Green Belt in the Non Statutory Interim Green Belt Policy adopted by the Planning Authority in 1982.

Proposals

Housing and Green Belt Boundary

- 16.12. There are no specific proposals for further housing development in the village in the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan. Substantial investment has been made or is now being made to extend the facilities of the village. This has helped to meet needs which have partly arisen from previous development. The definition of the inner Green Belt boundary around the settlement will allow for a small amount of additional housing on land east of Sheriden Way. Further development would involve encroachment into the Green Belt and would create additional needs. The village has already undergone rapid and substantial expansion over the past one and a half decades and the release of land beyond the current extent of the village is not required. Development on 'windfall' sites within the area excluded from the Green Belt is expected to continue during the Plan period. From their nature, the number of dwellings on these sites cannot be predicted accurately for individual areas, depending as they do on the varied decisions of private landowners. Development on windfall sites will be permitted subject to the policies set out in Chapter 6 of this Plan.
- 16.13. The area of the village excluded from the Green Belt is given permanent definition in the Local Plan. On appropriate sites within this excluded area further infill development will be permitted under Policy HODEV1 (para 6.159).

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16.14. Policy SM1

The village of Sturminster Marshall is excluded from the Green Belt as defined on the Proposals Map.

Industry

- 16.15. The site of the former cheese factory at Station Road was granted a Certificate of Established Use for general industry in 1975 and has since been developed as the Bailie Gate Industrial Estate. A new access has recently been provided off Station Road at a new roundabout. The employment which this site provides is valuable and it is the main single employment site in the rural west of the District. Its continued development will be supported although it will be important to ensure that the development provides for screen planting of forest trees on the northern, eastern and southern sides of the site where it adjoins the open level country of the Stour valley. On the north-west part of the site the existing trees in the grounds of 'Braemar' and the hedgerow trees along Moor Lane will need to be supplemented with additional landscaping. In these parts of the site, due to the proximity to the village, including the school, it will be important to ensure that disturbance and intrusion are minimised by restricted height of buildings, by their orientation and the positioning of doors and other openings, by the careful siting of external lighting, and through screening by walling, fencing, earth mounding and planting.

16.16. Policy SM2

The area within which industrial development will be permitted at Bailie Gate Industrial Estate under Policy INDEV1 (para 6.198) is defined on the Proposals Map. The development must provide for substantial screen planting where the site adjoins the open countryside. Where the site adjoins the built-up area of the village the layout and landscaping must minimise the impact on the adjoining land uses, and provide for screen planting between these uses and the industrial area.

Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities

- 16.17. The existing village hall has been rebuilt and extended on its present site to provide adequate facilities for the growing village. It includes changing rooms which can serve users of the Churchill Close playing field.
- 16.18. However additional sports pitches will also be needed to meet demand in the longer term. A proposal for the development of a new sports pitch area is therefore included, of a sufficient size to accommodate a cricket oval and other pitches, located in the Green Belt adjoining Station Road on a site which will be easily accessible on foot from all parts of the village, and by car from the main road network. The land, while relatively level, is outside the area prone to flood.

16.19. Policy SM3

Land at Station Road, Sturminster Marshall extending to 3.5 ha (8.6 acres) will be developed as public open space for sports pitches. The site is also capable of accommodating a small building containing changing rooms and pavilion together with car parking to serve the sports area. Substantial tree and shrub planting will be required as part of the development to provide a screen to the Industrial Estate from the south.

Conservation and Environment

- 16.20. As a result of recent development, the village presents a raw appearance in the landscape from several viewpoints. Additional planting has already been carried out by the Planning Authority along the railway bank at Springfields Farm; further substantial planting is proposed as part of the development of the Park Lea estate. The area where further planting is most needed is on the southern side of the Baillie Gate Industrial Estate. Some planting is already committed there as part of the development proposals on the estate; the opportunity will be taken to provide more extensive planting in association with the proposed sports field.

Transport

- 16.21. The guiding policies on highways and transportation are found with the general policies contained in Chapter 6. These guiding policies relate to cyclists, pedestrians, traffic management, heavy goods vehicles, environment and landscape, public transport, parking facilities and servicing. Appendix A sets out the road hierarchy for East Dorset in 2011.
- 16.22. Chapter 7 contains details of the Local Plan Road Improvement Programme and details the major highway schemes, including trunk road schemes, which are proposed for the period up to 2011.
- 16.23. This chapter contains specific highway and transportation schemes for Sturminster Marshall, and should be read in conjunction with Chapters 6 and 7.
- 16.24. The flow of traffic along the A350 is both fast and heavy. The long term solution will be provided by the construction of the Sturminster Marshall, Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall bypass. Following the diversion of the A350 onto the new bypass, the existing road will be downgraded and appropriate environmental and safety measures will be introduced to manage the traffic. This will provide an opportunity for the greater use of the old road for cyclists to be considered, possibly in conjunction with the disused railway line to provide a longer distance route connecting northwards to Blandford.
- 16.25. Appropriate measures will be considered, including the introduction of physical features where necessary, to limit traffic speeds, increase safety and ease of movement for pedestrians in the village north-east of the A350 Blandford Road and extending to the flood defence barrier on the road to White Mill Bridge. A lorry ban will also be sought in the short term to prevent use of these roads by through traffic.
- 16.26. The line of the former railway provides a potential route for a long distance trailway. Development within the village has not precluded this use, as the railway line has been generally used for roads serving new development. The Highway Authority propose that the former railway line together with the present A350 should be used as the basis for a cycleway and footpath route (Policy RODEV9 para 7.58). Use of the A350 will only be possible following the opening of the bypass (Policy RODEV1 para 7.26).
- 16.27. Under Policy TRANS8 (para 6.352) development will not be permitted which would prevent the creation of a long distance recreational route for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders along the former railway line.