



# North Dorset Local Plan Part 1

January 2016

## **North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 2011 -2031**

If you require further information on this document you can contact the Planning Policy Team:

By e-mail: [planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk)

By post: Planning Policy Team  
North Dorset District Council  
Nordon  
Salisbury Road  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset DT11 7LL

By phone: 01258 484214

Web: [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com)

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Dorset DT11 7LL

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the Planning Policy Team  
on (01258) 484214.**

# North Dorset Local Plan Part 1

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# 1. Introduction

## The North Dorset Local Plan

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) together with the online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides policy guidance to local planning authorities in drawing up local plans and on making decisions on planning applications. 'It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.'<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local plans must be based on and reflect the presumption and include clear policies setting out how the presumption should be applied locally<sup>2</sup>.

## What is a Local Plan?

- 1.3 A local plan is a document prepared by a local planning authority that sets out strategic planning policies. It gives clear guidance on how proposals for development will be considered and is the main basis for making decisions on planning applications. It forms part of the development plan<sup>3</sup> for an area and all planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.4 Local plans provide certainty for local communities and developers about what development will be approved by setting out clear aims and objectives and include policies to guide the overall level of development, where it should go and how it should be designed.

## What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan is a document prepared by the local community (often led by a parish or town council) that sets out more local planning policies. When made, a neighbourhood plan will also form part of the development plan for an area.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 1, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 15, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>3</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

## The Planning Policy Framework for North Dorset

- 1.6 In North Dorset, the planning policy framework will be made up of national policy, the North Dorset Local Plan prepared by the Council and neighbourhood plans prepared by local communities. The Council may also produce other development plan documents and supplementary planning documents to provide more detailed guidance on specific topics or on the development of specific sites<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.7 Part 1 of the Local Plan (this document) sets out the strategic planning policies for North Dorset. Part 2 (a subsequent document) will allocate specific sites for housing and employment growth in the main towns, Stalbridge and the larger villages and will include a review of other land allocations and settlement boundaries.
- 1.8 The two-part approach will see a strategic policy framework put in place in advance of specific sites being allocated (with the exception of the Strategic Site Allocation at Gillingham) and more detailed policies being reviewed. This approach ensures that sufficient provision is made to meet objectively assessed needs, through the identification of broad locations for development in Part 1, whilst also providing some flexibility in Part 2. It also provides choice to local communities in the four main towns, Stalbridge and the larger villages to decide whether they want to lead on defining sites and reviewing detailed policies through their neighbourhood plans, or whether the Council should lead on these matters in taking forward Local Plan Part 2.
- 1.9 Once adopted, the Local Plan Part 1 will replace many of the saved policies in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003. Those saved policies that will be replaced by new policies in this document, and those saved policies that will continue to be retained until reviewed in Part 2 are listed in Appendix A.

### What Period does this Local Plan Cover?

- 1.10 The plan period for the new North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 is from 2011 to 2031. This 20-year time horizon enables the plan to consolidate development that has taken place since the end of the last plan period and to take into account longer-term District-wide needs. However, to ensure the plan remains relevant in the face of rapidly changing circumstances, the Council will commence a review of the Plan by the end of March 2016 and intends to adopt the Plan by the end of November 2018. The early review of the Plan will ensure that it remains appropriate for the District and continues to encourage and secure the development and infrastructure that the District requires. The review will be informed by an updated evidence base drawing on the strategic

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<sup>5</sup> The documents that make up the development plan, any DPDs in production and any other documents that form part of the local planning framework are listed in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is reviewed from time to time.

work underway for the housing market area<sup>6</sup> and functional economic area<sup>7</sup>, and reflect the duty to cooperate.

### The Structure of the Local Plan Part 1

- 1.11 The Local Plan Part 1 begins by explaining the context within which the planning policies for the District have been developed. Chapter 2:
- describes the spatial characteristics of the local area;
  - identifies the key issues and challenges; and
  - includes a vision and objectives to tackle the issues and challenges.
- 1.12 Topic and place-based policies seek to establish the scale and broad location of future development in North Dorset. The topic-based policies establish an overall sustainable development strategy (Policies 1 and 2) and set out a strategic approach to: environment and climate change, meeting housing needs, supporting economic development, and infrastructure (Policies 3 to 15). A strategic approach to development in the District's four main towns, Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages and in the countryside is set out in Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy and amplified by Policies 16 to 20. The largest single area of development in North Dorset will be the Gillingham southern extension. How the development of this site will be taken forward is explained in Policy 21 - Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation.
- 1.13 Part 1 also includes strategic development management policies (Policies 22 to 33) which provide more detail on a range of issues and types of development, including development in the countryside. Part 1 concludes by establishing a framework for monitoring.

Figure 1.1: The Structure of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1

North Dorset Context	Characteristics of the District Issues and Challenges Vision for North Dorset Objectives for the Local Plan Part 1	
Topic-Based Policies	Sustainable Development Strategy Environment and Climate Change Meeting Housing Needs Supporting Economic Development Infrastructure	Policies 1 and 2 Policies 3 to 5 Policies 6 to 10 Policies 11 and 12 Policies 13 to 15
Place-Based Policies	Blandford Gillingham	Policy 16 Policy 17

<sup>6</sup> Eastern Dorset Housing Market Area.

<sup>7</sup> Dorset Functional Economic Market Area.



	Shaftesbury Sturminster Newton The Countryside	Policy 18 Policy 19 Policy 20
Strategic Site Allocation	Gillingham Southern Extension	Policy 21
Development Management Policies	General Policies Countryside Policies	Policies 22 to 27 Policies 28 to 33
Implementation	Monitoring	

1.14 The Local Plan Part 1 as a whole (including all the policies, supporting text and any maps, diagrams and figures) sets out the strategic priorities for the future development of North Dorset. All the policies have been prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development<sup>8</sup> and are consistent with the principles and policies set out in the NPPF and PPG, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

### Neighbourhood Planning in North Dorset

1.15 The Localism Act 2011 gives local communities the power to produce a neighbourhood plan, but whether to do so is a decision that starts with a local community.

1.16 In order for a neighbourhood plan to become part of the statutory development plan for an area it must meet basic conditions to:

- have appropriate regard to national policy and guidance;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area; and
- not breach and be otherwise compatible with EU obligations.

1.17 It will need to be independently assessed and supported by the Council and pass referendum. More information is set out in the NPPF and PPG. Often a neighbourhood plan would be prepared for a single town or parish, but towns and parishes also have the option of working together to prepare a joint neighbourhood plan.

1.18 The first step in preparing a neighbourhood plan is to define a neighbourhood area. At the time this plan was submitted, there were nine designated neighbourhood areas in North Dorset covering 13 parishes and more than 60% of the District’s population. All four towns are actively preparing

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<sup>8</sup> Under Section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 a local authority exercising their plan-making functions must do so with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

neighbourhood plans and in five of our larger more sustainable villages, local communities are shaping the places in which they live and work. There are designated neighbourhood areas for:

- Blandford + (this includes the parishes of Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston);
- Bourton;
- Gillingham;
- Milborne St Andrew;
- Okeford Fitzpaine;
- Pimperne;
- Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann;
- Shillingstone; and
- Sturminster Newton.

1.19 National policy<sup>9</sup> makes it clear that once a neighbourhood plan has demonstrated its general conformity with the strategic policies of the relevant local plan, and has been brought into force, the policies it contains will take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the local plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict.

1.20 Local planning authorities have a general duty to support communities producing neighbourhood plans<sup>10</sup>.

1.21 Where opportunities arise, local communities can also use neighbourhood development orders to enable developments that are consistent with their neighbourhood plans to proceed.

### **Associated Documents for the Local Plan Part 1**

1.22 A number of associated documents have been prepared to support the Local Plan Part 1 including:

- a Sustainability Appraisal;
- an Equality Impact Assessment;
- a Habitats Regulations Assessment;
- a Submission Statement;
- a Duty to Cooperate Statement;
- a series of background papers; and
- various evidence base studies.

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<sup>9</sup> Paragraphs 184 and 185, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Schedule 4B, paragraph 3(1) of the Localism Act 2011.

### Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 1.23 SA is an iterative process carried out during the preparation of a plan to assess the economic, social and environmental impacts of implementing it. Local plans must be subject to SA and an initial SA report was first published in 2010 with the publication of the Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). The different policy options were updated with the publication of the consultation document on the Key Issues for the Revision of the Draft DPD in 2012, and a further SA report together with a supplement has been produced for the submission of the Local Plan Part 1. In summary, it explains the alternatives that were considered in: developing the overall strategy; the selection of sites for development; and the drafting of policies, setting out the reasons for the choices made.

### Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- 1.24 An EqIA is a systematic way of examining whether a new or existing function, policy or process differentially affects any person or group of persons. Two draft EqIAs were produced in 2010 for the Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD. They examined the core policies in the draft DPD and the consultation process associated with its production. A final EqIA of the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 has been produced for submission.

### Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 1.25 An HRA is required to ensure that the Local Plan Part 1 will not have any adverse effect upon any internationally important wildlife sites, including special areas of conservation (SACs) and special protection areas (SPAs). A draft HRA report was published in 2010 with the Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD. It identified key mitigation measures that needed to be implemented. A further HRA report with an addendum has been produced for the submission of the Local Plan Part 1.

### Submission Statement

- 1.26 The Submission Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Regulations require that the documents published for the submission of a local plan should include a statement setting out:
- which bodies and persons were invited to make representations under Regulation 18;
  - how those bodies and persons were invited to make representations under Regulation 18;
  - a summary of the main issues raised by the representations made pursuant to Regulation 18;

- how any representations made pursuant to Regulation 18 have been taken into account;
  - if representations were made pursuant to Regulation 20, the number of representations made and a summary of the main issues raised in those representations; and
  - if no representations were made in Regulation 20, that no such representations were made.
- 1.27 The Submission Statement explains how consultation has been carried out at the various stages of preparation of the Local Plan Part 1. It explains the consultations that have been undertaken at each stage of the Plan's evolution, including the methods used, the people involved, the outcomes of the consultations and how these have influenced the development of planning policies.
- 1.28 In addition, there have been ongoing and informal discussions and correspondence with a number of key stakeholders and other representatives of the District's communities. These include discussions with adjoining local authorities, District Councillors, infrastructure providers, environmental groups, community action groups and representatives of the development industry. This ongoing dialogue has helped to inform the preparation of the Local Plan Part 1.

### Duty to Cooperate Statement

- 1.29 The Government introduced a statutory duty to cooperate in the Localism Act 2011 which requires local planning authorities and other bodies to plan strategically across local boundaries. National policy makes it clear that 'The Government expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities.'<sup>11</sup>
- 1.30 A statement has been produced setting out how the Council has met its obligations under the duty to cooperate. This establishes that there are no unmet requirements from neighbouring local planning authorities in Dorset, South Somerset and Wiltshire in terms of key issues such as housing, employment land and infrastructure provision and sets out the arrangements for maintaining an ongoing dialogue on strategic priorities across local boundaries.

### Background Papers

- 1.31 As part of the ongoing dialogue with the community, a series of topic papers was prepared. Initial versions were first published in 2010 with the Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD. These were updated in 2012 for the Key Issues consultation.

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<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 178, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

1.32 The topic papers have been further updated and redrafted as Background Papers to reflect the format and content of the Local Plan Part 1. They summarise much of the evidence that supports the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 and cover the following areas:

- 1 – Vision and Objectives;
- 2 – Sustainable Development Strategy;
- 3 – Natural Environment and Climate Change;
- 4 – Historic Environment;
- 5 – Meeting Housing Needs;
- 6 – Supporting Economic Development;
- 7 – Transportation;
- 8 – Infrastructure; and
- 9 – Market Towns: Site Selection.

### Evidence Base Studies

1.33 An evidence base has been developed to support the policies in the Local Plan Part 1. The evidence base studies can be seen on the Council's website.

### Using the Local Plan Part 1 to make Planning Decisions

1.34 The Council will assess the appropriateness of any development against the whole of the Local Plan Part 1 except where:

- policies clearly relate only to a specific area (such as a town) that will not be affected by the proposed scheme; and
- policies relate to a specific type of development that is not being put forward as part of the scheme.

1.35 The policies, key diagram, supporting text and any other material within the Local Plan Part 1, including figures, all form part of the decision-making framework that the Council will use to make planning decisions. Many of the policies are criteria based and the requirements of all the criteria need to be met unless it is clear from the wording that they are alternatives.

1.36 Some policies in the Local Plan Part 1 make reference to information that should be submitted with a planning application to enable the Council to make a judgement about the likely impacts of development. The Council has also produced a comprehensive planning application requirements document<sup>12</sup>, which will be reviewed from time to time, setting out the requirements for information to support different types of application. If all the relevant information is not supplied with an application, it will be deemed invalid.

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<sup>12</sup> Planning Application Requirements (Validation Checklist), NDDC (July 2011).

## 2. North Dorset Context

### Introduction

- 2.1 North Dorset is a rural district of some 61,000 hectares. It is the most northern district in Dorset and its neighbouring local authority areas are:
- East Dorset District to the east;
  - West Dorset District to the west;
  - Purbeck District to the south;
  - Wiltshire Unitary to the north-east; and
  - Somerset County and South Somerset District to the north-west.
- 2.2 The 2011 Census figures show that the resident population was 68,600 with just over 50% of the population living in the four main market towns of:
- Blandford (Forum and St Mary) (11,836);
  - Gillingham (11,756);
  - Shaftesbury (7,314); and
  - Sturminster Newton (4,292).
- 2.3 The District's population has grown by 10.8% (6,700) over the last 10 years with most of this growth being focused around the four main market towns.
- 2.4 This chapter explains the context within which the planning policies for the District and the places within it have been developed. It:
- summarises the main spatial characteristics of North Dorset, how it interacts at a sub-regional level and functions at a more local level. These spatial characteristics also provide the context for issues that may require a strategic approach or cross-border cooperation, as discussed in the Duty to Cooperate Statement;
  - identifies the issues and challenges facing the District. Duty to co-operate issues are discussed in Section 5 of the Duty to Co-operate Statement. This establishes that there are no unmet requirements from neighbouring local planning authorities in Dorset, South Somerset and Wiltshire in terms of key issues such as housing, employment land and infrastructure provision; and
  - sets out a vision for how North Dorset and the places within it should develop over the next 15 years, together with objectives to help achieve this vision and address the issues facing the District now and in the future.

### Spatial Characteristics at the Sub-Regional Level

#### North-South Divide

- 2.5 At the sub-regional level, many of the District's spatial characteristics show a north-south divide, however the location of the dividing line, which generally

runs from north-east to south-west across the central part of the District, depends on the characteristic being examined.

### Character Areas

- 2.6 The northern part of the District has a mixed geology and topography where limestone and greensand ridges sit alongside rolling farmland and clay vale landscapes. This part of the District primarily falls within Natural England's Blackmore Vale and the Vale of Wardour Character Area.
- 2.7 The southern part of the District mostly lies over chalk outcrops, with chalk valley, downland and woodland landscapes. This part of the District primarily falls within Natural England's Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase Character Area.
- 2.8 The dividing line between the two is the North Dorset Chalk Escarpment, which runs south from Shaftesbury and west from Blandford Forum. Much of the chalk outcrops of the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase Character Area are included within with the Cranborne Chase and West Wilshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Dorset AONB.
- 2.9 The valley of the River Stour is also an important landscape feature in North Dorset and the District lies almost entirely within the Stour catchment. The River Stour enters the northern end of the District at Bourton and flows south then south-east through Gillingham, Sturminster Newton and Blandford, before flowing out of the District at Spetisbury.
- 2.10 More information on the characteristics of North Dorset's natural environment is provided in the Environment and Climate Change Background Paper.

### Housing Markets

- 2.11 At the sub-regional level the northern part of the District (including the main towns of Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton) tends to look towards the Yeovil and Salisbury functional housing markets. In contrast, the south of the District (including the main town of Blandford) tends to look towards the Bournemouth and Poole functional housing market. There is no clear dividing line between these functional housing markets as they overlap to a certain extent.
- 2.12 For the purposes of preparing a strategic housing market assessment (SHMA), North Dorset falls entirely within the defined Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area. The recent SHMA Update<sup>13</sup> recognises that the northern part of the District has only a limited functional relationship with the south-east Dorset conurbation.

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<sup>13</sup> The Bournemouth/Poole Housing Market Area 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012).

- 2.13 The Meeting Housing Needs Background Paper provides further detail on this and other housing issues.

### Economic Zones and Retail Catchments

- 2.14 Research for the now revoked Regional Economic Strategy (RES)<sup>14</sup> showed that there is a north-south divide in North Dorset between two of the seven functional economic zones identified in the South West Region.
- 2.15 The northern part of the District, including Gillingham and Shaftesbury, lies within the A303 Corridor Functional Economic Zone, which stretches from Salisbury in the east to Taunton in the west. The southern part of the District, including Blandford, lies within the South East Coastal Functional Economic Zone, centred on Bournemouth and Poole.
- 2.16 Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton each primarily serve their own local retail catchment area and their town centres all have a limited draw beyond their respective catchment area boundaries. In terms of wider retail catchments, particularly for non-food shopping, people in the north of the District (Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton) mainly look towards Salisbury and Yeovil whereas people in the south (Blandford) mainly look south-east towards Poole.
- 2.17 More information on economic zones, retail catchments and other issues relating to the economy is provided in the Supporting Economic Development Background Paper.

### Transport Corridors

- 2.18 There are two strategic transport corridors that pass through the northern and southern edges of the District:
- the Exeter to London Corridor, which runs through the northern edge of the District and includes the A303(T), the A30 (which passes through Shaftesbury) and the Exeter to London Waterloo railway line (which passes through Gillingham); and
  - the Weymouth to London Corridor, which runs through the southern edge of the District and includes the A31(T) (which clips the very southern edge of the District at Winterborne Zelston) and the A35(T) (which runs just outside the District to the south of Milborne St. Andrew).
- 2.19 For east-west movements, residents of Gillingham, Shaftesbury and the northern part of the District generally look towards the Exeter to London Corridor whereas residents of Blandford and the southern part of the District generally look south towards the Weymouth to London Corridor.

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<sup>14</sup> Regional Economic Strategy for South West England 2006 – 2015, SWRDA (May 2006).



- 2.20 There is also an important north-south corridor, particularly for freight, linking Bournemouth and Poole with the Bristol area, which includes the A350 and C13.
- 2.21 More information on transport corridors, other transport issues and the provision of all forms of infrastructure is given in the Infrastructure Background Paper.

## **Spatial Characteristics at the District Level**

### **Market Towns and Rural Hinterlands**

- 2.22 At the District level, the pattern of development in North Dorset is one of market towns with surrounding villages set within rural hinterlands. The spatial characteristics of the pattern of development are different in the north and south of the District.
- 2.23 In the north there are four towns and many villages, especially in the Blackmore Vale. Gillingham and Shaftesbury, which are less than 5 miles apart, are the main service centres. Sturminster Newton is located towards the south-western edge of the northern part of the District together with the smaller town of Stalbridge.
- 2.24 In the south, Blandford is the only town and there are fewer villages linked by a much sparser network of minor roads running across the chalk downs.

### **Proximity of Settlements to Facilities and Services**

- 2.25 In the north, the relative proximity to services is high around Gillingham and Shaftesbury. There is also a high relative level of proximity in the west where Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and Marnhull (the District's largest village) are clustered together. The denser settlement pattern in the Blackmore Vale means that the rural hinterlands of the towns are relatively small and, in general terms, most of the population live in relatively closer proximity to a range of services.
- 2.26 In the south, the relative proximity to services is high around the market town of Blandford, but falls away quickly on the chalk downlands to the north-east and south-west. However, there is a corridor of relatively high proximity to services along the Stour Valley, from Spetisbury in the south-east, via Blandford and Sturminster Newton, to Stalbridge in the west. The sparser settlement pattern on the chalk means that Blandford's rural hinterland is relatively large and proximity to services is generally relatively low away from the Stour Valley.

### **The Role and Function of the District's Main Towns and Villages**

- 2.27 Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton each have their own distinctive characteristics, but all are service centres with a range of shops, jobs and community facilities that serve their respective rural hinterlands.

- 2.28 Blandford primarily serves the south of the District. In the north, the main service centres of Gillingham and Shaftesbury together serve a rural hinterland extending into South Somerset and Wiltshire. Sturminster Newton plays an important role in serving the rural hinterland in the western part of the District.

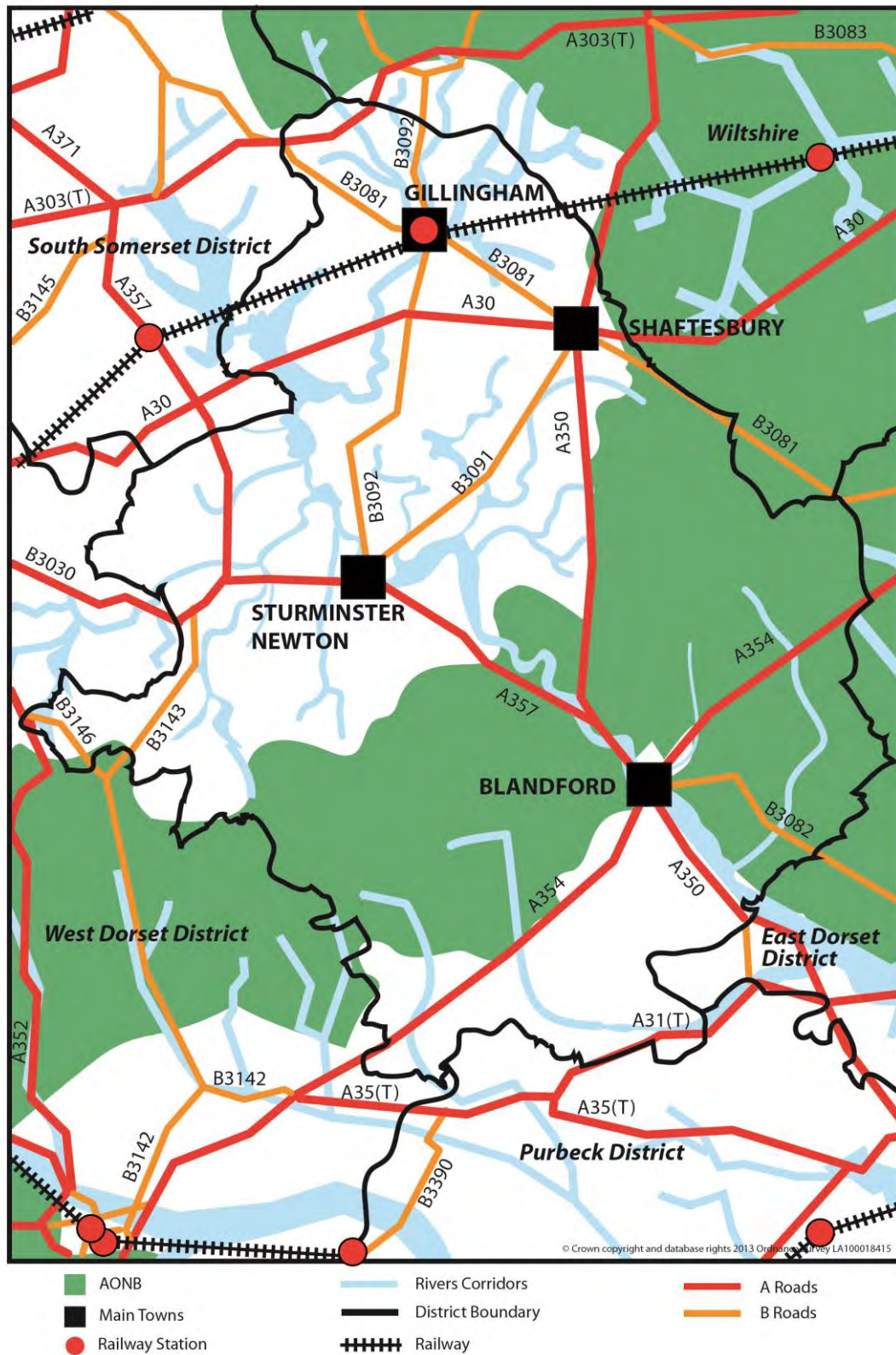


Figure 2.1: Spatial Characteristics of North Dorset

- 2.29 Over much of the Blackmore Vale, Stalbridge and the villages collectively function as a dense network of small rural communities where day-to-day needs can be met locally through relatively short trips. However, over much of the chalk in the south of the District (and in the Blackmore Vale on the south-west fringes of the District), the villages function more as dispersed hubs. Residents living in close proximity to these hubs can meet their day-to-day needs through relatively short trips, but longer journeys are required from some of the smaller, more isolated communities.
- 2.30 Further more detailed analysis of the spatial characteristics of the District can be found in the Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper.

## Issues and Challenges

- 2.31 This section sets out the key issues and challenges facing North Dorset from national policy and at a District and local level.

### Issues and Challenges from National Policy

- 2.32 The National Planning Policy Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It also identifies a need for the planning system to perform an economic role, a social role and an environmental role, if sustainable development is to be achieved<sup>15</sup>. These roles give rise to many issues and challenges for the District. Three key issues are:

- the need to address the causes and effects of climate change;
- the need to deliver more sustainable forms of development; and
- the need to deliver more sustainable patterns of development.

- 2.33 At the District level the challenges from the issues identified above are to:

- deliver higher standards of sustainable construction and encourage greater use of renewable energy so that the District can make an appropriate contribution towards addressing the causes of climate change and to ensure that the risks from the effects of climate change (such as flooding) are minimised;
- encourage the prudent use of resources, particularly previously developed land and water; to achieve higher levels of self-containment in settlements; and to develop a more sustainable transport network; and
- identify the most sustainable distribution of development within the District, for the four main towns, Stalbridge and the District's villages.

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<sup>15</sup> Paragraphs 6 and 7, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

2.34 Within planning's overarching roles, plan-making and decision-taking should be underpinned by a set of twelve core planning principles<sup>16</sup>. With regard to the principle of conserving and enhancing the natural environment, there are two key issues where it will be particularly important for the District Council to work collaboratively across local boundaries, which are:

- the conservation and enhancement of AONBs and the need to foster the social and economic well-being of their communities; and
- the protection of internationally important wildlife sites.

2.35 For these issues, the challenges for the District Council are to:

- ensure that decisions taken locally have regard to the generic national objectives for AONBs and to the specific objectives and policies for each AONB, as set out in their respective management plans; and
- ensure that internationally important wildlife sites are not harmed, either directly or indirectly, by development proposed in the Local Plan or any other planning document.

### **District Issues and Challenges**

2.36 The major issues facing the rural County are set out in Shaping Our Future – Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020<sup>17</sup>, which is the sustainable community strategy (SCS) both for the County and for North Dorset. It establishes key community priorities across rural Dorset, which are reflected in this Plan.

2.37 The SCS notes that North Dorset:

- is a very rural and sparsely populated District with vibrant market towns, some of which have experienced recent high population growth;
- has an ageing population with a high level of migration of young people out of the area. The SCS identifies that across Dorset priorities are to enable children and young people to realise their potential and to ensure that older people are healthy, active and independent in their communities; and
- has a high quality natural and built environment, which needs to be safeguarded and enhanced now and in the future.

2.38 It also sets out the key challenges from parish and community plans in North Dorset as:

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<sup>16</sup> The core planning principles are set out in Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Shaping Our Future, Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010).

- the provision of affordable housing, which is part of the wider challenge for Dorset of seeking to ensure that everyone can live in a good quality home and neighbourhood that meets their needs;
  - improving transport and access to services, including access to vocational and skills training. Across Dorset access to healthcare, essential shopping and leisure opportunities are also important; and
  - ensuring access to high speed broadband to support business growth, which forms part of the wider Dorset priority of trying to foster a strong economy that offers better job opportunities to local people.
- 2.39 Other County-wide priorities identified in the SCS include: narrowing the inequality gap; making people safe and ensuring that they feel safe; giving everyone the opportunity to take part in cultural activities; enabling people to play an active role in community life; and ensuring that people are healthy and that they have access to adequate healthcare.
- 2.40 The key challenges for North Dorset, reflecting the issues identified in the SCS both for rural Dorset and the District, are to:
- improve the quality of life of residents by helping to meet the needs of the older population and enhancing, as far as possible, the life chances of the young;
  - deliver growth that does not harm key environmental features; to encourage high quality design that respects the environment; and to safeguard amenity;
  - provide sufficient housing, including affordable housing, of a type, design and mix that meets the diverse needs of the District;
  - ensure that levels of service provision (both in the towns and the rural area) are maintained and where possible improved; and encourage better public transport that meets the needs of local communities; and
  - develop a more competitive economy that reflects wider sub-regional aims, but also recognises the particular economic characteristics of the District and brings greater prosperity to its residents.

### Local Issues and Challenges

- 2.41 The community-planning model in North Dorset has four local community partnerships (LCPs) focused on the District's four largest towns and their rural hinterlands. The four partnerships are:
- DT11 Forum, covering Blandford and the south of the District;
  - Shaftesbury District Task Force, covering Shaftesbury and the surrounding area including parts of Wiltshire;
  - SturQuest, covering Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural west of the District; and

- the Three Rivers Partnership, covering Gillingham and the far north of the District.
- 2.42 Each LCP has developed its own community strategy which has helped to establish key community priorities at the more local level. Key issues common to all LCPs were identified as being:
- access and transport;
  - healthier communities and older people;
  - economy;
  - environment (including climate change); and
  - culture, sport and leisure.
- 2.43 Two other issues were identified as lower priorities, albeit still important, which were:
- health; and
  - safer communities.
- 2.44 Further information can be found in the Vision and Objectives Background Paper.

## Vision for North Dorset

- 2.45 The vision for North Dorset sets out how the District and the places within it should develop over the next 20 years. It draws on issues derived from national policy, the shared agenda for the future in the Dorset SCS and the common issues identified by the four LCPs. Regard has also been had to the Council's corporate priorities and to the views expressed by organisations and individuals during the consultation on and development of this document.
- 2.46 The vision for North Dorset is as set out below:
- By 2031 North Dorset will:
- be a District that has played a positive role in addressing the causes and effects of climate change;
  - have more sustainable forms of development that are adequately served by infrastructure (including sustainable transport solutions) and make prudent use of natural resources (including previously developed land);
  - have expanded thriving market towns collectively providing homes, jobs and services for those living within them and within the communities they serve;
  - have sustainable smaller rural communities providing local services which enable day-to-day needs to be met locally;
  - have a conserved and enhanced locally distinctive historic and natural environment that retains the qualities that make the District's urban and rural areas even more attractive and desirable places to live, work and visit;

- have more housing, and in particular more affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District;
- be a District that has advanced towards more cohesive communities; that has recognised the needs of the older population; and where the life chances for children and young people have been enhanced;
- have a more robust and prosperous economy (including sustainable tourism) with high quality jobs and skills, focused in locations that best support the District's growing population; and
- have a range of community, leisure, cultural and recreational facilities in locations that are accessible to the local population.

2.47 Each LCP has a strategy with a vision, setting out each community's aspirations for its area. These local visions are set out in full in the Vision and Objectives Background Paper and have informed the policies for the four main towns. In the future neighbourhood plans may also include more local visions for individual towns and villages in the District.

## Objectives for the Local Plan Part 1

2.48 The objectives link the vision for North Dorset to the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 by focusing on the key issues that need to be addressed. The District-wide objectives relate to:

- meeting the challenge of climate change;
- conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environment;
- ensuring the vitality of the market towns;
- supporting sustainable rural communities;
- meeting the District's housing needs; and
- improving the quality of life.

### Objective 1 - Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change

2.49 The objective is to address the causes and effects of climate change by:

- encouraging the use of sustainable construction techniques;
- encouraging the use of renewable energy technologies appropriate to the local area; and
- ensuring the wise use of natural resources, particularly previously developed land and water.

### Objective 2 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment

2.50 The objective is to conserve and enhance the environment of North Dorset by:

- ensuring that North Dorset's wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage are protected and well managed;



- encouraging design that maintains the quality of the District's built and natural environment; and
- ensuring that the District's residents are able to enjoy their homes and public places without undue disturbance or intrusion from neighbouring uses.

### **Objective 3 - Ensuring the Vitality of the Market Towns**

2.51 The objective is to support the role and function of the market towns of Blandford Forum (and Blandford St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton as the main service centres for the District by:

- making them the main focus in the District for housing development, including affordable housing;
- enhancing their employment and training opportunities, particularly through the provision of sufficient employment land, to meet the growing needs of the towns and their hinterlands;
- focusing an improved range of retail, cultural and leisure uses within the town centres;
- improving health, education and community services to meet the needs of the towns and their rural hinterlands;
- improving sustainable transport links and accessibility within the towns, between the towns and the villages in their rural hinterlands, and through improved linkages with strategic transport networks;
- securing the delivery of mixed-use regeneration on previously developed land in accessible locations;
- ensuring that housing development is delivered in step with employment opportunities, community facilities and infrastructure; and
- taking account of the effects of any interaction between the towns themselves and with the large towns and cities in neighbouring districts.

### **Objective 4 - Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities**

2.52 The objective is to enable a network of sustainable smaller rural communities where local services and employment opportunities enable day-to-day needs to be met locally by:

- adopting a general policy of restraint outside the District's four main towns, whilst also enabling essential rural needs to be met;
- focusing on meeting local (rather than strategic) needs in Stalbridge and the District's villages;
- enabling individual rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs, especially through neighbourhood planning; and
- securing the retention, enhancement and future viability of local community facilities and local services.

### **Objective 5 – Meeting the District’s Housing Needs**

- 2.53 The objective is to deliver more housing, including more affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District by:
- meeting the vast majority of overall District housing needs by focusing provision at the District’s four main towns;
  - focusing provision elsewhere on meeting local housing needs, especially the need for affordable housing;
  - ensuring that all new dwellings contribute to overcoming the affordable housing shortfall;
  - ensuring that the type, design and mix of housing reflects housing needs in up-to-date assessments;
  - ensuring that housing is designed to support the changing needs of its occupants and users; and
  - ensuring that sufficient, sustainably located sites are provided to meet the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people in the District.

### **Objective 6 - Improving the Quality of Life**

- 2.54 The objective is to improve the quality of life of North Dorset’s residents, particularly the older population and the young, by:
- encouraging the provision of viable community, leisure and cultural facilities both in the main towns and rural communities;
  - retaining the current range of healthcare and education services and ensuring that additional healthcare and education facilities are provided in accessible locations;
  - ensuring that a network of multi-functional green infrastructure including sport and recreation facilities, open and natural space, is provided across the district;
  - securing an integrated approach to private and public transport (including parking provision and management), which improves accessibility to services; and
  - ensuring that development makes a positive contribution to enhancing existing and providing new transport infrastructure.
- 2.55 Further information can be found in the Vision and Objectives Background Paper.

## 3. Sustainable Development Strategy

### Introduction

- 3.1 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. National policy indicates that ‘*Sustainable* means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations’ and ‘*Development* means growth’<sup>18</sup>. This chapter includes two policies that establish an overall strategy which seeks to deliver sustainable development in North Dorset.
- 3.2 Policy 1 reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development in national policy and recognises that the economic, social and environmental roles of planning need to be pursued jointly. Policy 1 sets out how the Council will take planning decisions in accordance with the presumption and provides guidance on how it will be applied in the District.
- 3.3 Policy 2 establishes a core spatial strategy which will guide the pattern of growth in North Dorset in a sustainable manner. It seeks to concentrate strategic growth at the District’s main towns where homes, jobs and facilities are easily accessible. Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages have been identified as the focus for growth to meet local needs outside of the four main towns.

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<sup>18</sup> Ministerial foreword to the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

## Policy 1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

### Introduction

3.4 The Local Plan Part 1 has been prepared having regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which should be ‘seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking’<sup>19</sup>. Policy 1 sets out how the Council will take decisions in the context of the presumption<sup>20</sup> and the supporting text provides guidance on how this will be applied in North Dorset, particularly in relation to:

- the Council’s positive approach to considering development proposals;
- working proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions;
- approving planning applications without delay (unless material considerations indicate otherwise); and
- Decision-taking where there are no relevant policies or relevant policies are out of date.

### A Positive Approach to Considering Development Proposals

3.5 National policy does not change the statutory basis on which planning decisions are made, since planning law<sup>21</sup> still requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan<sup>22</sup> unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.6 The development plan for North Dorset includes, or will include:

- the Local Plan Part 1 (and, in due course, Part 2). How the Local Plan Part 1 should be used to make planning decisions is explained in Chapter 1;
- saved policies from the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003, which have not yet been replaced (as listed in Appendix A);
- any other development plan documents (DPDs) adopted by the Council; and
- any neighbourhood plan that has been made for any part of the District.

3.7 Material considerations in any planning decision may include:

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<sup>19</sup> Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Paragraph 15, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012) states that all plans should include clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally’.

<sup>21</sup> Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

<sup>22</sup> A definition of the development plan is given in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- draft or emerging DPDs and neighbourhood plans<sup>23</sup>;
  - supplementary planning documents, conservation area statements or other informal planning documents prepared by the Council or local communities incorporating the results of public consultation;
  - relevant sections from management plans, such as those for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or river catchments;
  - relevant sections in community-based documents, such as parish plans; and
  - evidence base (or research) studies.
- 3.8 Within the context of the development plan and material considerations as referred to above, the Council will take a positive approach to achieving the delivery of sustainable development.
- 3.9 Not all planning decisions in North Dorset will be made by the Council. For example, some decisions could be made by planning inspectors at appeal or by the Secretary of State following a call-in inquiry. It is envisaged that other decision makers will also take a positive approach similar to that of the Council when considering development proposals.

### **Working Proactively to Find Solutions**

- 3.10 The Council will work proactively with applicants looking to jointly find solutions:
- in the context of the plan-led system;
  - to secure development solutions that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area;
  - by taking account of viability considerations, where relevant;
  - by considering whether development could be made acceptable by using planning conditions and/or a planning obligation; and
  - by aiming to observe any protocols, service standards or individual performance agreements for dealing with planning applications.

### **Plan-Led System**

- 3.11 One of the national core planning principles is that planning should be genuinely plan-led<sup>24</sup>. In seeking to jointly find solutions, the Council will work proactively with developers to bring forward proposals that reflect the Council's approach to delivering sustainable development as set out in the development plan, including the Local Plan Part 1, which sets out the Council's strategic approach to meeting identified needs for housing, employment and infrastructure until 2031.

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<sup>23</sup> Weight should be given to relevant policies in emerging plans in accordance with Paragraph 216, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

### Delivering Sustainable Outcomes

- 3.12 National policy states that ‘to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system’<sup>25</sup>. The Council will look to work proactively with an applicant to jointly and simultaneously seek gains in all three aspects of sustainable development in relation to that applicant’s proposal. This will be particularly important in relation to issues such as climate change, where a long-term perspective is needed, and in relation to potential impacts on environmental assets, especially those that are protected by legislation and/or are considered irreplaceable.

### Viability Considerations

- 3.13 Relevant policies in the Local Plan Part 1 set out how the Council will take account of the issue of viability in relation to certain developments, such as those that include an element of affordable housing, or those that would result in the loss of a commercial community facility (such as a local shop or public house). The Council will seek to work proactively with developers on the issue of viability in the context of the relevant policies in the development plan.

### Planning Conditions and Planning Obligations

- 3.14 In some cases, it may be possible to make a development acceptable by permitting it subject to certain planning conditions and/or a planning obligation. The Local Plan Part 1 sets out the Council’s approach to the use of conditions and obligations in relation to certain forms of developments, for example occupational dwellings in the countryside (Policy 33). The Council will look to work proactively with developers to determine whether a development proposal can be made acceptable through the use of conditions and/or obligations in the context of the relevant policies in the development plan.

### Protocols, Service Standards and Performance Agreements

- 3.15 During the plan period, various protocols, service standards and performance agreements for individual planning applications may be put in place. The Council will aim to have regard to any extant protocols, standards and agreements that it has adopted as part of its commitment to work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions.
- 3.16 The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has produced a planning charter<sup>26</sup>, with the aim of creating a business-friendly planning system within

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<sup>25</sup> Paragraph 8, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Working Better Together; Dorset LEP Planning Charter, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (March 2013).

the LEP area. The charter is supported by all local authorities across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, including North Dorset District Council.

- 3.17 The Council offers a pre-application advice service (for which a fee is payable) and seeks to give a response to a request for advice within 28 days. Pre-application advice can help people to:
- understand whether a planning application is required;
  - understand how an application will be judged against planning policies;
  - identify any need for specialist input, for example on historic assets or trees;
  - modify a development proposal to potentially make it more sustainable; and
  - ensure that any subsequent application is complete, comprehensive and to a satisfactory standard.
- 3.18 A planning performance agreement (PPA) is an agreement between the Council and an applicant for a specific (usually large-scale) development, which identifies key milestones and timescales (for both parties) for the delivery of a planning decision. The Council may offer a PPA to developers of larger sites as part of its commitment to work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions.

### **Approving Planning Applications Without Delay**

- 3.19 The Council will approve applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 (and any other documents that form part of the development plan) without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Council will seek to work with applicants to jointly try and find solutions (as set out above), to achieve this outcome. However, where such solutions cannot be achieved, applications that do not accord with the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 (and any other documents that form part of the development plan) will be refused, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.20 Approving applications without delay does not imply that that the Council will make decisions in an unduly hasty manner. It means that the Council will make decisions in a timeframe that reflects the need to follow appropriate planning procedures (such as the requirement to undertake adequate consultation) and ensure adequate and proportionate consideration is given to each proposal.
- 3.21 Approving suitable applications without delay will also be dependent on applicants providing relevant information in a timely fashion to enable the Council to make a judgement about the likely impacts of development. The Council has produced a comprehensive planning application requirements document<sup>27</sup>, which will be reviewed from time to time, setting out the requirements for information to support different types of application. If all the

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<sup>27</sup> Planning Application Requirements (Validation Checklist), NDDC (July 2011).

relevant information is not supplied with an application, then it may be rendered invalid and necessitate a resubmission.

## **Decision-Taking where there are No Relevant Policies or where Relevant Policies are Out of Date**

### **No Relevant Policies**

- 3.22 There are unlikely to be many situations where there is no development plan policy relevant to a particular planning application in North Dorset, since many policies in the Local Plan Part 1 are generally applicable to all developments. For example, Policy 2 sets out a core spatial strategy for the whole District and place-based policies comprehensively cover the four main towns, Stalbridge and the eighteen larger villages, and the countryside (that is, the rest of the District outside the four main towns and Stalbridge and the larger villages). Other policies (such as those relating to design and amenity) are also generally applicable to all developments.
- 3.23 Policy 1 is also likely to be relevant to all development proposals, except those which the Council is not responsible for determining, including nationally significant infrastructure projects<sup>28</sup> and minerals and waste developments<sup>29</sup>. Should circumstances arise when all relevant policies in the development plan (including Policy 1) were determined to be out of date (for example as a result of a comprehensive review of national policy<sup>30</sup>), then regard would be had to all relevant material considerations (which would include any new or revised national policy).

### **Relevant Policies are Out of Date**

- 3.24 At the date of adoption, all the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 were considered to be up to date for the purposes of planning decision-making. However, there may be situations where one or more relevant development plan policy becomes out of date. When assessing development proposals, the Council will consider whether any policy in the development plan is out of date having regard to national policy, which states that 'due weight should be given to

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<sup>28</sup> Nationally significant infrastructure projects are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework set out in the Planning Act 2008 and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are considered both important and relevant (which may include the NPPF).

<sup>29</sup> Planning applications for minerals and waste developments are determined by Dorset County Council.

<sup>30</sup> This issue is discussed in *Edinburgh Council v Secretary of State for Scotland* [1997] 1 WLR 1447 and more recently *Anita Colman v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*, *North Devon District Council, RWE Npower Renewables Limited* [2013] EWHC 1138 (Admin).



relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework<sup>31</sup>.

- 3.25 When assessing development proposals, policies that the Council will have regard to include those in the 2003 Local Plan that remain saved, as listed in Appendix A. These policies were adopted before the NPPF was published. However, they form part of the Local Plan for North Dorset<sup>32</sup> and ‘should not be considered to be out of date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of this Framework’<sup>33</sup> (that is, the NPPF).
- 3.26 There may be circumstances when some policies relevant to a planning application are up to date and others are out of date. In such cases the Council will assess and determine the appropriate weight to attach to the different policies, differentiating as necessary between those policies that remain up to date and those that are not.

### Assessing Adverse Impacts against Benefits

- 3.27 Where the presumption is applied in the absence of relevant development plan policies, or where relevant development plan policies are out of date, the NPPF may require a decision-taker to consider whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole. Policy 1 has been written having regard to this.
- 3.28 For the purposes of this policy, the term ‘significant’ means ‘not insignificant’ (e.g. for adverse impacts, the focus will be on those matters which either individually or collectively would cause material harm sufficient to justify the development not going ahead)<sup>34</sup>.
- 3.29 Reference to ‘demonstrate’ or ‘demonstrably’ means that an evidential approach should be adopted in relation to decision-making to enable an assessment as to both the degree and likelihood of impacts (for example the risk of flooding) or scope for actual benefits being delivered.
- 3.30 The Council will also have regard to any conditions or planning obligations that could help overcome any adverse impacts or secure identified benefits.

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<sup>31</sup> Paragraph 215, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>32</sup> The definition of local plan in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework clarifies that the term ‘local plan’ includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act. Saved policies from the Council’s 2003 Local Plan can be viewed on the Council’s website.

<sup>33</sup> Paragraph 211, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>34</sup> The commentary on the meaning of ‘significant’ reflects the views expressed in oral evidence by John Rhodes, one of the witnesses at the Communities and Local Government Committee on 10 October 2011, which was an initial evidence session in their inquiry into the draft NPPF.

### Circumstances when Policies indicate that Development should be Restricted

- 3.31 Where the presumption is applied in the absence of relevant development plan policies, or where relevant development plan policies are out of date, the NPPF gives examples of some of the specific national policies that indicate that development should be restricted<sup>35</sup>. These are equally applicable for the purposes of Policy 1.
- 3.32 In North Dorset, examples include national policies relating to: sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives; sites designated as sites of special scientific interest; local green spaces; Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding.

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<sup>35</sup> Footnote 9 to Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

## **POLICY 1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Council will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- a any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- b specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

## Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy

### National Policy

- 3.33 Core principles in national policy state that that planning should 'actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable'<sup>36</sup> and that planning should 'take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas ... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it'<sup>37</sup>.
- 3.34 National policy also states that 'To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.'<sup>38</sup>

### Core Spatial Strategy for North Dorset

- 3.35 In North Dorset the core spatial strategy has been developed having regard to national policy and the need for sustainable development but it also recognises that different approaches to sustainable development are required in different areas.
- 3.36 The approach to sustainable development in North Dorset has been influenced by the key spatial characteristics of the District, as outlined in Chapter 2. Many spatial characteristics show a clear north-south divide across the District and at a more local level North Dorset is characterised by thriving market towns each serving their own more rural hinterland.
- 3.37 In the north of the District the market towns of Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton and Stalbridge sit within a rural hinterland with a dense pattern of villages resulting in most of the population living in relatively close proximity to a range of services. In the south of the District, Blandford is the only market town sitting within a rural hinterland with fewer, more widely scattered villages meaning that proximity to services is lower for many residents.
- 3.38 Based on this local assessment, the core spatial strategy identifies Blandford (Forum and St Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton as the key strategic settlements in the District and seeks to focus the vast majority of the District's growth in these main towns as they are the most sustainable locations where homes, jobs and facilities are easily accessible.

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<sup>36</sup> Penultimate bullet point of Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Fifth bullet point of Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Paragraph 55, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (2012).

- 3.39 Outside the four main towns, where access and proximity to services is more limited, development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs.
- 3.40 The concentration of strategic development at the main towns, coupled with the emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs elsewhere, also recognises the importance of carefully managing development at Stalbridge and the larger villages and in the countryside. In the recent past, housing development in the rural areas significantly exceeded planned rates, yet did not always enable rural facilities to be retained or enhanced. The Council does not want to see this unsustainable spatial distribution of development repeated.

### **The Four Main Towns**

- 3.41 Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton function as the main centres for services (including retail, health and leisure) and employment opportunities in North Dorset, serving both the towns themselves and their rural hinterlands. Concentrating growth at the four main towns will enable them to maintain their position as thriving market towns, reflecting the vision for North Dorset and Objective 3 of the Local Plan Part 1 – Ensuring the Vitality of the Market Towns.
- 3.42 The four main towns also have the best range of sustainable transport options (such as walking, cycling and public transport) and the greatest potential for further sustainable transport improvements.

### **Strategic Policies for Growth at the Four Main Towns**

- 3.43 Proposals for future growth to meet strategic needs and enhance the provision of facilities and services in each of the four main towns are outlined in Policies 16 to 19. These proposals will be worked up in more detail in the subsequent Local Plan Part 2, except in the case of the southern extension of Gillingham where Policy 21 sets out a strategic site allocation.

### **Neighbourhood Plans for the Four Main Towns**

- 3.44 The core spatial strategy envisages neighbourhood planning playing a key role in meeting local needs in the countryside, and neighbourhood plans are also being produced by communities in the towns. A neighbourhood plan for one of the four main towns will have to generally conform with the proposals for the growth of that town, as set out in the Local Plan Part 1.
- 3.45 A neighbourhood plan for one of the four main towns can allow greater levels of growth (by allocating additional sites for development) or include specific policies or guidance on how new development should be designed.

### Stalbridge and the Villages

- 3.46 Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages have been identified as the focus for growth to meet local needs outside of the four main towns.
- 3.47 These larger villages are: Bourton, Charlton Marshall, Child Okeford, East Stour, Fontmell Magna, Hazelbury Bryan, Iwerne Minster, Marnhull, Milborne St Andrew, Milton Abbas, Motcombe, Okeford Fitzpaine, Pimperne, Shillingstone, Stourpaine, Winterborne Kingston, Winterborne Stickland and Winterborne Whitechurch.
- 3.48 Settlement boundaries around the larger villages are retained while settlement boundaries around the District's remaining villages are removed.
- 3.49 A minimum of 825 dwellings out of 5,700 dwellings District wide will be provided in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) during the period 2011-2031.

### The Countryside

- 3.50 Outside the defined boundaries of the four main towns, in the remainder of the District (including Stalbridge and all the District's villages), development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs. Such needs may be met through:
- countryside policies;
  - neighbourhood planning; or
  - Local Plan Part 2.

### Meeting Essential Rural Needs through Countryside Policies

- 3.51 Policy 20 – The Countryside establishes that certain types of development are appropriate in the countryside. These types of development are described in the supporting text and are subject to more detailed policies including: Policies 3 and 22 (renewable energy schemes); Policy 9 (rural exception affordable housing sites, including small numbers of market homes); Policies 6 and 33 (essential occupational dwellings); Policies 11 and 29 (the re-use of existing rural buildings, primarily for economic development or community uses); Policies 11 and 31 (rural tourist accommodation); and Policy 14 (new non-commercial community facilities).
- 3.52 Policy 20 also establishes a test of overriding need which any other form of development would need to meet in order to be considered acceptable in principle in the countryside. The supporting text to the policy sets out some examples, such as agriculture, horticulture or forestry developments and infrastructure projects, including telecommunications installations and outdoor facilities for sport and recreation.

### Using Neighbourhood Planning to Meet Local Needs in the Countryside

- 3.53 Where a local community wishes to see sustainable growth to meet local needs, but those needs cannot be met through countryside policies alone, they have the option of preparing a neighbourhood plan.
- 3.54 The neighbourhood planning process will enable a local community to identify local issues and needs, develop a vision and objectives for the future and consider different options for meeting local needs.
- 3.55 Any assessment of sustainability should be underpinned by an analysis of the economic, social and environmental issues facing the neighbourhood plan area and incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive where necessary.

### Meeting Local Needs in the Countryside through the Local Plan Part 2

- 3.56 Local needs for housing, employment or other forms of development in the District's smaller villages will be addressed in Part 2 of the Local Plan, where appropriate, by allocating specific sites for new housing and employment development together with other land allocations.
- 3.57 Local communities may recognise that they have local development needs and wish to take forward development proposals by proceeding to get a neighbourhood plan prepared and made. In the event that a community choose this course of action, the Council will work closely with local people to support their proposals that enable them to meet their local needs.

### Settlement Boundaries

- 3.58 The existing settlement boundaries around the four main towns, Stalbridge and the larger villages (as shown on the proposals map of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003) will continue to be used for development management purposes alongside the proposals for housing and employment growth and regeneration, as set out in Policies 16, 17, 18, 19 and 21 of this document. The settlement boundaries may be reviewed either through Part 2 of the Local Plan or a neighbourhood plan. Prior to such a review, the Council will also have regard to the proposals for housing and employment growth and regeneration, as set out in Policies 16, 17, 18, 19 and 21 of this document, in decision-taking.
- 3.59 The settlement boundaries defined around all other settlements in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 have been removed. These settlements are subject to countryside policies, although a local community would be able to establish a new settlement boundary (within which development could take place) either in a neighbourhood plan, or in the North Dorset Local Plan Part 2.

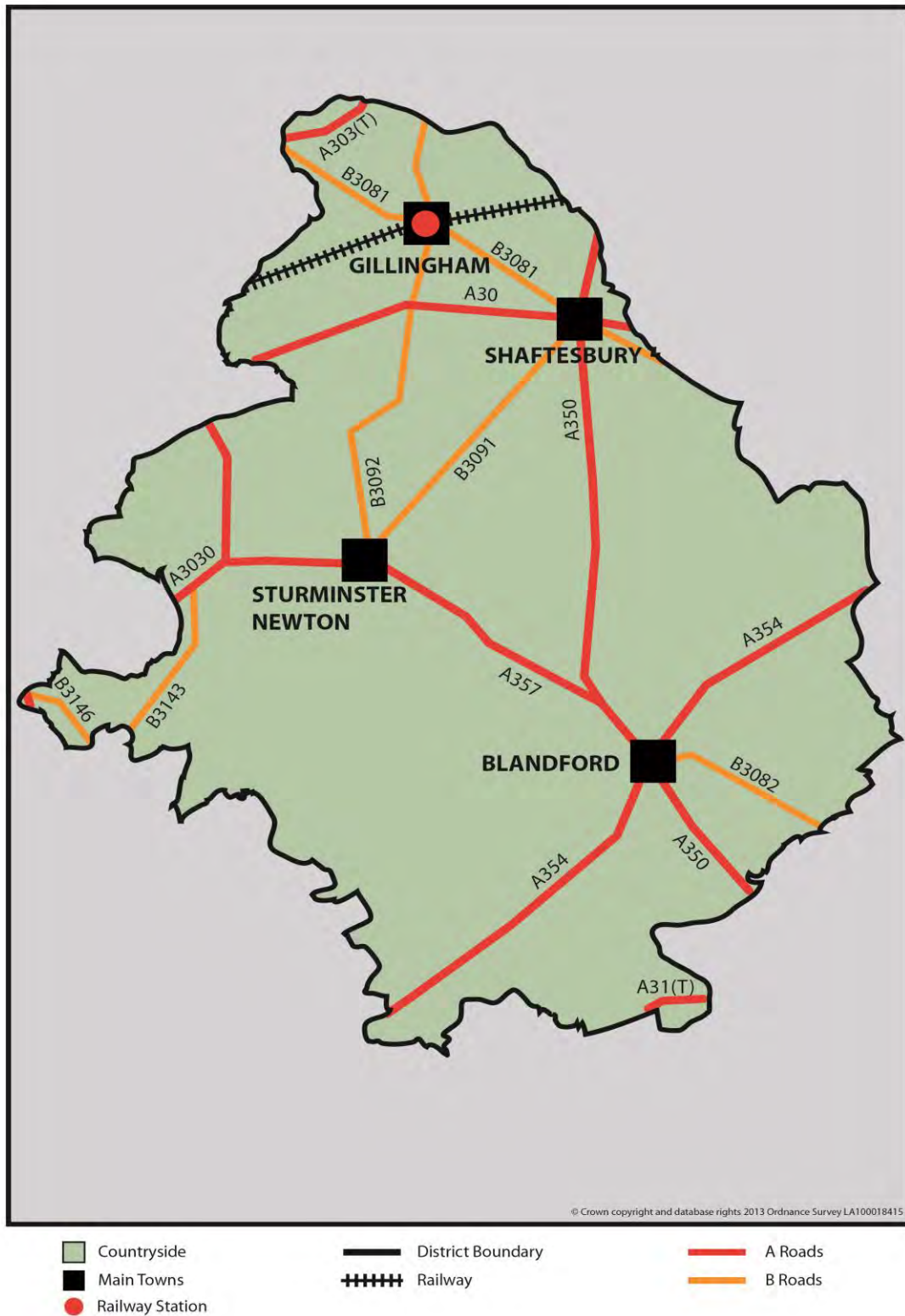


Figure 3.1: Key Diagram for North Dorset



## **POLICY 2: CORE SPATIAL STRATEGY**

All development proposals should be located in accordance with the spatial strategy for North Dorset.

### **The Four Main Towns**

Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton are identified as the main towns in North Dorset. They will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development.

Policies 16 to 19 set out the main locations for growth at the four main towns, which will be shown in more detail in Part 2 of the Local Plan that deals with site allocations, with the exception of the southern extension to Gillingham, which is identified as a strategic site allocation in Policy 21 of this document.

### **Stalbridge and the Larger Villages**

Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages have been identified as the focus for growth to meet the local needs outside of the four main towns.

These larger villages are: Bourton, Charlton Marshall, Child Okeford, East Stour, Fontmell Magna, Hazelbury Bryan, Iwerne Minster, Marnhull, Milborne St Andrew, Milton Abbas, Motcombe, Okeford Fitzpaine, Pimperne, Shillingstone, Stourpaine, Winterborne Kingston, Winterborne Stickland and Winterborne Whitechurch.

### **The Countryside**

Outside the defined boundaries of the four main towns, Stalbridge and the larger villages, the remainder of the District will be subject to countryside policies where development will be strictly controlled unless it is required to enable essential rural needs to be met.

At Stalbridge and all the District's villages, the focus will be on meeting local (rather than strategic) needs.

## **POLICY 2 (CONT'D): CORE SPATIAL STRATEGY**

### **Settlement Boundaries**

The settlement boundaries defined around the four main towns, Stalbridge and the larger villages in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 and proposals maps are retained and, in conjunction with Policies 16, 17, 18, 19 and 21 of this document, which identify the broad locations for housing and employment growth and regeneration, will continue to be used for development management purposes until reviewed either: through site allocations in Part 2 of the Local Plan or a neighbourhood plan. The settlement boundaries defined around all other settlements in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 and proposals maps are removed and these settlements will be subject to countryside policies unless new settlement boundaries are defined in neighbourhood plans or in Part 2 of the Local Plan.

## 4. Environment and Climate Change

### Introduction

- 4.1 In relation to the environment and climate change, the vision for North Dorset states that 'By 2031 North Dorset will:
- be a District that has played a positive role in addressing the causes and effects of climate change; and
  - have a conserved and enhanced locally distinctive historic and natural environment that retains the qualities that make the District's urban and rural areas even more attractive and desirable places to live, work and visit.'
- 4.2 This section sets out the Council's strategic approach to the natural and historic environment and to climate change, and how it intends to meet Objective 1 and Objective 2 of the Local Plan Part 1:
- Objective 1 – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change; and
  - Objective 2 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment.
- 4.3 Objective 1 is primarily covered by Policy 3 – Climate Change and Objective 2 is covered primarily by Policy 4 – The Natural Environment and Policy 5 – The Historic Environment.

## Policy 3 – Climate Change

### Introduction

- 4.4 There is now an overwhelming body of evidence accumulated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicating that the global climate is warming. This evidence includes direct observations of temperature, measurements of sea level, snow cover and retreating glaciers. It is becoming increasingly clear that this climatic change is attributable to human activity through emissions of greenhouse gases.
- 4.5 The impacts of climate change will be felt differentially around the globe as the global climate warms. The potential impacts of climate change that are likely to affect the UK include hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters with more extreme weather events. These will be evident through changes in farming practices and local biodiversity, both of which will result in a changing landscape. Climate change will result in more very hot days where vulnerable people may find it difficult to cope and more extreme rain events on the wettest days of the year leading to localised flooding. The UK is already experiencing extreme events such as these.
- 4.6 Residents of North Dorset emitted about 6.0 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per capita in 2011, in line with the Dorset average<sup>39</sup>. Only by reducing emissions of greenhouse gas emissions can the severity of climate change be controlled.
- 4.7 National policy sets out the role of the planning system<sup>40</sup> in tackling both the causes (mitigation) and effects (adaptation) of climate change. Mitigation includes the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from all sources through the management of development. Adaptation includes building resilience into urban areas to reduce the severity of the potential impacts of climate change.

### Mitigation of Climate Change

- 4.8 To mitigate climate change the Council will seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from new developments and from existing buildings. This will include a range of measures such as:
- encouraging the retrofitting of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures to existing buildings, including sympathetic fitting of such measures to listed buildings;
  - locating development where local needs can be met locally, reducing the need to travel;

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<sup>39</sup> Local Authority CO<sub>2</sub> emissions estimates for 2005-2010, Department of Energy and Climate Change (July 2013).

<sup>40</sup> Paragraph 94, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- designing developments in a way which facilitate the use of sustainable transport modes;
- incorporating the highest standards of sustainable construction into development proposals including the use of renewable energy where appropriate;
- supporting the production of energy from renewable and low carbon sources at both the large-scale, for example through the incorporation of solar panels on roofs of large commercial and agricultural buildings, and the micro-scale, such as the use of ground source heat pumps.

4.9 In addition to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation can be achieved through the planting of trees.

### Existing Buildings

4.10 Reducing the amount of energy used through the installation of energy efficiency measures not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but reduces the running costs of buildings and reduces fuel poverty particularly in areas which do not have mains gas. Using less energy will result in the need for fewer energy installations to meet the energy demand. The Council is committed to improving energy efficiency in both new and existing buildings.

4.11 Measures to improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings including housing often do not require planning permission. In cases where such retrofitting does require consent, other policies in the Local Plan Part 1 will apply, in particular Policy 24 - Design. Where a building is extended or subject to re-use and requires a planning permission, the proposal will be required to improve the energy efficiency of the whole building unless it can be demonstrated that it is not viable to do so.

4.12 In relation to listed buildings, the sympathetic application of measures to improve the energy performance of the building will be supported providing that the reason for the designation of the building, including its setting, is not compromised.

### Location of New Development

4.13 Where possible, development should be located in areas that are, or can be, made more sustainable by virtue of being close to a good range of facilities, in line with Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy. This will enable building users to meet their everyday needs within a short distance of their location. In all instances the first travel option should be through sustainable travel modes such as walking or cycling, rather than through the use of the private car. This approach is in line with Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy and will reduce transport related greenhouse gas emissions in line with Policy 13 – Grey Infrastructure.

## Design of New Developments

- 4.14 To aid in the mitigation of climate change, developments should consider energy efficiency from the outset. Measures to improve energy efficiency are not reliant on the building fabric alone but can incorporate measures to ensure users of the building can do so in an efficient way. Such measures include:
- the use of walking and cycling to meet everyday needs through establishing safe routes between development sites and the existing built areas within settlements;
  - the provision of sufficient secure cycle storage space within developments to facilitate cycling; and
  - the provision of sufficient clothes drying space within residential developments to encourage clothes drying using less energy.
- 4.15 In addition to these measures the layout of developments, the orientation of buildings and landscaping should be considered to make best use of passive solar design principles and passive ventilation to improve the energy performance of the development as a whole. Policy 24 – Design details the Council’s approach to design and how the design elements of building performance should be considered.

## Performance of New Development

- 4.16 New buildings offer opportunities to incorporate energy efficiency measures from an early stage and minimum requirements are set out through Part L (conservation of fuel and power) of the building regulations. The Government has set out a timetable for the progressive tightening of building energy performance through its zero carbon buildings policy. The Council will rely on this mechanism which will be progressively tightened over time, to achieve improved energy efficiency in new buildings.
- 4.17 To meet the requirements of the Government’s zero carbon policy, developments should first look at measures within the building fabric such as insulation or through passive design features. Secondly, developers should incorporate renewable or low carbon energy technology into the building or through connection to an existing or proposed district heating network. This approach should be the priority for all new developments as it is the most efficient way of meeting the requirements of the zero carbon buildings policy.
- 4.18 In certain circumstances, on-site measures to attain the requirements of zero carbon policy may be difficult to achieve due to for example, the physical characteristics of the site, the location of the site or for viability reasons. In these instances, contributions towards near-site or off-site measures will be acceptable in line with emerging policy on allowable solutions. Where the allowable solutions route is appropriate, contributions will be put towards projects on a prescribed list of local projects. If no up-to-date local list is

available, contributions will be put towards national allowable solutions projects. Small housing sites of 10 or fewer units will be exempt from contributing towards off-site measures and will not be required to contribute to projects on a prescribed local or national list.

- 4.19 Detailed energy statements are required in support of building regulations applications. In many circumstances these energy statements are produced after planning permission has been granted and often result in changes to the scheme approved under the planning permission. These changes then require further planning applications to be submitted. For this reason, detailed energy statements will be expected to accompany planning applications demonstrating what measures have been considered as part of efforts to minimise greenhouse gas emissions from new buildings. Such energy statements will need to set out the expected level of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the proposed development and how these will be reduced in line with this policy.

### Renewable Energy

- 4.20 The generation of energy from renewable sources is encouraged by the Government as it helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thereby combating climate change. National policy highlights the responsibility of all communities to contribute to the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources. The Climate Change Act<sup>41</sup> sets a national target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80% below 1990 baseline levels by 2050. Similarly the UK has signed up to generating<sup>42</sup> at least 15% of its energy requirement from renewable sources by 2020. The delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and contribution towards these targets is clearly an important issue within North Dorset.
- 4.21 The Council will encourage appropriate renewable or low carbon energy schemes that offer a saving in greenhouse gas emissions, so that it makes its contribution towards achieving the most up-to-date targets. Whilst encouraging schemes, adverse impacts including cumulative landscape and visual impacts, will need to be satisfactorily addressed. Some renewable or low carbon energy developments may be large-scale and may require a countryside location; others may be incorporated into other development proposals. Policy 22 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy sets out the Council's approach to development proposals for, or that incorporate, renewable or low carbon energy, including assessment of landscape impact in accordance with the Council's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Climate Change Act 2008.

<sup>42</sup> The EU Renewable Energy Directive – 2009/28/EC.

<sup>43</sup> Landscape Sensitivity to Wind and Solar Energy Developments in North Dorset District, Land Use Consultants, (April 2014).

## Adapting to Anticipated Climate Change

- 4.22 Climate change will also require changes in agriculture and have impacts on wildlife habitats. These changes will affect the District's economy, society and the environment, creating both opportunities (for example, the potential to develop a greener economy) and challenges (for example, the need for more drought-resistant planting).
- 4.23 To adapt to the potential impacts of climate change the Council will seek to reduce the impact of development on vulnerable resources (such as water resources) and reduce the vulnerability of developments to potential impacts (such as flooding). Measures will include:
- encouraging water efficiency to reduce the impact of drought;
  - reduce the impact of flooding, including surface water flooding; and
  - provide green infrastructure to reduce the impact of warmer weather.
- 4.24 In many instances adaptation measures to tackle one of the impacts of climate change can also help tackle other potential impacts, for example the provision of green infrastructure for recreation can also help reduce the runoff of surface water from a development, provide for biodiversity and have a cooling effect within urban areas. This multi-functionality should be exploited wherever practical.

## Water Resources

- 4.25 One of the likely impacts of climate change is increased instances of drought due to hotter, drier summers. This necessitates the careful management of water resources to ensure there is sufficient available to meet everyone's needs and to reduce impacts on biodiversity. Other potential impacts include subsidence due to depleted groundwater, changes in farming practices and soil erosion, all of which have the potential to have an impact on the character of the local landscape<sup>44</sup>. In addition, the clay soils in the north of the District will be susceptible to shrinking and swelling due to long-term changes in water levels, resulting in subsidence to buildings.
- 4.26 To guard against these potential impacts, the protection of groundwater sources and the use of water in association with buildings needs to be given careful consideration. This is particularly relevant to the consumption of potable water. In all new buildings and in the conversion and re-use of existing buildings, water conservation measures should be utilised. This includes measures such as reduced flow rates on taps, low flow showers, smaller cistern sizes and the use of rainwater or grey water for flushing toilets and watering

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<sup>44</sup> NE116 – Responding to the impacts of climate change on the natural environment: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase, Natural England (2008).



gardens. Rainwater harvesting can easily be achieved for use in gardens through the provision of water butts.

### Flood Risk

- 4.27 Current existing flood risk exists in association with rivers, groundwater and surface water. However, climate change is likely to bring about wetter winters and more extreme weather events including increased frequency of heavy rain associated with storms. This increase in rainfall is likely to result in more flooding events from both fluvial and groundwater sources. In addition, the increased intensity of rainfall events is likely to increase the amount of surface water and result in localised flooding during and immediately after rainfall events. The likelihood and severity of flooding events can be increased as a result of developments incorporating features such as increased hard surfacing and canalisation of watercourses. These features should be avoided and wherever possible removed through development.
- 4.28 Areas liable to fluvial and groundwater are shown in the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for the District<sup>45</sup>. As set out in national policy<sup>46</sup> development proposals should avoid areas at highest risk of flooding having regard to the Sequential and Exception tests.
- 4.29 If, following the application of the sequential test, development is proposed in a flood risk area, or where the site is greater than 1 hectare in area even in Flood Zone 1, a site specific Flood Risk Assessment taking into account all sources of flood risk, including fluvial, groundwater, surface water (both site derived and other overland flow) etc., and the impact of climate change, will be required to accompany the planning application.
- 4.30 Flood Risk Assessments must demonstrate that development itself is not at risk from flooding nor does it increase flood risk elsewhere. Development proposals provide opportunities to minimise the risk and impacts of flooding from all sources both to the development and elsewhere. Flood risk mitigation and flood resistance and resilience measures may be required as part of development proposals.
- 4.31 Flooding from surface water can occur as a result of heavy rainfall with the instances of such events increasing as a result of climate change. The impacts of surface water flooding not only include direct impacts on property but also pollution from runoff from urban areas, combined sewer overflows and soil erosion. SuDS look to avoid, reduce, delay and manage surface water runoff

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<sup>45</sup> Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Salisbury Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Halcrow Group Ltd (February 2008).

<sup>46</sup> Paragraph 100, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

from developments and will be required in line with Policy 13 – Grey Infrastructure.

### Heat Stress

- 4.32 Climate change is likely to bring increasingly frequent and severe heat waves. The result of this will not only be related to the availability of water but there will also be an impact on health. Health effects will include heat stroke and aggravation of heart disease and respiratory diseases such as asthma. Increased heat waves will also increase the reliance on active cooling systems such as air conditioning and the use of fans, resulting in increased levels of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 4.33 To adapt to the extreme heat events, there will be a need to include vegetation such as trees, green roofs and green open space within settlements. Inclusion of vegetation reduces man-made surfaces which absorb and radiate heat, replacing them with natural surfaces which supply shading from the sun and a cooling effect. A coordinated approach to the provision of multifunctional green space and the incorporation of landscape planting and vegetation within developments is required under Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure.
- 4.34 In addition to the inclusion of green space and vegetation within developments, shading of buildings, for example through extended roof eaves, and the incorporation of passive ventilation mechanisms is important. This not only reduces the dependency on active cooling measures, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also provides for more comfortable places to live and work. Passive cooling and ventilation methods should be incorporated into the design and layout of developments as set out in Policy 24 – Design.

### Local Community Action

- 4.35 Everyone has a role to play in tackling climate change and in adapting to its impacts. Community based initiatives such as local car share schemes, village hall investments, biofuel utilisation, community emergency support and renewable energy part ownership will be supported by the Council. Neighbourhood plans may address the adaptation and mitigation of climate change at the community level as recognition that all neighbourhoods can contribute towards tackling climate change in a way which is appropriate to their local area.

### **POLICY 3: CLIMATE CHANGE**

Development proposals within the District should seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions including through appropriately sited renewable and low carbon energy developments.

Where the proposal involves the re-use or extension of existing buildings, developments should seek to improve the buildings energy performance unless it can be demonstrated that it is not practical or viable to do so.

Where the proposal includes new buildings they should:

- a be located in line with the Core Spatial Strategy in Policy 2 and where possible in areas served by a good range of everyday facilities and facilitate cycling, walking and the use of public transport; and
- b be designed to make best use of solar radiation and passive cooling through the incorporation of passive solar design principles; and
- c incorporate measures to meet the current national targets for energy performance by incorporating measures into the building fabric itself or through the inclusion of renewable or low carbon energy measures. Where this is not practical or viable, near-site or off-site measures may be considered.

Development should seek to minimise the impacts of climate change overall through:

- d incorporation of measures to reduce water consumption; and
- e avoidance of areas at risk of flooding from all sources and the incorporation of measures to reduce flood risk overall; and
- f incorporation of measures to reduce the impact of excessive heat on the urban environment through the incorporation of green infrastructure and passive shading and ventilation.

Neighbourhood plans will be required to consider local community actions that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

## Policy 4 – The Natural Environment

### Introduction

- 4.36 Everyone relies upon the natural environment to sustain everyday life through the services it provides. These ecosystem services provide benefits to us in many ways and are multiple and interconnected. A change in one part of the ecosystem will have a knock-on effect in another, which in turn will have an impact on the way we live our lives. An example would be climate change where changes in climate patterns resulting from human activity are changing where different species can survive.
- 4.37 The benefits that arise from ecosystem services can be grouped into four main categories:
- provisioning services are the products we obtain from our ecosystem, such as raw materials, fuel, water and food;
  - regulating services are the processes from which we benefit, such as the purification of water, local climate regulation including reducing the urban heat island effect, the pollination of plants, filtering of pollutants by vegetation, water attenuation and natural flood management;
  - cultural services are the benefits from our interactions with the natural environment, such as our cultural well-being, education, health and recreation; and
  - supporting services which enable the other ecosystem services to function, such as photosynthesis, soil formation and nutrient cycling. These are the cycles and interactions that exist between different species within an ecosystem.
- 4.38 Our health, wealth and well-being all depend on the existence of these ecosystem services and the multiple interactions between them. Many of these services are in decline and need to be carefully managed. It is therefore important that we work with these natural systems to ensure they still deliver the benefits we need for the long-term. Actions and decisions taken now will have an impact on ecosystem services in the future and this will have an impact on future generations.
- 4.39 National policy highlights the important role of the planning system in recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services<sup>47</sup> in its role of enhancing the natural environment. As part of this, working with natural processes, the protection of the natural environment assets, including landscape assets, and the provision of gains in biodiversity through an interconnected network of natural features, are key aims.

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<sup>47</sup> Paragraph 109, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- 4.40 As we all benefit from ecosystem services, it is in all of our interests to preserve the natural environment and to protect species and habitats from harm. This can be achieved through reducing pressure on existing habitats and species but also through the creation of new and the connection of existing areas to form coherent ecological networks.
- 4.41 Reducing pressure on existing habitats and species to protect the services they provide will include reductions in development pressure in sensitive locations, minimising the impacts of climate change through mitigation and adaptation, reductions in pollution and traffic and through reductions in recreational pressure on important sites. The provision of new ecological features, including the connection of the existing, are equally important in the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment, building in resilience to support the range of ecosystem services that we rely upon.

### **The Natural Environment in North Dorset**

- 4.42 North Dorset benefits from a high quality natural environment characterised by dramatic landscapes, agriculture and biodiversity. There are two internationally protected wildlife sites within the District and 12 nationally protected wildlife sites. Within a short distance from the border, there are also a number of other sites which have the potential to be harmed by actions that take place within the District. The landscape of North Dorset is highly valued with almost 40% of the District being covered by Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designations.
- 4.43 The use of land for development can put pressure on wildlife, harm historic assets and increase flood risk. Development in inappropriate locations and of poor design can harm the landscape and erode the character of an area. The management of growth alongside this rich environment is critical to the future prosperity of the area particularly when considering the impacts of climate change.
- 4.44 The high quality natural environment should not however be seen as an absolute constraint on development. It should shape the way that growth is managed within the District rather than the converse being the case. The local economy has been built on the environmental assets that exist and these assets should continue to be utilised sustainably in the future; they can act to attract businesses and visitors to the area, offering opportunities to improve the local economy further.
- 4.45 The protection and enhancement of the natural environment are core objectives of the planning system achieved through the protection and establishment of coherent ecological networks and the creation of multi-functional spaces. The challenge is to ensure that the quality of environmental assets is not undermined by future development resulting in harm to quality of life and the local economy. Development should therefore be utilised to

enhance environmental assets and increase biodiversity, offering gains in biodiversity where opportunities exist.

- 4.46 National guidance highlights that when applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development to decision-taking, there are specific national policies indicating that development should be restricted<sup>48</sup>, for example policies relating to sites protected by international designations, those designated as sites of special scientific interest, areas designated as local green space and AONB.

### Landscape-Scale Approach

- 4.47 Management of the natural environment will be achieved through a landscape-scale approach, developing coherent ecological networks. This offers the best opportunities to enhance the natural environment and integrate it into the way the District functions. The approach will include the protection of designated sites and actions taken across broader landscape areas including across the AONBs.
- 4.48 The designated sites within the District contribute to the provision of many ecosystem services including water purification. The biodiversity that exists on these designated sites and across other parts of the District provides benefits such as nutrient production and plant pollination, all of which contribute to the production of the food we eat.
- 4.49 Landscape designations provide for historic and cultural services such as a sense of place and, as a result of the protection afforded them, contribute to sustaining regulating services such as water purification and provisioning services such as food production.
- 4.50 Actions that will support this landscape approach will include:
- protecting the highest value habitats through the hierarchy of international, national and local designations and undertaking appropriate management of these sites to prevent harm to them;
  - linking together the designated sites with 'stepping-stone' sites and corridors through the establishment of a green infrastructure network as set out in Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure;
  - where opportunities exist, for example as identified in the South West Nature Map Project<sup>49</sup>, enhancement of the value of an area through measures undertaken to improve its biodiversity significance and restore natural habitats; and

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<sup>48</sup> Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>49</sup> The South West Nature Map produced by Biodiversity South West shows the best areas to maintain and expand terrestrial wildlife habitats at a landscape scale through restoration or recreation measures.

- encouraging the use of buffer zones around the natural environment assets to improve their overall biodiversity value, minimising disturbance.

4.51 Where the main purpose of a development proposal is to enhance the natural environment and contribute to the objectives of this policy, permission should be granted unless there are significant adverse social or economic effects.

### Landscape Character Areas

- 4.52 The District is divided into two natural areas where the underlying geology, landform and biodiversity are broadly similar. This divide runs from the north-east to the south-west of the district.
- 4.53 The northern part of the District is characterised by rolling hills and vales. The landscape consists of pastures and meadows enclosed by a network of tall thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees and ancient woodlands.
- 4.54 The southern part is characterised by rolling downland, river valleys and woodlands with the main influences on the landscape being from agriculture and woodland management. This southern area also contains the two landscape designations of the Dorset AONB and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.
- 4.55 The landscape provides an important setting for settlements and contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. This has been formed by natural factors such as vegetation and human factors such as the historic management of this vegetation and patterns of settlement.
- 4.56 The District-Wide Landscape Character Area Assessment<sup>50</sup> identified 18 landscape character areas and set out the key features of these. If these features were harmed by development, the landscape character would be degraded. It is therefore important that all development is designed to fit with this landscape character, including the use of appropriate building materials and in relation to the scale of development.
- 4.57 Where there is likely to be a significant impact on the landscape, development proposals should be accompanied by an assessment of the impact on the landscape character such as a landscape and visual impact assessment based on best practice. This should demonstrate how important landscape features will be integrated into development proposals and how the visual impact of a development has been mitigated.
- 4.58 Focusing strategic growth on the four main towns will help to protect the landscape character of the District. It is however important that neighbourhood plans have regard to the landscape character to ensure that the character of an area is not degraded through incremental development.

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<sup>50</sup> Landscape Character Area Assessment, NDDC (March 2008) and Addendum (July 2008).

## Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 4.59 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are landscapes of outstanding value that are protected due to their national significance. AONBs are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act) confirmed their significance. The primary purpose of the AONB designation, as set out in the CROW Act, is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. It also seeks to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area and there is a requirement to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.
- 4.60 In relation to AONBs, national policy gives the highest status of protection to the landscape and scenic beauty and gives great weight to their conservation<sup>51</sup> indicating that development in such areas should be restricted. This includes the setting of an AONB.<sup>52</sup> Except in exceptional circumstances, there is a presumption against major development within AONBs unless it can clearly be demonstrated that it is in the public interest for the development to go ahead<sup>53</sup>, having regard to:
- the need for the development and the impact on the local economy;
  - the scope and costs associated with developing elsewhere, outside of an AONB, or meeting the need in an alternative way; and
  - the impact on the environment, landscape and recreation opportunities within the area and the extent to which these impacts could be mitigated.
- 4.61 There are two AONBs within the District, covering almost 40% of the land area. The two AONBs both have management plans which encourage a partnership approach to long-term action to protect the AONB's character and special qualities. In general there is a presumption against large-scale development within AONBs except in exceptional circumstances and unless there is an overriding public need for the development to take place in that location.
- 4.62 The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB covers an area to the east of the A350 with the boundary running from the District boundary near Spetisbury via Blandford and on to Shaftesbury. The full designated area extends beyond the District boundary into Wiltshire. The AONB area is deeply rural and tranquil, largely unspoilt and aesthetically pleasing. It is of great ecological and cultural importance and characterised by extensive land holdings, panoramic views over rolling chalk downland, enclosed wooded vales, steep escarpments, level farmed terraces and elevated woodlands. The part of

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<sup>51</sup> Paragraph 115, National Planning Policy framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>52</sup> Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Paragraph 116, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).



the AONB within the District is characterised by rolling downland fringed to the west by a steep scarp slope. The agricultural and forestry sectors are the main employers in the area and these have a significant influence over the landscape.

4.63 The Dorset AONB covers an area of chalk downland to the west of Blandford and north of the A354. It is noted for its diversity of landscape types, its tranquillity and sense of remoteness, wildlife of national significance, exceptionally well-preserved historic environment providing a 'living textbook' and rich legacy of cultural associations. Outside the District the Dorset AONB occupies the downland to the south of the Blackmore Vale, the downs, vales and hills of West Dorset and much of the coast from Lyme Regis to Poole. Within the District the AONB is characterised by chalk downland with agriculture and forestry being the major land uses, including mixed arable and livestock grazing. The Dorset AONB also includes the Hambledon Hill National Nature Reserve to the north-west of Blandford.

4.64 The management plans<sup>54</sup> produced for the two AONBs highlight a number of objectives to further the sustainable management of the important landscapes. Local issues identified that have an impact on the landscapes of the AONBs include:

- the need for the distinctive characteristics of the AONBs to be understood and valued including through better managed access to the AONBs;
- the need for the historic and cultural landscape elements to be recognised and conserved;
- the need for a thriving local economy which provides the facilities for everyday life in a sustainable way, including tourism and food and fuel production;
- the need for good design, appropriate choice of materials and for developments to be of an appropriate scale for their location;
- the need for assessments of the impacts on the AONBs' landscapes of proposals for tall structures such as communication masts, barns, renewable energy projects and associated energy infrastructure;
- the impact of non-native tree planting and the lack of management of woodlands;
- the fragmentation of habitats through changes in land use including agricultural practices, such as the fragmentation and loss of hedgerows;
- the increase in equine related developments; and
- the impact of transport infrastructure on the AONBs, including increases in road signage.

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<sup>54</sup> The Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-19 and The Dorset AONB Management Plan 2014-2019.

- 4.65 The Council will seek advice on landscape impact and other relevant matters from the AONB management teams and have regard to the objectives included in the two AONB Management Plans when making decisions on development proposals. Developers will be expected to demonstrate that their proposals have taken account of the relevant management plan for the AONB area. The aim will be to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape whilst recognising the social and economic needs of those who live and carry on business in the area.
- 4.66 Where development is proposed within an AONB or that may harm the setting of an AONB and is at a scale above the needs of those who live and work in the area, the Council will require developers to clearly demonstrate that the development is in the public interest<sup>55</sup>.

### Agricultural Land

The best and most versatile agricultural land (comprising grades 1, 2 and 3a) is a finite resource essential to enable agriculture to successfully operate. It is therefore important that the best agricultural land is safeguarded for agricultural uses. To achieve this, the Council will seek to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from development and only approve development which would result in its permanent loss where:

- the site has been allocated for development in either the Local Plan or a neighbourhood plan; or
- it can be demonstrated that the social or economic benefits of the proposal outweigh the value of the land; or
- there is no appropriate alternative site, including previously developed sites or sites of lower agricultural value; or
- the proposal is small in scale, to support the diversification of an existing agricultural business.

The grade of agricultural land will therefore be taken into account in the decision-making process.

### Ancient Woodlands

Ancient woodlands are exceptionally rich in wildlife and include many rare species and habitats and are an important part of the landscape. Ancient woodland is land that has had continuous woodland cover, including managed or replanted woodland, since 1600 AD. Development proposals within 500 metres of ancient woodlands or which may harm ancient woodlands should make an assessment of the potential impact on the woodland.

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<sup>55</sup> In line with Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

## International Wildlife Designations

- 4.67 There are a number of internationally designated wildlife sites that contribute to the importance of the local environment and national policy indicates that development in such areas should be restricted<sup>56</sup>. These need to be protected so that they continue to support the biodiversity that relies upon them. They will be protected from harm and in relation to ecology and biodiversity benefits, will form the centre piece of the green infrastructure network as set out in Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. The international designations are:
- Special areas of conservation (SACs) are designated under the European Union’s Habitats Directive<sup>57</sup>. SACs provide increased protection to a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats and are a vital part of global efforts to conserve the world’s biodiversity.
  - Special protection areas (SPAs) are sites protected due to their importance for the breeding, feeding or migration of rare or vulnerable bird species. They are designated under the Wild Birds Directive<sup>58</sup>. This directive includes a list of rare and vulnerable birds and established a framework for their protection and for the protection of areas upon which they depend.
  - Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance providing habitats for waterbirds. They are designated under The Ramsar Convention<sup>59</sup> which aims to stop the loss of wetlands.
- 4.68 The European Habitats Directive and the European Wild Birds Directive, along with the SACs and SPAs designated under them, provide for the protection of species of European importance and the habitats which support them through the establishment of a network of protected sites called Natura 2000. The aim of this network is to assure the long-term survival of the most valuable and threatened species and habitats with the emphasis being on sustainable management both economically and ecologically.
- 4.69 The provisions of the Habitats Directive and the Wild Birds Directive have been transposed into UK legislation through a range of acts and regulations with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) being the most recent.
- 4.70 National policy gives equal protection to SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. This protection prevents development which is likely to have a significant effect on a site by requiring an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal for the site. This effect can be either related to a stand-alone project or the

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<sup>56</sup> Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>57</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

<sup>58</sup> Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds.

<sup>59</sup> The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971 (known as The Ramsar Convention).

cumulative effect of multiple projects. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where an appropriate assessment is required<sup>60</sup>.

- 4.71 It is essential that development that takes place within the North Dorset area does not result in a significant impact on internationally designated sites unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, having considered alternatives. Where a residual impact, including cumulative impact, is expected as a result of development taking place, it is important that that impact is minimised and appropriate mitigation measures put in place to reduce the impact further. Development within the District will be required to demonstrate how it avoids impact on the internationally designated sites and where any residual impact exists, the measures that have been put in place to mitigate this impact.

### Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC

- 4.72 The Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC site consists of approximately 260 hectares of species rich chalk grasslands on the scarp slope of the Dorset Downs to the south of Shaftesbury. The area supports large populations of early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) and is one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for this species. A slightly larger area, encompassing the whole of the SAC is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 4.73 Threats to this designated site are from grazing pressure, the impact from adjacent intensive agricultural practices and scrub encroachment onto the site. There is also a public right of way which crosses the site which carries with it the potential for trampling and soil erosion.
- 4.74 The potential impacts on the designated site are likely to result from residential growth in Shaftesbury and the associated increase in recreational pressure.
- 4.75 Further measures to mitigate the impact on the SAC resulting from growth across the District, but primarily at Shaftesbury, should include the provision of suitable and attractive recreational green space within the town.

### Rooksmoor SAC

- 4.76 Rooksmoor SAC is split into two clusters of smaller sites. The first at Lydlinch Common covers approximately 30 hectares at the junction of the A3030/A357 whilst the second area covers approximately 32 hectares to the south at Rooksmoor Copse. The areas designated as a SAC form part of the larger Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI totalling approximately 296 hectares. The site supports an exceptionally large population of marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*) and supports Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey, silt-laden soils.

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<sup>60</sup> Paragraph 119, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- 4.77 The Lydlinch Common area is difficult to manage in the traditional way through light grazing by cattle as it is bisected by the A3030/A357 junction, creating a need for infrastructure. The difficulty in establishing effective management at both parts of the SAC site has resulted in scrub invasion.
- 4.78 Due to the presence of the A3030/A357 through the Lydlinch Common part of the designation, growth in traffic along this road corridor as a result of residential growth could have an impact on the designated site through increases in air pollution. Although the level of residential growth in the area is unlikely to have a significant effect, there will be an increase in air pollution and mitigation should be put in place to minimise this potential impact.
- 4.79 Diversion of traffic away from the A3030/A357 road corridor will help to reduce the impact on the designated site. One way of achieving this will be by making alternative routes available and attractive. The obvious route in this area is the extension of the North Dorset Trailway from Sturminster Newton to Stalbridge, thereby offering a direct, sustainable pedestrian or cycle route between the two towns. Contributions will therefore be sought to help fund this route to help mitigate the potential impact on the designated site.

#### Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA, Dorset Heathlands Ramsar Site<sup>61</sup>

- 4.80 The Dorset Heaths SAC comprises a network of sites around Poole Harbour covering approximately 5,730 hectares and stretching from Warmwell Heath in the west, to Hengistbury Head in the east and to Alderholt Common in the north. The Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC covers the remaining parts of heathland within the District of Purbeck. The Dorset Heathlands SPA and the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site cover similar areas to the two SAC designations.
- 4.81 The heathland sites together support a wide range of important habitats and species. Habitats present consist of the transition from wet heaths to dry heaths and include wet lowland heathland and mires, woodland, grassland, pools and reedswamps. The Studland Dunes also comprise the only large dune site in the south of Britain. There are numerous protected species supported by these habitats including a stronghold of the southern damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*), and great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*).
- 4.82 The sites that make up the Dorset heathlands have been fragmented by losses to urban expansion, to agriculture and to forestry. Although these pressures have now been halted, the remaining sites are subject to further pressures from recreation, wildfires and cat predation of wildlife. Decline in traditional

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<sup>61</sup> Collectively referred to as the Dorset heathlands.

agriculture on heathland sites has also resulted in scrub encroachment and invasion by other species.

- 4.83 Research undertaken on the Dorset heathlands has identified that residential development within 400 metres of a heathland site is likely to result in significant effects that cannot be successfully mitigated. Outside this region, the zone of influence of residential development has been shown to stretch to 5 kilometres from the heathland site. The southern parts of the District<sup>62</sup> are within 5 kilometres of parts of the Dorset heathlands and hence there is the potential for development in this area to increase recreational pressure on the heathland sites.
- 4.84 As there is a link between development in the southern part of the District and pressure on the Dorset heathlands, mitigation measures will need to be put in place to offset the impact. Mitigation will either take the form of the provision of alternative recreation space in close proximity to the development taking place or through a contribution collected from each new dwelling to directly fund mitigation works on heathland sites, such as to help fund access management and educational activities to protect and improve the Dorset heathlands. Large-scale developments within 5 kilometres of a Dorset heathland site will be expected to provide sufficient suitable high quality mitigation as part of the development site.
- 4.85 As the Dorset heathland sites are outside of the District, contributions taken from developments will be used to support management works undertaken by the Urban Heaths Partnership<sup>63</sup> or other similar organisation, on the sites within 5 kilometres of the District's boundary. It may also be put towards the provision of alternative recreation space to reduce pressure on heathland sites from recreation. The level of contributions and an indication of appropriate mitigation measures are as set out in the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework Supplementary Planning Document.

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<sup>62</sup> Including parts of the parishes of Anderson, Milborne St Andrew, Winterborne Kingston, Winterborne Whitechurch and Winterborne Zelston.

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south\\_west/ourwork/heathlands/dorsetmaps.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_west/ourwork/heathlands/dorsetmaps.aspx)

<sup>63</sup> The Urban Heaths Partnership is a partnership of agencies involved in the management and conservation of the Dorset heathlands. The partnership consists of the Borough of Poole, Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Dorset County Council, East Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Natural England, The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, The Forestry Commission, The National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It emerged out of the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework to mitigate the impacts of residential development on the Dorset heathlands.

### Poole Harbour SPA and Poole Harbour Ramsar Site

- 4.86 Poole Harbour is a natural harbour, approximately 4,000 hectares in area lying around 11 kilometres to the south-east of the District. The majority of the intertidal areas around the harbour are designated as a SPA, totalling almost 2,275 hectares. These intertidal areas include extensive mud flats, saltmarshes and reedbeds, all important for waterfowl. The Poole Harbour SPA and Ramsar designations cover very similar areas and abut the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar and Dorset Heaths SAC in many areas.
- 4.87 The growth of Poole and the development of a commercial port and marinas along the northern shore of the harbour have had an impact on the designation. The pressure from urban expansion and the recreational pressure that goes with urbanisation are direct threats to it.
- 4.88 Several sewage treatment plants drain into the harbour along with the River Piddle and the River Frome and contribute to nitrogen levels in the harbour through sewage treatment plant outflow. Additionally, nitrogen runoff from intensive agricultural practices increases the impact on the harbour, directly and via groundwater. Both of these sources cause growth in green seaweeds creating macroalgae mats. To tackle this issue, a joint strategy has been produced by the Environment Agency and Natural England for managing the nitrogen impact on Poole Harbour arising as a result of intensive agricultural practices and as a result of development.
- 4.89 One of the tributaries of the River Piddle drains more than 3,500 hectares of the District around Milborne St Andrew and Milton Abbas into Poole Harbour. As a result of this there is the potential for development in this area to have a significant impact on the Poole Harbour designation through nitrogen deposition.
- 4.90 To avoid contributing to these adverse effects, where development takes place, there will be a need for developments within the Poole Harbour catchment<sup>64</sup> to be nitrogen neutral in order to be compliant with the legal requirements. There are a number of ways that this could be achieved as set out in the Strategy for Managing Nitrogen for Poole Harbour. An example could be for large-scale developments to upgrade sewage treatment works to reduce the nitrogen impact on the harbour. Alternatively, it may be appropriate for smaller-scale developments to enable the transfer of an area of land from intensive agricultural uses to less intensive grassland or woodland thereby offsetting an equivalent amount to the nitrogen arising from development, resulting in the development becoming nitrogen neutral. The approach will need to be in accordance with the Strategy for Managing Nitrogen for Poole Harbour or

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<sup>64</sup> As indicated at: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/OperationalCatchment/6wsx>

alternative mitigation measures which may arise out of joint working with other local authorities and local partners.

### Other Internationally Designated Sites

- 4.91 Outside of the District there are a number of other internationally designated sites with a potential pathway which could lead to significant effects. Only two sites are within five kilometres of the District boundary.
- Holnest SAC consists of approximately 20 ponds and associated scrub, grassland and woodland covering approximately 55 hectares and which support a large population of great crested newts. The main threat to this site is through changes in agricultural practices. As the site is outside of the District, it is thought that there will be no significant impact from the proposed development.
  - Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC consists of an area of grassland on the chalk downs to the south-west of the District covering almost 370 hectares. The main pathway for an impact on this site is through recreational pressure. Due to the distance from the centres for growth, it is not thought that there will be any impact on this designation from proposals within the District.

### National Wildlife Designations

- 4.92 The two national designations that fall within the District are sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) and national nature reserves (NNRs). These sites are designated as nationally important for wildlife or as geological sites and offer opportunities for the study of the natural environment. NNRs are the best examples of the SSSI network.

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 4.93 SSSIs are examples of the very best wildlife or geological sites and include some of the most spectacular areas for wildlife. Many SSSIs are also subject to an international designation due to their importance. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) sets out the provisions in relation to the notification, protection and management of SSSI. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) establishes a general duty for local authorities to take reasonable steps to further the conservation and enhancement of the features for which the sites are designated.
- 4.94 National policy sets out the approach to managing development to conserve and enhance biodiversity<sup>65</sup> with permission being refused if significant harm would result from a development which could not be avoided, adequately mitigated or compensated for. Specifically, developments which would have an adverse effect on a SSSI should not be permitted unless the benefits of

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<sup>65</sup> Paragraph 118, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).



development outweigh the impact on the site and the broader network of SSSIs. This specific national policy is relevant when the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied to decision-taking<sup>66</sup>.

4.95 There are twelve SSSIs within the District:

- Cranborne Chase SSSI comprises one of the largest tracts of semi-natural woodland in the area;
- Sutton Combe SSSI supports unimproved chalk downland with a rich flora and fauna;
- Bryanston SSSI consists of the large roof space in the derelict 18th Century kitchens at Bryanston and is a breeding site for the greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrum-equinum*);
- Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI supports a diverse mosaic of semi-natural habitats. Part of the site is also designated as a SAC;
- Piddles Wood SSSI is a substantial oak woodland to the south of the River Stour, supporting diverse communities of plants and animals typical of oak woodland.
- Breach Fields SSSI comprises three west-facing fields which have been relatively little modified by agricultural improvement;
- Hod & Hambledon Hills SSSI consists of two prominent hills which rise steeply from the Stour Valley and support chalk grassland and scrub. The Hambledon Hill part of the site is also designated as a National Nature Reserve;
- Blandford Camp SSSI lies on the dip slope of the chalk outcrop. It supports unimproved chalk grassland on level ground;
- Fontmell & Melbury Downs SSSI comprises part of the edge of the chalk escarpment and includes unimproved chalk grassland and scrub. Part of the site is also designated as a SAC;
- Handcocks Bottom SSSI consists of ancient, semi-natural woodland around the former medieval deer park of Harbins Park. The area supports important lichens and populations of butterflies;
- Shillingstone Quarry SSSI provides a virtually complete section through the chalk; and
- Higher Houghton SSSI covers three dry valleys in chalk with adjacent plateau and supports grassland and woodland.

### National Nature Reserves

4.96 National nature reserves (NNRs) are some of the most important natural and semi-natural ecosystems in the country. They offer opportunities for the research and appreciation of habitats and the species within them.

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<sup>66</sup> Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- 4.97 NNRs are declared by Natural England as the very best of the SSSI network under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The designation as SSSIs is what gives these sites their statutory protection.
- 4.98 As with SSSIs, national policy seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity by protecting NNR sites. The Hambledon Hill part of the Hod and Hambledon Hill SSSI is designated as an NNR.

### Managing Nationally Designated Wildlife Sites

- 4.99 Due to the value of the nationally designated sites, it is essential that these sites are not harmed by growth within the District unless the benefits of the development can clearly be demonstrated to outweigh the harm. In relation to the ecology and biodiversity benefits of green infrastructure, nationally designated wildlife sites will form the backbone of the green infrastructure network as set out in Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. The sites should be effectively managed, expanded where possible and linked together to provide for a network of sites.
- 4.100 Developers will need to demonstrate that steps have been taken to avoid or minimise harm to these important sites arising from their development proposals. Developments should seek to enhance their biodiversity value. Where harm is unavoidable due to development, effective mitigation measures will need to be put in place as part of the development, resulting in an overall gain where possible.

### Local Designations

- 4.101 There are a number of statutory and non-statutory local designations which all aid in the delivery of many ecosystem services. They aid in protecting our most valuable local environmental assets. Their protection is therefore important and developments should not harm their integrity nor harm their connections with other designated sites.

### Local Nature Reserves

- 4.102 Local nature reserves (LNRs) are designated for their importance for wildlife and geological interest and are managed to conserve these assets. LNRs also offer opportunities for research and for people to observe and enjoy the nature that they support. They can be designated by local authorities under the National Parks and Countryside Act (1949). There are five LNRs within the District. LNRs and the connections between them and other designated sites should not be prejudiced by development.

### Local Geological Sites

- 4.103 Formerly known as regionally important geological sites, local geological sites (LGSs) are designated for their value as educational sites for the understanding of earth science or for their aesthetic value. Although they do not benefit from statutory protection, sites are designated locally based on nationally agreed criteria. There are ten LGSs within North Dorset and developments which may potentially have an impact on them should have regard to the reasons for their designation.

### Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

- 4.104 Sites of nature conservation interest (SNCIs) are locally important wildlife sites designated by the Dorset Wildlife Trust in partnership with local authorities for the conservation of locally and nationally threatened species. The designated SNCIs in the District are material considerations in determining planning applications and should not be harmed by development.

### Local Green Space

- 4.105 Local green space, where designated through a neighbourhood plan or as part of the Local Plan 2, will be protected from inappropriate development in line with national policy<sup>67</sup>. This specific national policy is relevant when the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied to decision-taking<sup>68</sup>. New buildings on local green space are considered inappropriate development except in very special circumstances where the harm is outweighed by the benefits.

### Managing Locally Designated Sites

- 4.106 The network of locally designated sites will be enhanced and expanded to aid in the delivery of ecosystem services through the delivery of green infrastructure. These sites will form an important supporting role to the nationally and internationally designated sites through enhanced connectivity. Development proposals should consider facilitating linkages between the existing designated sites to enhance the green infrastructure network as set out in Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure.
- 4.107 The impact on locally designated wildlife sites will be taken into account when arriving at a decision on development proposals. Applicants should clearly assess the likely impact on sites and how the important features of these sites can be enhanced as a result of the development.

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<sup>67</sup> Section 9, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>68</sup> Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

## Species

- 4.108 Many ecosystem services are dependent on the species which exist on designated habitats. Protecting habitats alone is not sufficient to reduce pressure on many of the species that exist within the local area. If the species living on designated habitats are harmed, for example through air pollution, the benefits of their existence will be lost.
- 4.109 The Habitats Directive lists a number of European protected species which are given a high degree of protection by virtue of the Habitats Regulations (1994). These species are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). The Wildlife and Countryside Act also gives great protection to all wild birds and a number of wild animals and plants included on a list. Similarly badgers are given protection by virtue of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- 4.110 National policy highlights the need to minimise the impacts of development on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible<sup>69</sup>. Many protected species found within or in close proximity to the District are already in decline and the impacts of climate change are likely to put even more pressure upon them. For this reason it is essential that opportunities for linking and buffering habitats are realised to increase resilience and enable species to react to the changing climate. The establishment of these ecological networks is important to the long-term survival of wildlife.
- 4.111 Within Dorset there are a number of rare and scarce species which should be protected where they are found. Development proposals should assess the likely impact, including cumulative impact, on nationally protected or locally rare or scarce wildlife both on and in close proximity to the site. Such an assessment should be informed through consultation with the local environmental records centre. Where significant harm is identified which is unavoidable, permission will be refused unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the benefits of the scheme outweigh any harm and that the impact is adequately mitigated.
- 4.112 Mitigation measures could include enhancement of the existing biodiversity assets on site through appropriate planting or the provision of a buffer to the biodiversity asset. If mitigation cannot be put in place, the last resort would be for any biodiversity loss to be compensated for through the provision of equivalent, alternative and suitable habitat in close proximity to the area of habitat loss. Compensation for biodiversity loss does not however apply to internationally designated sites or internationally protected species.

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<sup>69</sup> Paragraph 109, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

## **POLICY 4: THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

The natural environment of North Dorset and the ecosystem services it supports will be enhanced through the protection of environmental assets and the establishment of a coherent ecological network of designated sites and stepping stone sites linked via corridor features. Where development takes place, buffers should be provided to environmental assets to improve their biodiversity value and facilitate adaptation to climate change. Where opportunities exist, new habitats should be created to enhance this network further.

Developments that offer gains in biodiversity whether through the restoration of habitats or the creation of linkages between existing sites, will be looked upon favourably in the decision-making process.

Developments are expected to respect the natural environment including the designated sites, valued landscapes and other features that make it special. Developments should be shaped by the natural environment so that the benefits it provides are enhanced and not degraded.

Development proposals which seek to conserve or enhance the natural environment should be permitted unless significant adverse social or environmental impacts are likely to arise as a result of the proposal.

### **Landscape Character**

The landscape character of the District will be protected through retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely to arise as a result of a development proposal, developers will be required to clearly demonstrate that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features have been incorporated in to the development scheme.

### **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

Within the areas designated as AONB and their setting, development will be managed in a way that conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the area. Proposals which would harm the natural beauty of the AONBs will not be permitted unless it is clearly in the public interest to do so. In such instances, effective mitigation should form an integral part of the development proposals. Developers will be expected to demonstrate how they have had regard to the objectives of the relevant AONB management plan for the area.

**POLICY 4 (CONT'D): THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT****Internationally Important Wildlife Sites**

Developers should demonstrate that their proposals will not have significant adverse effects, including cumulative effects, on internationally important wildlife sites. Where this cannot be demonstrated, appropriate mitigation measures will be required otherwise permission will be refused. Mitigation measures for specific sites will include:

- a in relation to Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, contributions towards the effective management of the site to reduce recreational pressure;
- b in relation to Rooksmoor SAC, contributions towards the establishment of the North Dorset Trailway between Sturminster Newton and Stalbridge to reduce traffic pollution on the site;
- c in relation to the Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA, and Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site, contributions from developments within 5km of the heathland designations towards the sustainable management of the heathland sites or contributions towards the provision of alternative accessible recreation space to reduce recreational pressure on the Dorset heathlands;
- d in relation to the Poole Harbour SPA and Poole Harbour Ramsar site, developments within the harbour catchment will be required to be nitrogen neutral to avoid increasing nitrogen inputs into Poole harbour. A package of measures including upgrade of sewage treatment works or through the transfer of land from intensive agricultural use to less intensive grassland or woodland uses is available.

**Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSIs)**

Nationally designated wildlife sites should not be harmed by development unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the benefits of development clearly outweigh the impact on the site and the wider SSSI site network.

Developers should demonstrate that their proposals will not have a negative impact, including cumulative impacts, on nationally designated wildlife sites. Where the potential for harm is identified, effective mitigation measures will need to be put into place. Developments should seek to link sites together to contribute towards the establishment of a coherent ecological network.

## **POLICY 4 (CONT'D): THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **Locally Designated Natural Environment Sites**

Locally designated sites represent some of the most valuable local environmental sites. Development should have regard to the reasons for the designation and not harm the integrity of these sites nor connections between them and other environmental assets.

Development proposals should aim to avoid impact on local biodiversity sites however where impact is unavoidable; developers will be required to provide effective mitigation for this loss in biodiversity. As a last resort, compensation measures may be acceptable if effective mitigation cannot be provided. Such compensation measures must offer gains equivalent in magnitude to the loss resulting from the development.

### **Agricultural Land**

The best and most versatile agricultural land will be safeguarded from permanent loss unless it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable alternative sites, or that the proposal has significant economic or social benefits that outweigh the loss of the land from agricultural uses, or that the proposal would support an existing agricultural business.

### **Species**

Where there is likely to be an impact on nationally protected or locally rare or scarce species, an assessment of the impact on these species should be submitted to accompany development proposals. This should be appropriate to the scale of development and be informed initially through consultation with the local environmental records centre.

## Policy 5 – The Historic Environment

### Introduction

- 4.113 Much of North Dorset’s unique character is derived from the interaction between people and places over time, giving us the historic environment we have today. This character is rich and varied, for example, with different and distinctive architectural and vernacular styles in towns and villages reflecting the age and function of settlements and locally available building materials.
- 4.114 The District’s rich historic environment is one of its key strengths, which needs to be conserved and enhanced for future generations. National policy indicates that local planning authorities should set out in their local plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.
- 4.115 Central to any strategy is the conservation of heritage assets, which is discussed in detail below. Other measures to secure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment are set out later in this policy.

### Heritage Assets

- 4.116 The historic environment includes many individual heritage assets, which contribute to local identity and distinctiveness. A heritage asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listings)<sup>70</sup>.
- 4.117 Heritage assets in North Dorset include:
- archaeological remains including around 180 scheduled monuments;
  - buildings of architectural or historic interest including nearly 2,500 listed buildings;
  - areas of architectural or historic interest including 47 conservation areas; and
  - historic parks and gardens including 8 registered historic parks and gardens.
- 4.118 National policy indicates that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations<sup>71</sup>. Also any positive strategy to secure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable

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<sup>70</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>71</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).



resource which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance<sup>72</sup>.

- 4.119 Designated heritage assets are designated (or listed) under statute. Some heritage assets, such as listed buildings, benefit from statutory protection, requiring specific statutory duties to be exercised or specific statutory tests to be applied in assessing the impact of a development upon them. They may also be subject to a separate specific heritage-related consent regime.

### Scheduled Monuments

- 4.120 Scheduled monuments are designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, providing protection for nationally important monuments and archaeological remains. In addition to any planning approval that may be required for proposals affecting scheduled monuments, they also have their own separate statutory consent regime. Scheduled monument consent (which must be obtained from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport through Historic England) is required for most works and other activities that physically affect a scheduled monument.

### Listed Buildings

- 4.121 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 makes provision for the control of development in and relating to buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The Act requires decision makers to have ‘special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’<sup>73</sup>. Proposed works to listed buildings can require both planning approval and a separate specific listed building consent.
- 4.122 The designation, protection and consent regime for listed buildings enables decisions to be taken about a building’s future having regard to its historic and architectural significance, balancing this significance against other issues such as its function, condition and the viability of its current use.

### Conservation Areas

- 4.123 Conservation areas can also be designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as areas of special architectural or historic interest. For the purposes of determining an application within a conservation area, statute requires that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Paragraph 126, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>73</sup> Section 66 Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

<sup>74</sup> Section 72 Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 4.124 The majority of the larger settlements within the District have conservation areas designated to help preserve their character. Within conservation areas, tighter planning controls exist over: the demolition of buildings; felling of or works to trees; and in relation to minor developments; with such works often requiring planning consent.

### Historic Parks and Gardens

- 4.125 Historic parks and gardens are designed landscapes of national interest. These sites are listed on a national register established under the National Heritage Act (1983). Although no additional statutory protection is given to a site on the register of historic parks and gardens, they are protected under national policy as a designated heritage asset.
- 4.126 Within or partly within the District there are eight sites on the historic parks and gardens register: Eastbury, Larmer Tree Grounds, Melcombe and Milton Abbey are all grade II\*; and Anderson Manor, Stepleton House, Ranston and Rushmore Park are all grade II.

### Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 4.127 There are a large number of non-designated heritage assets in North Dorset, which contribute to the unique character of the District, including:
- non-scheduled archaeological remains, including those recorded in Dorset's Historic Environment Record;
  - non-listed buildings, such as large Victorian farmhouses, late 18<sup>th</sup> Century country houses, cemetery chapels and other locally significant agricultural and ecclesiastical buildings;
  - non-registered parks and gardens identified by the Dorset Gardens Trust<sup>75</sup>; and
  - other historic and cultural features of the landscape, such as sunken lanes, ancient hedgerows and water meadows.
- 4.128 These assets receive no statutory protection, but national policy establishes that the effect of a planning application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application<sup>76</sup>.

### The Approach to Decision-Making on Proposals affecting Heritage Assets

- 4.129 National policy<sup>77</sup> indicates that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

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<sup>75</sup> These include Bryanston, Chettle, Fontmell Parva, Hinton St Mary Manor House, Spring Head, Stock House, Shaftesbury Town Walks and Wyke Hall.

<sup>76</sup> Paragraph 135, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
  - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.130 In making planning decisions on development proposals affecting a heritage asset it will be necessary:
- for the significance of the asset to be assessed; and
  - for the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage asset to be considered.
- 4.131 Impact may be positive, negative or neutral and by considering the impact of a development proposal on the significance of a heritage asset (and having regard to all other relevant matters, including those outlined above), a view can be taken as to whether the benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm to, or total loss of, the asset.
- 4.132 More details on how the Council will assess significance, consider impacts and weigh benefits against harm in decision-making are set out below.

### Assessing Significance

#### Heritage Interest

- 4.133 In relation to heritage assets, significance is defined<sup>78</sup> as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’.
- 4.134 In assessing significance the Council will seek to establish the value of a heritage asset on the basis of its heritage interest<sup>79</sup> in terms of:
- its archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the

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<sup>77</sup> Paragraph 131, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>78</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>79</sup> The definition of archaeological interest is taken from Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012). The definitions of architectural, artistic and historic interest are taken from Annex 2: Terminology of PPS 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG (March 2010), which has been cancelled.

substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them;

- its architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture; and
- its historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide an emotional meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

- 4.135 The setting of a heritage asset<sup>80</sup> is defined as the surroundings from which an asset is experienced. This setting is integral to the heritage asset and the impact of a proposal on the heritage asset is also derived from the impact to its setting. An assessment of the impact of development on the setting of a heritage asset is therefore required. This should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which the proposal detracts from its significance. An assessment should also consider cumulative impacts and the long-term viability of the heritage asset.
- 4.136 In the event that these terms are defined or redefined in national policy or guidance, the Council will seek to establish the value of a heritage asset on the basis of the new or redefined terms.

### Developers' Role in Assessing Significance

- 4.137 The Council will expect developers to identify any heritage assets that may be affected by their development proposals and describe the significance of the identified assets including any contribution made by their setting<sup>81</sup>. The significance should be described in terms of the heritage asset's archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interests. The information provided by developers to support a proposal should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset (or assets) that may be affected and the potential impact.
- 4.138 Where a heritage asset is made up of several constituent parts (such as the individual buildings within a conservation area) all of the parts will not have the

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<sup>80</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>81</sup> Requirements of developers are set out in more detail paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

same heritage interest nor will they all necessarily contribute to the significance of the asset. The importance of these features as part of the whole heritage asset and the contribution they make to its interest and value needs to be taken into account in describing its significance.

- 4.139 Larger-scale developments, such as wind and solar farms, could impact on a number of heritage assets over a wide area and in such cases it will be important that heritage assets both close to the development site and more distant are identified and their significance described.
- 4.140 Much information about the interest of heritage assets is contained in Dorset's Historic Environment Record and other sources, such as the Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB<sup>82</sup>. Developers should use all sources of available information, including those above, to establish the interest and value of a heritage asset and describe its significance.

### The Council's Role in Assessing Significance

- 4.141 Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise<sup>83</sup>.
- 4.142 The starting point for this assessment will be the information provided by developers describing the significance of the heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal. The Council will seek to validate this information to ensure that: all heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal have been identified; their heritage value (in terms of the relevant heritage interests) has been established; and their significance has been adequately and properly described.
- 4.143 The Council will also refer to all sources of available information and use its in-house (and where necessary external) expertise to establish the interest and value of a heritage asset and describe its significance. The Council may require further work to be undertaken by developers, if it is considered that the significance of a heritage asset has not been adequately and properly described in the information they have provided.

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<sup>82</sup> Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation Project – E Rouse on behalf of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and English Heritage (July 2008).

<sup>83</sup> Paragraph 129, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

## Considering Impacts

- 4.144 The Council will take its assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, with a view to finding a solution that will avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal<sup>84</sup>. The Council will work proactively with developers to determine whether such conflict is necessary or whether proposals could be taken forward in a different way to sustain, and where possible, enhance the asset.
- 4.145 The Council will encourage developers to take the significance of a heritage asset into account in any development proposal from the outset and, where possible, developers should seek to enhance and better reveal elements that contribute to its significance.
- 4.146 For the purposes of decision-making, the Council will seek to establish the nature of any impact and whether it is:
- positive;
  - neutral; or
  - negative.

## Decision-Making

### Harm to Significance

- 4.147 National policy recognises that different proposals affecting heritage assets may result in different 'scales' of harm to their significance. For the purposes of decision-making, the Council will seek to establish the 'scale of harm' associated with any proposal affecting a heritage asset, in terms of:
- the total loss of the heritage asset;
  - substantial harm to the heritage asset; or
  - less than substantial harm to the heritage asset.
- 4.148 Harm to a heritage asset may be as a result of total destruction or direct physical impact, but may also be as a result of a change to its setting. Practice guidance sets out how 'significant' harm and harm in relation to conservation areas should be assessed<sup>85</sup>.
- 4.149 The Council will expect developers to be able to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to mitigate the harm a proposal will cause to the significance of a heritage asset. Such mitigation will be taken into account by the Council when seeking to establish the scale of harm associated with the proposal.

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<sup>84</sup> Paragraph 129, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>85</sup> As set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (Reference ID: 18a-017-20140306 and 18a-018-20140306).

## Public Benefits

- 4.150 For the purposes of decision-making, the Council will also seek to establish the nature of the benefits associated with a proposal affecting a heritage asset. To be taken into account, such benefits should be public benefits (that is, they should benefit the wider community and not just private individuals or organisations) and, in the widest sense could be any benefit that helps to fulfil the planning system's economic, social and environmental roles in securing sustainable development. The Council will also seek to establish whether the benefits associated with a proposal are substantial or not.
- 4.151 Public benefits could be directly associated with a proposal that affects a heritage asset and, in this respect, may include:
- measures to sustain and/or enhance the significance of the heritage asset;
  - the putting of the heritage asset to a viable use consistent with its conservation;
  - measures to enable the heritage asset to make a positive contribution to achieving sustainable and economically viable communities; and
  - any positive contribution any new development makes to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.152 Measures to improve the deteriorated state of a heritage asset, where there is evidence that the deterioration was caused by deliberate neglect or damage, will not be regarded as a benefit for the purposes of decision-making.
- 4.153 The Council may require developers to record and advance the understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) and to make this evidence publically available. However, national policy establishes that the ability to record such losses should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted<sup>86</sup>. Arrangements put in place by developers to record such losses will not be regarded as a benefit in decision-making.

## Weighing Public Benefits against Harm

- 4.154 The Council's approach to decision-making is to weigh the public benefits of a proposal against the harm caused to the significance of a heritage asset.
- 4.155 The greater the significance of a heritage asset and the greater any harm to such significance the greater the amount of public benefit that will need to be demonstrated in order for a proposal to be acceptable. Conversely, the greater the positive contribution a proposal makes to sustaining and enhancing the significance of an asset or securing an optimum viable use<sup>87</sup>, the greater the likelihood of the Council supporting the scheme.

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<sup>86</sup> Paragraph 141, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>87</sup> As set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (Reference ID: 18a-015-20140306).

4.156 The optimum viable use is the one which is likely to cause the least harm to the heritage asset in both the short and long term. Therefore, the extent of impact of a proposal upon the maintenance of the heritage asset and the securing or safeguarding of a long-term viable use for the heritage asset that is consistent with its conservation will also be considered. Proposals that would remove or have a negative impact upon such long-term viable use will not be supported in the absence of demonstrable public benefit that would outweigh such harm.

4.157 In line with national policy, Policy 5 – The Historic Environment sets out:

- how the Council will assess proposals that would harm a heritage asset;
- the circumstances where the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset may be acceptable;
- the circumstances where less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset may be acceptable; and
- the circumstances where harm to a non-designated heritage asset may be acceptable.

In cases where an applicant seeks to demonstrate ‘no viable use’ to justify substantial harm or total loss, the Council will expect redundancy to have been demonstrated through appropriate marketing.

4.158 In the event that a proposal is permitted that would result in the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset, the Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the new development proceeds, and the associated public benefits are delivered, after the loss has occurred.

### **Hidden and Unidentified Heritage Assets**

4.159 Due to the often hidden nature of archaeological remains, it is not always possible to identify the locations of such heritage assets. Similarly, important features and fabric of listed buildings can often be hidden during different phases of construction or due to later alterations. For this reason, a desk based assessment of any development site which may contain hidden or unidentified heritage assets should be submitted along with applications for development.

4.160 This assessment should assess the likelihood of the site containing buried or concealed remains that are of heritage interest, for example due to the location of heritage assets in the near vicinity or where there is evidence of several phases in the evolution of a building. Where there is reasonable evidence to suggest that remains, hidden features or fabric may exist on site, further survey work or limited opening up may be required prior to full works commencing on site and consent or permission may be granted subject to a ‘watching brief’ and provision for recording or mitigation during development of the site.

4.161 Furthermore, where remains or hidden features or fabric are found or there is strong evidence to suggest that remains, hidden features or fabric exist, further evaluation work may be required to establish their heritage value and describe



their heritage significance. This work should be undertaken prior to determination to enable an informed judgement to be made on the acceptability or otherwise of development and to decide whether the remains or hidden features or fabric should be preserved in situ, or removed.

- 4.162 Remains or hidden features or fabric, that contribute to the significance of a designated heritage asset, should be recorded and preserved in situ. When remains or hidden features or fabric are revealed to have sufficient heritage value to demonstrate that the non-designated heritage asset is of equivalent significance to a designated heritage asset, they should also be recorded and preserved in situ.
- 4.163 The Council may permit the recording and excavation of remains or hidden features or fabric of less heritage interest or value, if it can be demonstrated that recording and preservation in situ is not a reasonable or feasible option. Where an assessment establishes that a non-designated archaeological heritage asset is of equivalent significance to a scheduled monument, it will be considered to be subject to the same policies as those for designated heritage assets.

### **Positive Strategy for the Conservation and Enjoyment of the Historic Environment**

- 4.164 The Council's approach to the conservation of heritage assets (as discussed above) is the cornerstone of its positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In addition, other measures which seek to secure the District's heritage assets for future generations to experience and enjoy include:
- appraisals and guidance to increase the understanding of the historic environment and the significance of heritage assets;
  - the designation of additional heritage assets and the identification and recording of additional non-designated heritage assets;
  - taking the historic environment into account when preparing planning policies;
  - promoting heritage-led regeneration, particularly in the four main towns;
  - permitting enabling development, as a last resort, to secure the conservation of heritage assets at risk; and
  - taking emergency action when heritage assets are at risk or placed under immediate threat.

### **Understanding the Significance of Heritage Assets**

- 4.165 The Council has a programme for the preparation of conservation area appraisals. As part of the preparation of an appraisal, the Council will re-examine conservation area boundaries to ensure that they are fit for purpose and establish management policies to guide future development.

- 4.166 The Council has worked with local communities to help them to produce town and village design statements, which characterise and set out development guidelines for towns and villages in the District.
- 4.167 To help people to understand the potential impact of development on heritage assets and to assist them in developing proposals that sustain and enhance their significance, the Council has produced guidance on alterations to historic buildings<sup>88</sup> and shop front design<sup>89</sup>.

### Designating and Identifying Additional Heritage Assets

- 4.168 The Council may consider the designation of additional conservation areas, where it is considered that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest. In 2012 new conservation areas were designated at Stubhampton in the Tarrant Valley and at Wyke, Gillingham. The Council will ensure that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.
- 4.169 The Council has developed a local list of non-designated heritage assets. To ensure that any asset included on the list has a genuine heritage value it only includes assets which: are of historic importance; offer a cultural connection to the past; are locally significant architecturally; or add significantly to the character or appearance of an area. To this end, a series of criteria have been established to assess the suitability of heritage assets for local listing. Communities may also wish to identify non-designated heritage assets in their local area.
- 4.170 The Council will have regard to the significance any non-designated heritage asset: included on the local list; identified by a neighbourhood plan; or made known from other sources of evidence, when making decisions on development proposals.

### Taking account of the Historic Environment when drawing up Plans

- 4.171 The Council has had regard to the historic environment and the potential impact of land-use policies on heritage assets when drawing up the Local Plan Part 1. This issue is discussed in more detail in the background paper relating to the selection of sites for development in the four main towns.
- 4.172 The key features of the historic environment in the four main towns are described in the supporting text to Policies 16 to 19, which seek to ensure that each town's natural and historic environment is protected and enhanced. Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation also identifies a need to retain and enhance the heritage assets that may be affected by the allocation, namely the

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<sup>88</sup> Guidance on Alterations to Historic Buildings in North Dorset (Draft), N DDC (October 2007).

<sup>89</sup> North Dorset Guide to Shop Front Design (Draft), NDDC (June 2007).

Kings Court Palace moated site and Gillingham Park boundary bank scheduled monuments.

### Heritage-Led Regeneration

- 4.173 The Council will work with communities to secure heritage-led regeneration, where suitable opportunities arise. A community-led design and development brief for the Station Road area in Sturminster Newton seeks to secure heritage assets associated with the town's dairy farming and railway past<sup>90</sup>. Other proposals for heritage-led regeneration may be worked up in neighbourhood plans.

### Enabling Development

- 4.174 A number of heritage assets in the District are on the national Heritage at Risk register. The Council also maintains a local risk register and will update it periodically.
- 4.175 In exceptional circumstances, where a heritage asset is at risk and no viable use can be established to bring the asset back into use or secure it in a manner compatible with its reason for designation, it may be appropriate to enable development that would not normally be permitted, to facilitate the conservation of the asset. In such exceptional circumstances, the applicant would need to demonstrate that other uses of the asset which do not conflict with local planning policies have been fully and rigorously explored.
- 4.176 This provision may apply unless there is evidence of deliberate neglect or damage to the heritage asset.

### Emergency Measures

- 4.177 The Council will make use of its statutory powers, such as the issuing of enforcement, urgent works or repairs notices, where a listed building is considered to be under immediate threat or at serious risk. The Council may also make Article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights in all or part of a conservation area, where important features are being degraded.

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<sup>90</sup> Station Road Area Design and Development Brief produced for SturQuest by the Matrix Partnership (April 2008). Part of the site has since been regenerated and the original Creamery building (a non-designated heritage asset) has been retained and re-used as part of the scheme.

## **POLICY 5: THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

### **Assessing Proposals That Would Harm a Heritage Asset**

Any development proposal affecting a heritage asset (including its setting) will be assessed having regard to the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of that asset and securing a viable use for it that is most consistent with its conservation.

For any designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to its conservation when considering any proposal that would have an impact on its significance. Clear and convincing justification for any development that would cause harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset will be required however slight and whether through direct physical impact or by change to its setting.

### **Justifying Substantial Harm to or the Loss of a Designated Heritage Asset**

Development that results in substantial harm to or the loss of a designated heritage asset will be refused unless it can clearly be justified that there is substantial public benefit resulting from the development, outweighing the harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is not possible; and
- d the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

In all cases substantial harm (whether through direct physical impact or by change to its setting) to, or the total loss of, a grade II listed building or a registered park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm (whether through direct physical impact or by change to its setting) to, or total loss of, grade I or II\* listed buildings and registered parks and gardens, scheduled monuments and undesignated archaeological sites of equivalent importance to scheduled monuments should be wholly exceptional.

### **Justifying Less Than Substantial Harm to a Designated Heritage Asset**

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

## **POLICY 5 (CONT'D): THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

### **Justifying Harm to a Non-Designated Heritage Asset**

Where a development proposal will lead to harm to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, regard will be had to:

- e the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the asset; and
- f the scale of any harm or loss; and
- g the significance of the heritage asset.

### **Hidden and Unidentified Heritage Assets**

Remains or hidden features or fabric, which contribute to the significance of a designated heritage asset (or which suggest that a non-designated heritage asset is of demonstrably equivalent significance), should be recorded and preserved in situ. The recording and excavation of remains or hidden features or fabric of less heritage value may be permitted, if recording and preservation in situ is not a reasonable or feasible option.

### **Enabling Development**

In exceptional circumstances, a proposal for enabling development that would not otherwise be permitted may be supported if it can be demonstrated that this will secure the long term preservation and enhancement of a designated heritage asset considered to be at risk, or other heritage asset on a local risk register maintained by the Council. Such development will only be permitted if:

- h it has been demonstrated that reasonable consideration has been given to other options for securing the long-term preservation and enhancement that are more consistent with the policies of the Local Plan and these are not available; and
- i it has been demonstrated that the enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure such long term preservation and enhancement; and
- j the benefits of the enabling development outweigh the dis-benefits of departing from other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

Enabling development will not be permitted where the Council considers the current condition of the heritage asset is the result of deliberate or reckless neglect or actions designed to secure a benefit from this exception to policy.

## 5. Meeting Housing Needs

### Introduction

- 5.1 This chapter sets out the Council's overall approach to meeting housing needs and includes policies relating to:
- the distribution of new housing development (including affordable housing) across the District: Policy 6 – Housing Distribution;
  - the mix of housing that will be sought in the District and the Council's approach to the density of housing developments and infilling, including infill development in residential gardens: Policy 7 – Delivering Homes;
  - the provision of affordable housing, including on rural exception sites: Policy 8 – Affordable Housing and 9 – Rural Exception Schemes; and
  - the Council's strategic approach to the provision of sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople: Policy 10 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 5.2 These policies will help to achieve the vision for North Dorset, one aspect of which is to have more housing, and in particular affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District.
- 5.3 These policies also respond positively to Objective 5 of the Local Plan Part 1 – Meeting the District's Housing Needs.

## Policy 6 – Housing Distribution

### National Policy

- 5.4 National policy<sup>91</sup> states that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of the housing needs in their area and should prepare a strategic housing market assessment (SHMA) to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries.
- 5.5 They should use their evidence base (including the SHMA) to ensure that their local plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the relevant housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). They should also identify key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period<sup>92</sup>.
- 5.6 In terms of location, national policy advises that local planning authorities should actively manage growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in location, which are or can be made sustainable. It also states that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

### The District Council's Approach

- 5.7 The Council has commissioned research to assess future housing needs and has established an overall District-wide housing figure and levels of affordable housing provision that will be sought at the District's four main towns.
- 5.8 The proposed strategic distribution of housing in North Dorset reflects both national policy and Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy. Provision for housing and affordable housing has been made largely at the District's four main towns, which are the most sustainable locations for housing development. The southern extension of Gillingham is a key site which is critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period. Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation allocates and provides further detail on how the development of this site will be taken forward.
- 5.9 In Stalbridge, the eighteen larger villages and the countryside the focus is on meeting local housing needs. Where a local housing need can be demonstrated in the countryside, neighbourhood plans can identify rural exception sites, as set out in Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing.

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<sup>91</sup> Paragraph 159, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>92</sup> Paragraph 47, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- 5.10 The amount of housing proposed at each of the four main towns has been determined following an analysis of the key constraints and opportunities. The amount of affordable housing to be sought at each of the four main towns also takes account of the viability of provision in different parts of the District.
- 5.11 The scale of housing and affordable housing provision in Stalbridge, the eighteen larger villages and the countryside will reflect cumulative local and essential rural needs and local viability considerations.

### **District-Wide Housing Provision**

- 5.12 For the purposes of preparing a SHMA, North Dorset falls entirely within the Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area (HMA). All the local planning authorities in the HMA commissioned consultants to produce a SHMA in 2008<sup>93</sup>.
- 5.13 In light of the reforms of the planning system and the economic downturn, the original SHMA was updated in 2012<sup>94</sup>. In relation to North Dorset, the updated SHMA states that 'trend-based data suggests household growth of around 273 per annum for the period from 2011 to 2031 and so a housing delivery figure (on the basis of this figure) might be around 280 per annum (to take account of a small vacancy rate)'<sup>95</sup>.
- 5.14 Applying an allowance for second homes would give an annualised target rate of 285 dwellings per annum. This equates to a need for about 5,700 homes over the twenty years from 2011 to 2031 and forms the basis for the District-wide housing provision figures used in the Local Plan Part 1. However, should housing supply across the District exceed the 285 dwellings per annum target, the Council will not seek to restrict the supply of additional housing, in accordance with national policy, providing it accords with the spatial approach as set out in Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy. The Housing Trajectory in Appendix E shows the anticipated rate of delivery as at March 2015.

### **District-Wide Affordable Housing Provision**

- 5.15 The 2012 SHMA Update used the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) housing needs model, which estimated that 387 additional units of affordable housing would need to be provided annually over a five-year period to meet the identified need.

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<sup>93</sup> The Bournemouth and Poole Strategic Housing Market Assessment, including the Housing Need and Demand Survey for North Dorset, Fordham Associates (June 2008).

<sup>94</sup> Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012).

<sup>95</sup> This statement appears in Paragraph 5.10 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the 2012 Updated SHMA.



- 5.16 The 2012 SHMA Update also considered that the provision of 40% of additional housing as affordable would be a sensible level in the context of the role played by the private rented sector<sup>96</sup>. An assessment of viability<sup>97</sup> provided a more fine-grained analysis suggesting that the Council should seek at least 40% affordable housing on sites across most of the District, 30% on sites within Blandford Forum and Shaftesbury, 25% in Sturminster Newton and Gillingham (where residual land values are lower) and, subject to viability testing 25% on the southern extension to the town.
- 5.17 The provision of affordable housing in line with these percentages would deliver about 1,350 additional affordable homes in the four main towns by 2031. The Council will seek to deliver this level of provision, whilst also having regard to any site-based assessments of viability which could, where evidenced and justified, result in a different level of provision being sought.

### **Determining the Spatial Distribution of Housing Development**

- 5.18 A number of factors, which reflect aspects of the District's vision and objectives, have influenced the determination of how future housing growth should be accommodated in North Dorset including:
- Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy, which establishes the Council's overall approach to the distribution of development in the District;
  - the need to deliver thriving self-contained market towns and stronger, more sustainable communities in the rural area;
  - the need to protect and enhance the environment and in particular a recognition of the environmental constraints affecting different settlements;
  - the availability of developable land at different settlements, as evidenced largely by the Council's strategic housing land availability assessment<sup>98</sup>; and
  - the need to avoid increasingly dispersed populations, as has occurred in the past through high levels of 'oversupply' in rural areas<sup>99</sup>.

### **The Spatial Distribution of Housing in the District**

- 5.19 Figure 5.1 below sets out how the new homes proposed in the Local Plan Part 1 will be distributed in North Dorset. More detail on the background to the spatial distribution of housing development in North Dorset is given in the Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper.

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<sup>96</sup> This statement appears in Paragraph 5.11 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the 2012 Updated SHMA.

<sup>97</sup> North Dorset District Council: Affordable Housing Provision and Developer Contributions in Dorset – Three Dragons (April 2009).

<sup>98</sup> North Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, North Dorset District Council (August 2011).

<sup>99</sup> As discussed in the Housing Background Paper, North Dorset District Council (August 2013).

5.20 Gillingham will accommodate about 39% of housing growth in North Dorset over the 20 years between 2011 and 2031 reflecting its economic potential, the availability of suitable sites and the relative lack of environmental constraints<sup>100</sup>. The vast majority of new housing at Gillingham will be built on the southern extension to the town. Policy 21 - Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation, provides detail on how this development will be taken forward to 2031 and shows how new housing will be delivered in step with infrastructure and facilities.

Figure 5.1: Proposed Spatial Distribution of Housing Development

Location	Homes Proposed 2011 to 2031 <sup>101</sup>	% of Total
Blandford	At least 1,200	About 21%
Gillingham	At least 2,200	About 39%
Shaftesbury	At least 1,140	About 20%
Sturminster Newton	At least 395	About 7%
Countryside (including Stalbridge and the Villages)	At least 825	About 14%
Total	At least 5,700	100%

5.21 Blandford will accommodate about 21% of housing growth. The figure of at least 1,200 new homes by 2031 includes homes on both brownfield sites, such as the Brewery, and greenfield urban extensions. The level of proposed housing growth reflects the town's importance as the main service centre in the south of the District, but also recognises environmental constraints, particularly in the form of protected landscapes, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), and areas at risk of flooding. At Blandford, the need to encourage self-containment in order to limit levels of commuting to the South East Dorset conurbation is also important.

5.22 Shaftesbury will accommodate about 20% of housing growth. The figure of at least 1,140 new homes by 2031 includes all those that will be built on the eastern extension of the town. This is currently being developed in a phased manner and is likely to be completed well before 2031. Environmental constraints, such as the town's hill-top location and nearby AONB, together

<sup>100</sup> The potential for growth at Gillingham, both in the period up to 2026 and beyond, has been examined in detail in Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

<sup>101</sup> Note: Figures do not sum due to rounding.

with the proximity of the administrative boundary of Wiltshire, limit the potential for further growth on land within North Dorset.

- 5.23 Sturminster Newton will receive about 7% of housing growth recognising the important role it plays as a service centre in the north-west of the District, but also its smaller size. The figure of at least 395 new homes by 2031 includes homes both on brownfield and greenfield sites near the town centre and small greenfield urban extensions.
- 5.24 Concentrating the vast majority of strategic housing growth at the four main towns means that a different approach can be taken in Stalbridge, the eighteen larger villages and the countryside, where the focus is on meeting local housing needs.
- 5.25 At least 825 dwellings out of 5,700 dwellings district wide will be provided in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) during the period 2011-2031.
- 5.26 The figure of at least 825 new homes should not be seen as a target for, or a cap on, the overall level of housing development that should take place in Stalbridge, the eighteen larger villages and the countryside.
- 5.27 In Stalbridge, the eighteen larger villages and the countryside the overall level of housing (and affordable housing) provision by 2031 will be the cumulative number of new homes that have been delivered to contribute towards meeting local and essential rural needs identified at the local level. These needs may be identified through: the neighbourhood planning process (for example, housing to deliver a new, or support an existing, community facility); local surveys to establish the need for rural exception housing; and assessments to establish the functional need for occupational dwellings.

### **The Spatial Distribution of Affordable Housing**

- 5.28 Affordable housing will be distributed in largely the same way as market housing. This will ensure that it is primarily focused at the four main towns, where it can best serve District-wide needs in the most sustainable manner.
- 5.29 Outside the four main towns, affordable housing may be delivered through neighbourhood planning or on rural exception sites, in accordance with the policies relating to its provision in the Local Plan Part 1.

**POLICY 6: HOUSING DISTRIBUTION**

At least 5,700 net additional homes will be provided in North Dorset between 2011 and 2031 to deliver an average annual rate of about 285 dwellings per annum. The vast majority of housing growth will be concentrated at the District's four main towns of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton.

The approximate scale of housing development at the four main towns during the period 2011 - 2031 will be as follows:

- a Blandford (Forum and St. Mary) – at least 1,200 homes;
- b Gillingham – at least 2,200 homes;
- c Shaftesbury – at least 1,140 homes;
- d Sturminster Newton – at least 395 homes.

The approximate scale of affordable housing development that will be sought at the four main towns during the period 2011 - 2031 will be as follows:

- e Blandford (Forum and St. Mary) – about 395 affordable homes;
- f Gillingham – about 480 affordable homes;
- g Shaftesbury – about 380 affordable homes;
- h Sturminster Newton – about 95 affordable homes.

In the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) the level of housing and affordable housing provision will be the cumulative number of new homes delivered to contribute towards meeting identified local and essential rural needs. At least 825 dwellings will be provided in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) during the period 2011 – 2031.

## Policy 7 – Delivering Homes

### National Policy

#### Mix of Housing

- 5.30 National policy encourages local planning authorities to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive mixed communities. To do this they should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community. Local planning authorities should also identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing required in particular locations, reflecting local demand<sup>102</sup>.

#### Residential Densities

- 5.31 The national indicative minimum residential density standard (of 30 dwellings per hectare) was deleted in an earlier review of national policy and current national policy now indicates that local planning authorities should set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances<sup>103</sup>.

#### Infilling and Residential Gardens

- 5.32 National policy no longer adopts a brownfield first approach to housing development, but still encourages brownfield development<sup>104</sup>, which may take the form of residential infilling. National policy used to regard residential gardens as brownfield sites; however, they are now expressly excluded from the definition of previously developed land<sup>105</sup>.
- 5.33 In light of this change, national policy indicates that local planning authorities should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Paragraph 47, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>103</sup> The June 2011 version of PPS 3: Housing did not include a national indicative minimum density standard. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to set out their own approach to housing density.

<sup>104</sup> Paragraph 36 of the June 2011 version of PPS 3: Housing indicated that, in relation to housing 'the priority for development should be previously developed land...' One of the core planning principles in Paragraph 17 of the NPPF is that planning should 'encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value'.

<sup>105</sup> Gardens were not excluded from the definition of previously developed land in Annex B of PPS 3. The definition of previously developed land in Annex 2 of the NPPF excludes 'land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments'.

<sup>106</sup> Paragraph 53, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

### The District Council's Approach

- 5.34 The Council will seek a mix of housing across the District, in terms of bedroom numbers, that reflects the identified needs for different sizes, both in relation to market and affordable homes. A similar mix will also be sought on larger housing sites.
- 5.35 The Council will seek residential densities that make effective use of development sites, but which also have regard to impacts on local character and design and amenity issues. Within this context higher densities are encouraged in more sustainable locations, such as town centres.
- 5.36 Sensitive infilling is encouraged in the four main towns and within any other settlement where a settlement boundary has been set. The Council also encourages local communities to develop more detailed policies relating to infilling through the neighbourhood planning process.

### Housing Mix and Type

- 5.37 Part of the vision for North Dorset is to have more housing, and in particular more affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District. Objective 5 of the Local Plan Part 1 seeks to achieve this by ensuring that the type, design and mix of housing reflects housing needs in up-to-date assessments and ensuring that housing is designed to support the changing needs of its occupants. The right mix and type of housing can also help to address equalities issues, such as the needs of the older population and the young.
- 5.38 All the local planning authorities in the Bournemouth and Poole HMA commissioned consultants to examine future housing needs in a SHMA, which was produced in 2008<sup>107</sup>, and a SHMA Update, which was produced in 2012<sup>108</sup>. For the purposes of preparing a SHMA, North Dorset falls entirely within the Bournemouth and Poole HMA and both SHMA studies examined housing needs at the HMA and District level. These studies have been used to inform policies for the mix, type and form of tenure of housing that should be provided in North Dorset.
- 5.39 The 2012 SHMA Update examined the likely size requirements for market housing, splitting the size requirement into smaller (one and two bedroom) and larger (three plus bedroom) homes. The need for smaller and larger market homes across the HMA was examined based on two different scenarios for the delivery of affordable housing (namely, 30% or 40% of all housing delivered as affordable across the HMA). This showed a need for a roughly equal split

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<sup>107</sup> The Bournemouth and Poole Strategic Housing Market Assessment, including the Housing Need and Demand Survey for North Dorset, Fordham Associates (June 2008).

<sup>108</sup> Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012).

- between the need for smaller and larger market homes across the HMA in both scenarios<sup>109</sup>.
- 5.40 A similar analysis was undertaken for North Dorset, which concluded that ‘around 59% of market housing should be family-sized housing (3 or more bedrooms) and 41% one- and two-bedroom homes, with the main focus being on two and three bedroom accommodation’<sup>110</sup>.
- 5.41 The 2012 SHMA Update examined the likely size requirements for affordable housing, using the same smaller and larger homes split and the same two scenarios for the delivery of affordable housing. Across the HMA the 2012 SHMA Update recommended a policy target for 55% to 60% of future affordable housing provision to be one and two bedroom properties and 40% to 45% to have three or more bedrooms<sup>111</sup>.
- 5.42 A similar analysis was undertaken for North Dorset, which concluded that ‘around 39%’<sup>112</sup> of new affordable provision in North Dorset should be family-sized housing (3 or more bedrooms), which means that around 61% of new affordable provision in North Dorset would be one and two bedroom homes.
- 5.43 Over the plan period, the Council will seek to deliver larger and smaller market and affordable homes in the proportions set out above across the District as a whole. These proportions will also be the starting point for negotiations on the sizes of homes to be provided on major housing sites (that is, on sites where 10 or more dwellings are proposed), although a different mix of sizes may be permitted if it can be soundly justified by local circumstances or viability considerations.
- 5.44 The Council will adopt a more flexible approach on smaller sites, where site-specific issues and potential impacts on local character may have a strong influence on the size of dwellings that would be appropriate. On rural exception

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<sup>109</sup> These issues are discussed in detail in Section 7 of the Bournemouth/Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012).

<sup>110</sup> These issues are discussed in Section 6 of the Bournemouth/Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update – Summary Report for North Dorset District Council, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012). The quotation comes from paragraph 6.14 on Page 18 of the report.

<sup>111</sup> See paragraph 7.108 on page 119 of the of the Bournemouth/Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012).

<sup>112</sup> These issues are discussed in Section 6 of the Bournemouth/Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update – Summary Report for North Dorset District Council, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012). The quotation comes from paragraph 6.15 on Page 19 of the report.

sites, the sizes of homes to be provided will much more closely reflect local needs, as set out in Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing.

### The Housing Needs of Particular Groups

- 5.45 National policy indicates that local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community, including:
- families with children;
  - older people;
  - people with disabilities;
  - service families; and
  - people wishing to build their own homes.
- 5.46 Research shows that in 2007, 19% of all households in North Dorset had one or more members with an identified special need and 27% of these households were in the social rented sector<sup>113</sup>. The ways in which planning policies assist in meeting the needs of different groups in the community, including those with special needs, is set out below.

#### Families with Children

- 5.47 The analysis undertaken in the SHMA studies looked at household formation rates and used a housing market model that took into account how households of different ages occupy dwellings. The analysis shows a high level of need for family housing, which will be sought through this policy.

#### Older People

- 5.48 In 2007, 42% of households in North Dorset included an older person<sup>114</sup>. More recent studies show that the proportion of people over 60 is likely to increase significantly over the next 20 years. The District's ageing population will give rise to proposals for elderly persons' accommodation, including sheltered accommodation, care homes and nursing homes.
- 5.49 The Council will support the provision of both additional elderly persons' accommodation and other specialist forms of housing, to meet this growing need. The planning issues raised by such developments (including issues such as design, amenity and parking) will be considered in the context of the relevant policies of the Local Plan.

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<sup>113</sup> The needs of particular groups in North Dorset are discussed in Section 12 of the Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand (DSHND): Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008). Special needs categories include: frail elderly; physical disability; learning difficulty; mental health problem; severe sensory disability; and medical condition.

<sup>114</sup> Table 12.7, page 110, Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand (DSHND): Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008).



- 5.50 In cases where occupancy is age restricted and there is little or no care, requirements for open space and car parking may be the same as for unrestricted residential accommodation. However, where higher levels of care are offered, reduced standards may be acceptable. The Council will usually seek to control the occupancy of residential accommodation for the elderly by condition or agreement, whatever level of care is offered.
- 5.51 Sheltered accommodation, where the residential units are self-contained, are usually defined as dwellings in planning terms, whereas care homes and nursing homes, where the accommodation is not self-contained, are usually defined as residential institutions. Developers should be aware that the use class within which the development falls may have implications for the levels of affordable housing and developer contributions that the Council will seek.
- 5.52 The Council will also support the adaptation of existing properties or the provision of suitably designed new properties to enable elderly people to stay in their own homes, or to be cared for at home, rather than requiring a care or residential home.

### People with Disabilities

- 5.53 The Council will work with Dorset County Council Social Services and registered social landlords (RSLs) to consider the likely future needs for people with disabilities. When seeking new affordable housing, it may be possible to provide suitably designed new properties for those with an identified special need or those with impaired mobility. New specialist housing provision is not always required for a disabled person and in some cases it may be possible to meet their requirements through the adaptation of their own property.
- 5.54 Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset's health and social care services are responsible for meeting the housing needs of people requiring social care or health related issues. These organisations, together with the Clinical Commissioning Group, draw up long-term strategic plans to enable provision to be coordinated across the County. Proposals for schemes outside of the control of Dorset County Council or NHS Dorset health and social care services should therefore have regard to these long-term objectives.

### Service Families

- 5.55 Blandford Camp is a large military site located to the north-east of Blandford Forum within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Camp, which is likely to remain a military establishment during the plan period, supports the main concentration of service families in the District.
- 5.56 Blandford Camp has a range of facilities to support service personnel, including a primary school. However, much of the residential accommodation requires modernisation. Some improvements have taken place in recent years and the

Council will continue to support further improvements, within the environmental constraints of the site.

### People Wishing to Build their Own Homes

- 5.57 People wishing to build their own homes can do so either on an infill plot in a town or village, or by replacing an existing dwelling in the countryside. Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy allows infilling within the District’s four main towns, Stalbridge and the eighteen larger villages and, in the event that a local community establishes a boundary around a village in a neighbourhood plan, that would create additional opportunities for infilling, subject to any more detailed, local policies. Policy 29 – Existing Dwellings in the Countryside also allows existing dwellings in the Countryside to be replaced.
- 5.58 There is a very high level of need for affordable housing in North Dorset, but partly to recognise that sites for one or two net additional dwellings will often be developed by people wishing to build their own home (or by small local builders), the Council will not seek the provision of, or a financial contribution towards the provision of, affordable housing on such sites. Setting a higher threshold in Policy 8 – Affordable Housing should reduce the development costs for people wishing to build their own homes on such sites.

### Density of New Housing Development

- 5.59 In North Dorset, the density of existing development varies from generally lower densities in villages and rural areas to higher densities in the four main towns, especially in town centres. The wide variation in the character of different parts of the district and the densities at which housing development has been built, means that it would be inappropriate to impose a standard density requirement, District wide or for individual towns or villages.
- 5.60 It is important to make effective use of housing land, but new housing development should also respect the character of an area, including locally distinctive patterns of development. The density chosen for any new housing development will have a major influence on its design and may also have implications for the amenity of the intended occupants and the occupants of existing development nearby.
- 5.61 Higher density new developments are more likely to respect the character of an area, if that area such as a town centre, has already been developed at a high density. However, high-density housing development (above 50 dwellings per hectare) in any location could give rise to amenity problems such as insufficient room for drying laundry and the storage of refuse bins. Local communities in North Dorset have also identified a number of concerns with higher density development such as the lack of outside space the loss of character of settlements inappropriate housing for certain parts of the population and the encouragement of on-street parking. Whilst lower density schemes are less

likely to give rise to amenity issues, they could result in sites being underutilized and could also cause harm to local character, especially in areas of tightly knit development.

- 5.62 The Council will seek residential densities that make effective use of development sites, but which also have regard to impacts on local character and design and amenity issues. Whilst high densities may be appropriate in certain more sustainable locations, such as town centres, the Council will have regard to potential impacts on local character and design and amenity issues wherever high-density housing is proposed.
- 5.63 In order to assess the impacts different densities may have on local character it will be important for developers to understand the local context, as outlined in Policy 24 – Design. Proposed housing densities should be informed by:
- policies that allocate development on specific sites, such as those that remain saved in the 2003 Local Plan, Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation and allocations in the Local Plan Part 2;
  - policies in town and village design statements and other supplementary planning documents that the Council may adopt;
  - informal design and development briefs, master plans and character appraisals produced either by the Council or local communities; and
  - neighbourhood plans, which may allocate specific sites or set density policies that would apply inside defined settlement boundaries.

### **Infilling and Residential Gardens**

- 5.64 National policy used to give priority to the use of previously developed land (the brownfield first approach) and set a national indicative minimum density standard (of 30 dwellings per hectare) for housing development. The national definition of previously developed land also formerly included residential gardens (although they are now considered to be greenfield sites).
- 5.65 This former national policy framework effectively prioritised infilling within settlements (essentially, built-up areas with defined settlement boundaries), including on residential gardens, and reduced the weight that local planning authorities could give to more local concerns, such as impacts on the character and appearance of an area, when making planning decisions.
- 5.66 National policy now offers more scope for local planning authorities and local communities to develop policies that focus on encouraging more sensitive infilling, including in relation to the development of residential gardens, having regard to more local and site-based concerns.
- 5.67 Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy establishes that infilling will be permitted within the settlement boundaries of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the eighteen larger villages . Any infilling that takes

place within these settlement boundaries should be sensitively designed to its local context and respect the amenity of adjoining properties.

- 5.68 Remaining settlements will be subject to countryside policies. Outside the four main towns, Stalbridge and the eighteen larger villages settlement boundaries could be re-established through the neighbourhood planning process to allow infilling, if a local community considered that was an appropriate approach to meeting local needs. In such cases, Policy 7 also requires any infilling within newly created settlement boundaries to be sensitively designed to its local context and to respect the amenity of adjoining properties.
- 5.69 Policy 7 establishes the general principle that any infilling within a defined settlement boundary should be sensitively undertaken. Local communities may also establish more detailed policies relating to infilling, through the neighbourhood planning process.

## **POLICY 7: DELIVERING HOMES**

### **Housing Mix**

All housing should contribute towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities.

In the period to 2031, the Council will support the delivery of about 40% of market housing in North Dorset as one or two bedroom properties and about 60% of market housing as three or more bedroom properties.

In the period to 2031, the Council will support the delivery of about 60% of affordable housing in North Dorset as one or two bedroom properties and about 40% of affordable housing as three or more bedroom properties.

These proportions will be the starting point for negotiations on the mix of house sizes on all sites where 10 or more dwellings are proposed, although a different mix may be permitted if it can be soundly justified by local circumstances or viability considerations. On sites of less than 10 dwellings, a mix of house sizes appropriate to each specific site will be sought, although in the case of rural exception sites, the mix should reflect identified local needs in accordance with Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing.

### **The Housing Needs of Particular Groups**

The Council will seek to meet the needs of different groups in the community both through the provision of a suitable mix of market and affordable house sizes and by working with partners, including registered social landlords, Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset health and social care services.

The Council will support the provision of age-restricted housing for the elderly and will usually seek to control its occupancy by planning condition or planning obligation. Where evidence exists, provision of housing for people requiring specially adapted or supported housing should be provided as part of the general mix of housing on a site. For sites of 10 or more dwellings this mix should be determined through early engagement with registered social landlords, Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset health and social care services.

New social care or health related development proposals within the C2 use class, or proposals which extend the provision of existing facilities, should be in accordance with the strategic aims of Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset health and social care services unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be practical or viable to do so.

## **POLICY 7 (CONT'D): DELIVERING HOMES**

### **Residential Density**

The design and layout of any development with a housing element should seek to achieve a residential density that:

- a makes effective use of the site; and
- b respects the character and distinctiveness of the locality; and
- c is acceptable in terms of design and amenity, both for the intended occupants of the new development and the occupants of existing development in the vicinity.

High-density housing development (above 50 dwellings per hectare) is only likely to be acceptable:

- d in town centres; or
- e in areas outside town centres, which offer opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport to access key locations and essential facilities; or
- f in other locations that have already been developed at a high density.

### **Infilling and Residential Gardens**

Any infilling that takes place within the settlement boundaries of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the eighteen larger villages, should be sensitively designed to its local context and respect the amenity of adjoining properties.

Where settlement boundaries exist, or are created or modified in neighbourhood plans, local communities are encouraged to develop more detailed policies relating to infilling and should be sensitively designed to the local context and to respect the amenity of adjoining properties.

## Policy 8 – Affordable Housing

### Introduction

- 5.70 One of the priorities identified for rural Dorset in the Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy<sup>115</sup> is to ensure that everyone can live in a good quality home and neighbourhood that meets their needs. The provision of affordable housing is also identified as a key challenge for North Dorset<sup>116</sup>. Consequently Objective 5 of the Local Plan Part 1 is to deliver more housing, including affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District.
- 5.71 The Council recognises that more affordable housing will not only help to create more sustainable, mixed communities, but will also maintain a supply of labour by providing school leavers, recent graduates and households on lower incomes with greater opportunity to remain in North Dorset. This will help to tackle the District's growing generational imbalance, provide the labour needed to enable existing firms to expand and attract new firms to the area.

### National Policy

- 5.72 National policy supports the provision of affordable housing and indicates that local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their local plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the NPPF<sup>117</sup>.
- 5.73 National policy also seeks to ensure that local plans are viable and deliverable particularly in relation to setting requirements for affordable housing provision<sup>118</sup>.

### The District Council's Approach

- 5.74 The Council has commissioned research to identify the future need for affordable housing and to assess the level of provision that may be realistically achieved, having regard to strategic viability considerations.
- 5.75 The Council aims to provide as much affordable housing as can be realistically delivered within strategic viability constraints, whilst also having regard to other matters, such as the wish of some people to build their own homes. Policy 8 sets out how this will be achieved by:

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<sup>115</sup> Page 14, Shaping Our Future – Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010).

<sup>116</sup> Page 10, Shaping Our Future – Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010).

<sup>117</sup> Paragraph 47, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>118</sup> Paragraphs 173 and 174, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- establishing thresholds (in terms of the number of net additional dwellings and floorspace) above which affordable housing will be sought;
- setting out the proportion of homes on a site that the Council will seek to be provided as affordable, which varies in different parts of the District;
- outlining the Council's approach to site-based viability considerations and associated issues, such as resolving viability disputes, the provision of affordable housing off-site and off-site financial contributions;
- providing guidance on the form of affordable housing tenure (or tenures) that should be provided on sites; and
- outlining the key considerations that will apply to the delivery of affordable housing on sites.

5.76 The Council's approach to the provision of affordable housing on rural exception sites is dealt with separately by Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing.

### **Housing Need**

5.77 All local planning authorities in the Bournemouth and Poole HMA commissioned consultants to produce a SHMA in 2008, which was updated in 2012. The 2012 SHMA Update used the DCLG housing needs model and estimated that 387 additional units of affordable housing would need to be provided annually over a five year period to meet the District-wide need.

5.78 This level of provision could not be delivered within strategic viability constraints and the 2012 SHMA Update indicates that attempting to do so would be likely to lead to significant problems within the wider housing market, in particular increased vacancy levels in the private rented sector.

5.79 The 2012 SHMA Update recommends that future affordable housing provision should be set against the likely level of additional housing provision required on the basis of projected household growth<sup>119</sup>.

### **Numerical and Gross Floorspace Thresholds**

5.80 The numerical and gross floorspace thresholds in Policy 8 – Affordable Housing are taken largely from the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The guidance indicates that a lower numerical threshold (of six or more, rather than eleven or more, dwellings) can be set in designated rural areas. In North Dorset, the only designated rural areas where this lower numerical threshold applies are those parts of the two AONBs that lie within the District.

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<sup>119</sup> As discussed in Paragraphs 5.7 to 5.10 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update produced by JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012).



- 5.81 In designated rural areas (that is, AONBs) the Council has established that it will seek only financial contributions towards the provision of affordable housing on schemes of between six and ten dwellings.
- 5.82 The Council will seek contributions towards the provision of affordable housing when either the relevant numerical or the relevant floorspace threshold is exceeded. For the purposes of applying the floorspace thresholds, gross floorspace should be measured externally. In those cases where the development is in an AONB, within the range six to ten dwellings, payment of commuted sums will be required only when the development is completed.
- 5.83 Affordable housing will continue to be sought on sites above the thresholds set in Policy 8 – Affordable Housing in order to:
- recognise that smaller development sites often have on-site costs (such as demolition of existing buildings) that are likely to have a proportionately greater impact on issues of viability;
  - recognise that smaller sites will often be developed by people wishing to build their own home, or small local builders; and
  - reduce the overall need for viability assessments for housing development proposals.
- 5.84 The Council is mindful that such an approach could be subject to abuse. For example, proposals that seek to reduce density below that reasonably appropriate to the site or the submission of piecemeal planning applications for reduced numbers of housing, both aimed at bringing applications below the numerical threshold. Where such situations are identified, then affordable housing provision may still be sought.

### Target Proportions

- 5.85 The 2012 SHMA Update considered what proportion of affordable housing should be sought on sites in North Dorset and suggested that provision of 40% of additional housing as affordable would be a sensible level in the context of the role played by the private rented sector<sup>120</sup>.
- 5.86 A whole plan viability assessment<sup>121</sup> provided a more fine-grained analysis and gave an indication of the levels of affordable housing (having regard to other infrastructure needs) that could be delivered in different parts of the District.
- 5.87 The study suggested that the Council should seek 40% of housing as affordable outside the four main towns. A target of 30% was suggested for Blandford (Forum and St. Mary) and Shaftesbury. A target of 25% was suggested for

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<sup>120</sup> This statement appears in Paragraph 5.10 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the 2012 Updated SHMA.

<sup>121</sup> North Dorset Whole Plan Viability and CIL Study – Peter Brett Associates (February 2015)

Gillingham and Sturminster Newton, reflecting the lower land and property values in these towns (compared with the rest of the District) and the more limited residual values available to fund both affordable housing and infrastructure. The study also examined the viability of the Gillingham Southern Extension and suggested that 25% of the housing within the Strategic Site Allocation should be provided as affordable.

- 5.88 The Council will seek the provision of affordable housing in line with the percentages set out above, which, if achieved, would deliver about 1,350 additional affordable homes in the four main towns by 2031. The Council will seek to deliver this level of provision, whilst also having regard to any site-based assessments of viability which could, where justified, result in a level of provision below that being sought.

### Viability

- 5.89 Applicants seeking to justify a level of affordable housing provision on a specific site below the percentages set out in Policy 8 will be expected to submit with a planning application an assessment of viability, which should be undertaken to a methodology that is acceptable to the Council. A lower level of provision will only be permitted if the assessment evidences that it is not economically viable to make the level of provision being sought.

### Housing Grant and Subsidies

- 5.90 As part of any assessment applicants will be expected to provide clear evidence of efforts to identify possible sources and levels of housing grant (or other subsidy) that may be available to make a scheme viable and clear evidence of any attempts they have made to secure such grant (or subsidy).
- 5.91 In cases where grant funding or subsidy would make a level of provision above the proportions sought in Policy 8 viable, the Council will expect provision to be made at that higher level. In some cases, grant or subsidy may only make it viable to deliver affordable housing at below the proportions set out in the policy. In such circumstances, the Council will seek to secure the maximum amount of affordable housing achievable within viability constraints at the time of the assessment.

### Resolving Viability Disputes

- 5.92 It has not always been possible for the Council to reach an agreed negotiated position with developers on the issue of viability. There have been disputes relating to the way in which an assessment has been carried out and how it should be interpreted. This has resulted in both the applicant and the Council securing their own studies, which even then have not always resolved differences between the parties.

- 5.93 The Council has however found that the use of the District Valuer (an expert independent of the Council) and an open-book approach have been helpful in enabling an agreed negotiated position to be reached with a developer and reducing areas of possible contention.
- 5.94 On a site where viability may be an issue, the Council will consider offering the opportunity for both the applicant and the Council to rely upon a single assessment of viability by the District Valuer or other mutually agreed independent assessor. Where such an offer is made, the terms will include the following requirements:
- the applicant will be expected to cover the cost of the assessment, reflecting the fact that the purpose of the exercise is to enable the applicant to seek to justify a departure from the normal requirements of the Council;
  - the District Valuer or other mutually agreed independent assessor would be instructed by the District Council; both parties would however have the opportunity to provide information to the District Valuer or other mutually agreed independent assessor to assist in the undertaking of the assessment; and
  - the applicant must adopt an open-book approach for the purposes of the assessment.
- 5.95 The parties would agree to rely upon the conclusions of the District Valuer or other mutually agreed independent assessor for the purposes of the application, thereby minimising disputes and protracted negotiations, and could refer to the findings of the District Valuer or other mutually agreed independent assessor in any subsequent proceedings.
- 5.96 An open-book approach in relation to any viability assessment, whether solely commissioned by the applicant or otherwise will be required in all cases.

### **Off-Site Provision and Financial Contributions**

- 5.97 National policy indicates that local planning authorities should, where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities<sup>122</sup>.
- 5.98 In North Dorset, affordable housing should be provided on sites of eleven or more dwellings, but where this is not a feasible or viable option, the Council may permit provision off site, provided that the housing on the alternative site can be delivered to meet local housing needs and will contribute towards creating mixed, balanced communities. A financial contribution towards

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<sup>122</sup> Paragraph 50, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

affordable housing provision is much less desirable, as suitable serviced land would still need to be found and the homes would still have to be delivered. The Council will, therefore only accept a financial contribution on sites of eleven or more dwellings where on- or off-site provision are not feasible or viable options.

- 5.99 On such sites a commuted sum of broadly equivalent value will be sought to contribute towards off-site provision. The same approach will be taken on sites which can only deliver a partial contribution towards the percentage of affordable housing being sought. For example, 40% affordable housing in a scheme of 11 dwellings would deliver 4 affordable units on site (representing 36% of provision). The residual amount would be sought as a commuted sum of a broadly equivalent value as if the affordable housing were being provided on site.
- 5.100 In cases where the Council considers it acceptable for an off-site financial contribution of broadly equivalent value to be made, a level of contribution will be sought based on a realistic assessment of the overall cost of delivering affordable homes. The Council may ask a valuer to periodically calculate the costs of delivering different sizes of affordable units in North Dorset and may seek different levels of off-site contributions based on these calculations.

### Tenure Split

- 5.101 Different types of affordable housing tenure address different requirements, reflecting the financial situation of those in housing need. Those most in need are only likely to be able to afford affordable rented or social rented accommodation. However, others may be able to pay more and afford intermediate housing, which may include the purchase of part of the equity in a property<sup>123</sup>.
- 5.102 The SHMA (published in 2008), which was produced in 2007 before the introduction of the affordable rent product, suggested that the proportion of need in North Dorset (as measured by the DCLG model) which could be met through intermediate housing was about 30%<sup>124</sup>. The 2012 SHMA Update identified a need for 14% intermediate housing, although none of the households were found to be able to afford an equity-based product (e.g.

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<sup>123</sup> The terms affordable housing, social rented housing, affordable rented housing and intermediate housing are defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>124</sup> Paragraph 13.23 on Page 120 of the Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand: Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008).

shared ownership) due to very low levels of capital and mortgage lending restrictions at that time<sup>125</sup>.

- 5.103 The two studies show that need in North Dorset is largely for affordable rented or social rented housing, with proportionately a much lower need for intermediate housing, which is highly sensitive to changes in the economy and consequently the financial situation of those in housing need.
- 5.104 In order to focus provision on meeting needs, but also to give an element of flexibility in relation to the need for intermediate housing, which is likely to fluctuate over the plan period, the Council will aim to deliver between 70% and 85% of all new affordable housing in North Dorset over the plan period as social rented and/or affordable rented housing and the remaining 15% to 30% as intermediate housing.
- 5.105 The starting point for negotiations on individual sites will be to deliver a tenure split within this range. The Council may permit a tenure split outside this range on individual sites, but only if this can be soundly justified by local circumstances or local needs, for example:
- where a scheme is proposed to meet a specific affordable housing need (for example the need for extra care affordable housing);
  - where the total number of affordable units provided on the site is too small to realistically deliver a mix of tenures; or
  - where updated and/or more local evidence of need and the relative affordability of different tenure types suggests that a different tenure split would better meet identified needs.
- 5.106 The rental levels in affordable rented properties are subject to rent controls but can be charged at up to 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). In locations where those in housing need are unlikely to be able to afford such rental levels, the Council will seek the provision of social rented housing, subject to local viability considerations.

### **Delivery of Affordable Housing**

- 5.107 Affordable housing must be provided to eligible households in housing need. Proposals incorporating affordable housing should provide the size and type of affordable housing required to meet the identified need having regard to: Policy 7 – Delivering Homes; the 2012 SHMA Update or any subsequent District-wide assessment of housing need; any more local housing need assessments; and the needs identified on the Council's housing register.

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<sup>125</sup> As discussed in Paragraphs 5.13 to 5.16 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update produced by JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012).

- 5.108 The delivery of affordable housing should be phased with the delivery of market housing on a development site and this will be controlled by planning condition or planning obligation. Affordable housing should be designed to a high standard and fully integrated with the market housing on a site so that the two elements cannot be told apart.
- 5.109 The provision of affordable housing not only helps to meet local housing needs but should also contribute towards creating mixed and balanced communities. To help create a more mixed and balanced community on a larger scheme, the affordable housing units should usually be pepper-potted amongst the market housing, or where there is a high proportion of affordable housing, grouped in small clusters. On large sites where there is a high proportion of affordable housing, the Council may also work with the developer and/or registered social landlord to produce a local lettings plan.
- 5.110 In addition, the provision of housing to meet the needs of those who require adapted or supported housing should be considered as part of the affordable housing mix. On schemes providing 10 or more affordable homes, early engagement with Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset health and social care services should help to establish this mix.

### **Low Cost Market Housing**

- 5.111 Low cost market housing (LCMH) no longer falls within the definition of affordable housing set out in national policy<sup>126</sup> and therefore does not count towards affordable housing provision. In the past the Council has sought and delivered some LCMH (as part of overall affordable housing provision) however, this has given rise to various problems, which have outweighed any limited benefits that have been achieved. For these reasons, a proposal for LCMH will not be regarded as a justification for reducing the provision of affordable housing that would otherwise be required. Any intention to include LCMH within a scheme should be supported by evidence of need for this particular type of housing in the location proposed.

### **Housing for Key Workers**

- 5.112 Research<sup>127</sup> shows that 90% of key workers<sup>128</sup> in North Dorset are able to afford entry-level prices in the local housing market. The vast majority of key workers' housing needs can, therefore be met through the general provision of market housing. The needs of those who are unable to afford to enter the local housing

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<sup>126</sup> Annex 2, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>127</sup> See Section 12 of Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand: Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008).

<sup>128</sup> A definition of key workers appears in the Glossary to the Local Plan Part 1.

market will be met through the provision of affordable housing across the District.

### **Vacant Building Credit**

- 5.113 The PPG makes clear that where a vacant building is brought back into use or is demolished and replaced by a new building, affordable housing contributions should only be required for any increase in floorspace. In such cases the Council will apply this vacant building credit in accordance with national guidance.

**POLICY 8: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Development that delivers eleven or more net additional dwellings and which has a maximum combined gross floorspace of more than 1,000 square metres, including housing on mixed-use sites, will contribute to the provision of affordable housing. On schemes of six to ten in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including housing on mixed-use sites, financial contributions to the provision of affordable housing will be sought.

Such development will contribute to the provision of affordable housing in the following proportions:

- a within the settlement boundaries of Gillingham and Sturminster Newton and within any urban extensions to these towns, 25% of the total number of dwellings will be affordable; and
- b within the settlement boundaries of Shaftesbury and Blandford (Forum and St. Mary) and within any urban extensions to these towns, 30% of the total number of dwellings will be affordable; and
- c elsewhere in the District 40% of the total number of dwellings will be affordable.

In the event of grant funding (or another subsidy) being secured or having the prospect of being secured in relation to affordable housing provision on a site, the percentage of affordable housing provided should be maximised to reflect the level of funding secured.

In cases where a level of affordable housing provision below the target percentages is being proposed, the developer may be offered an opportunity (subject to certain requirements) to involve the District Valuer or other mutually agreed independent assessor with a view to securing a mutually agreed level of affordable housing provision. In any case where viability is an issue, an 'open book' approach will be sought on any viability assessment.

If it can be demonstrated that a level of affordable housing provision below the percentages set out above can be justified on grounds of viability (taking account of grant funding or any other subsidy) an obligation will be required:

- d to secure the maximum level of provision achievable at the time of the assessment.



## **POLICY 8: (CONT'D): AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The presumption is that affordable housing will be provided on site. Where the size of a site means that the full required percentage of affordable housing could not be provided on site, the amount of affordable housing that can be accommodated on site will be maximised. Any shortfall in on-site provision will be met either by off-site provision or, where alternative off-site provision is not considered feasible or viable, by a financial contribution. Where a developer contribution in lieu of actual affordable housing provision is considered appropriate, contributions will be sought based on realistic assessments of the cost of delivering affordable homes.

Within the District as a whole, 70% to 85% of all new affordable housing should be provided as affordable rented and/or social rented housing. The remaining 15% to 30% should be provided as intermediate housing. As a starting point for site-based negotiations, the Council will seek a tenure split within this range on individual sites, but a different split may be permitted if it can be justified by local circumstances, local needs or local viability considerations. Where local market conditions would make affordable rent unaffordable for those in housing need in that area, the Council will seek the provision of social rented housing, subject to local viability considerations.

Adapted or supported housing should be considered as part of the affordable housing mix.

Affordable housing should be designed to be indistinguishable from other housing on a development site. On a larger site, the affordable units should be pepper-potted amongst the market housing, or where there is a high proportion of affordable housing, grouped in small clusters amongst the market housing.

## Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing

### National Policy

- 5.114 National policy<sup>129</sup> establishes that in rural areas, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate.
- 5.115 National policy defines rural exception sites<sup>130</sup> as small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.
- 5.116 Local planning authorities are asked to consider whether allowing an element of market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs<sup>131</sup>. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed on rural exception sites at the local authority's discretion.

### The District Council's Approach

#### The Provision of Rural Exception Sites

- 5.117 The Council's approach is to permit small sites for rural exception affordable housing within or on the edge of the existing built-up areas of the smaller villages, as well as on sites adjoining Stalbridge and the larger villages, but only to meet strictly local needs.
- 5.118 The Council may also allow small numbers of market homes as an integrated part of a rural exception scheme:
- but only as a last resort to contribute towards closing a funding gap for the provision of the rural exception affordable homes proposed on the site; and
  - provided that any market element is similar (or smaller) in size and type to the rural exception affordable homes being proposed.

#### Spatial Approach to the Location of Rural Exception Sites

- 5.119 Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy focuses strategic growth on the four main towns of Blandford (Forum and St Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. Since provision will be made to meet the overall District-wide need for affordable housing on sites within the four main towns, rural exception sites

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<sup>129</sup> Paragraph 54, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>130</sup> In Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>131</sup> Paragraph 54, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

will not be permitted within, or in the countryside adjacent to, their boundaries.

- 5.120 Rural exception schemes may be permitted within, or on the edge of, the existing built-up areas of the smaller villages, as well as on sites adjoining Stalbridge and the larger villages. Most rural exception schemes will be located at the District's larger villages, where some day-to-day needs can be met locally. For all schemes, the Council will need to be convinced that the higher costs associated with living in a rural location would not render the proposed scheme unaffordable for the intended occupants of the rural exception affordable housing units.

### **Defining the Local Need for Rural Exception Affordable Housing**

- 5.121 The Council will only support schemes for rural exception affordable housing (including schemes that include a market housing element) if a local need for rural exception affordable housing has been demonstrated in an appropriate, up-to-date survey. Such a survey should usually be undertaken at the parish level, although in certain circumstances it may be appropriate to undertake a survey for a group of smaller or less populated parishes.
- 5.122 For the purposes of the Local Plan, a household will only be considered to have a local need for rural exception affordable housing if it:
- is unable to access market housing without publicly funded financial assistance; and
  - has a local connection to the parish or parishes to which the local affordable housing needs survey relates.
- 5.123 To be considered to have a local connection to the parish or group of parishes to which the local affordable housing needs survey relates, a household must meet one of the following criteria:
- it includes at least one person who is an established resident and has a demonstrable need for separate accommodation (for example, due to overcrowding in a current residence); or
  - it includes at least one person who has an established family connection (for example, if a close family member is an established resident) and who needs to move to be near a close family member (for example, to care for a relative in ill health); or
  - it includes at least one person who has an established employment connection (s/he works in the parish or parishes concerned).
- 5.124 Any local connection needs to have existed for a reasonable period of time. The Council would usually expect residence to have been established for at least a continuous period of the twelve months preceding the survey and also at least three of the preceding five years, or for any family or employment connection to have been established for at least three of the preceding five years.

- 5.125 The Council will publish guidance for the production of local housing need surveys. In particular, any survey should seek to establish the number, size, type and form of tenure of affordable dwellings required and identify any special requirements (for example those relating to disability). Any survey should also take account of the needs of occupants of any existing affordable housing in the survey area, particularly those seeking to upsize or downsize and those that may wish to relocate to a town or another village.
- 5.126 A survey is unlikely to be considered up to date if it is more than 12 months old at the date when an application falls to be determined.

### Selecting Rural Exception Sites

- 5.127 Where a local needs survey for a parish, or group of parishes, identifies a need for rural exception affordable housing a rural exception site should be sought, in the first instance, at the most sustainable settlement in that area/group in terms of population, facilities and accessibility<sup>132</sup>. A site should only be sought at the other settlements in the area/group if no suitable or available sites can be found at the most sustainable settlement.
- 5.128 When searching for a rural exception site at a smaller village, the starting point should be to try and identify a site within the existing built-up area in order to keep encroachment into open countryside to a minimum. Where no suitable and available site exists within a settlement, it will be necessary to search for a site adjoining the existing built-up area.
- 5.129 For the purposes of this policy, a settlement is not considered to include collections of dwellings or hamlets. To be considered a settlement it should have:
- at least one essential facility within 1 kilometre of the physical centre of its built-up area ; and
  - an estimated population living within the built-up area of more than 100 people.
- 5.130 Rural exception sites are, by definition, small sites. The number of dwellings proposed on any rural exception site should reflect (and not exceed) the level of need identified in an appropriate up-to-date local housing needs survey and in any event should not exceed 9 dwellings in total, including any market housing element<sup>133</sup>.
- 5.131 Rural exception schemes are likely to be taken forward by RSLs, although other developers may be involved with any market housing element. The Council will

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<sup>132</sup> The relative sustainability of the settlements in North Dorset, in terms of population, facilities and accessibility is discussed in detail in the Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper.

<sup>133</sup> Sites for 10 or more dwellings are considered to be major development in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, Statutory Instrument No. 2184.

expect RSLs and any other developers to work closely with parish councils and local people to identify sites for rural exception housing that have the support of local communities. Rural exception schemes should not be located on local green spaces identified in the Local Plan or neighbourhood plans.

- 5.132 In most cases it should be possible to provide sufficient rural exception affordable housing to address a local need on a small site. In cases where this is not possible, a local community should consider whether it would wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan to allocate a housing site to meet both affordable and market housing needs.
- 5.133 Policy 8 and Policy 20 – The Countryside establish that appropriately located rural exception schemes can be an acceptable type of development in the countryside. Any proposed scheme will however also be considered against all other relevant planning policies, including those relating to sustainability, design, amenity and the protection of the environment, to ensure that it can be sensitively integrated into its local surroundings.

### **Addressing Local Community Affordable Housing Needs**

- 5.134 The number, size (in terms of both the overall size and the number of bedrooms) and type (for example house, bungalow, flat) of affordable dwellings proposed as part of a rural exceptions scheme should aim to address the identified affordable housing needs of the local community. The affordable homes that are proposed should take account of those already in affordable housing in the locality that are seeking to upsize or downsize and those that may wish to relocate to a town or another village. Provision should also be made to meet any identified special requirements (for example those relating to disability).
- 5.135 Affordable housing may take the form of social rented, affordable rented or intermediate housing and the form (or mix of forms) of tenure proposed should address the identified needs. Provision should be made for social rented housing, where it is likely that other forms of tenure would be too expensive to occupy for those identified to be in need in an appropriate up-to-date survey. In making such an assessment, regard should be had to all relevant costs including any likely service charge and travel expenditure.

### **Market Housing on Rural Exception Sites**

- 5.136 National policy indicates that in order to deliver significant additional affordable housing, small numbers of market homes may be allowed on rural exception sites at a local authority's discretion. The Council will only accept the principle of a rural exception affordable housing scheme on the basis of a demonstrable local need for rural exception affordable housing. The principle of a scheme cannot be justified on the basis of market housing needs.

- 5.137 In this context, 'small numbers' means small numbers in relation to the overall number of housing units proposed on the rural exception site. The number of market homes the Council may permit will depend on individual circumstances and will be assessed on a site-by-site basis. However, it is unlikely that a proposal which exceeds one third of the total number of dwellings being provided as market homes will be acceptable and in many cases the percentage is likely to be less.
- 5.138 Where a market housing element is proposed on a rural exception affordable housing scheme, the Council will look for clear evidence to justify its provision. Viability information will need to be provided to the Council as part of an application on an open book basis and will be subjected to appropriate scrutiny.
- 5.139 Developers will be expected to demonstrate that they have examined all other potential sources of funding to provide the rural exception affordable homes without a market element before the Council would consider allowing any market homes on a scheme. Such sources could include: grant funding (for example from the Homes and Communities Agency); monies a registered social landlord may have collected from the disposals of affordable homes elsewhere in the District; and monies the Council may have collected in contributions from developers towards the off-site provision of affordable homes.
- 5.140 The Council will only accept the principle of small numbers of market homes on a rural exception affordable housing scheme, if they are required to contribute towards closing a funding gap for the provision of the rural exception affordable homes on that scheme. Such provision may not fully close the funding gap in all cases, but where it does, the small numbers of market homes proposed should be the minimum necessary to support the provision of the affordable homes on that site.
- 5.141 Any assessment of viability should set out why a market element is required to contribute towards closing a funding gap for the scheme as a whole. Factors that should be taken into account include:
- the costs associated with providing the number of affordable units proposed;
  - the costs associated with providing affordable units of a size, type and tenure that will address the identified affordable housing needs of the local community;
  - the availability of any grant funding, or other source of funding to meet the costs of providing the affordable units (for example from off-site affordable housing contributions taken elsewhere);
  - the sums likely to be generated from the sale of any market units; and
  - the extent to which the rental and other income from the affordable units could contribute to furnish any borrowing required to deliver the scheme.

- 5.142 In the event that a viability assessment shows that more than a small number of market units are required to make a scheme viable, it will not be granted planning permission. Further, proposals that seek the provision of market housing in excess of the minimum needed to make the proposed affordable element viable, having had regard to all other potential sources of funding, will also not be permitted.
- 5.143 Any market element should be similar in size and type to the rural exception affordable homes proposed on a scheme. Typically these will be smaller dwellings which would be likely to be suitable to local households on lower incomes seeking to enter the housing market for the first time, or local households (especially of older people) that wish to downsize, but still live locally.
- 5.144 Any proposed market housing unit that is larger in overall floorspace, bedroom or amenity provision than the largest proposed affordable housing unit, or is not comparable in size to similar affordable housing types being proposed on site, will not be permitted. Smaller-scale open market housing may be acceptable, particularly where it is shown this could meet existing local demand for open market housing.
- 5.145 Any market element should be integrated with the affordable element and should be designed as part of a single scheme. Proposals seeking to separate the market and affordable elements (for example either side of an area of open space) or schemes that seek to build the market element separately or remotely from the affordable element will not be permitted.

### **Nominations and Occupancy**

- 5.146 The number, size, type and form of tenure of any affordable units on a rural exception affordable housing scheme should reflect currently identified need. However, there will be cases where the level of need exceeds the level of provision made. It is also recognised that local housing needs may change during the period between a scheme being put forward and the completion of the dwellings.
- 5.147 When considering potential occupants for rural exception affordable housing, the Council will usually look to secure arrangements for priority to be given in the following order:
- to a household with at least one person who is an established resident with a demonstrable need for separate accommodation in the parish or parishes to which the local affordable housing needs survey relates;
  - to a household with at least one person who has an established family or employment connection in the parish or parishes to which the local affordable housing needs survey relates;

- to a household with at least one person who is an established resident with a demonstrable need for separate accommodation in adjoining parishes or households with a family or employment connection to an adjoining parish.
- 5.148 Following construction of the rural exception housing, in the event that there are no potential occupants with an established local connection to the parish or adjoining parishes, consideration will be given to potential occupants with an established local connection who live within the District and finally to potential occupants with an established local connection who live outside the District.
- 5.149 The Council will not seek to control the occupancy of any market housing units on a rural exception site. Developers will be expected to market such properties locally, but local people will have to compete on the open market to acquire them.
- 5.150 National policy<sup>134</sup> requires that affordable housing delivered through a rural exceptions policy remains available to meet local housing need in perpetuity. As part of any consent that is granted for a rural exception site, the Council will expect to secure the occupancy of the housing to meet local affordable housing needs on that basis.

### **Planning Permissions and Renewals**

- 5.151 As the justification for the provision of rural exception housing is an evidenced extant local need, consented schemes should be delivered in a timely manner, to seek to ensure that the affordable homes are provided whilst the currently identified need still exists. To help achieve this, the Council will consider limiting the grant of planning permissions for rural exception schemes (e.g. by requiring that the permission be begun in a period of less than three years – for instance one year).
- 5.152 In order to demonstrate an existing need, when a planning application is submitted to renew permission for a rural exception scheme, the Council will expect any such application to be accompanied by an updated local affordable housing need survey. Where possible, the Council wishes to avoid rural exception affordable housing being provided where it cannot be fully occupied by those in local housing need. Consequently, the Council will wish to see any applications to renew permission modified to reflect lower levels of local need, if that is shown in an updated needs survey. In the event that an updated survey shows that there is no longer an identified local need, planning permission will be refused.
- 5.153 Equally, in the event of the original permission including an open market element, any renewal will need to demonstrate via an appropriate viability submission that such a need remains.

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<sup>134</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).



## **POLICY 9: RURAL EXCEPTION AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Rural exception affordable housing schemes will only be permitted within or adjoining the built-up area of the District's smaller villages. In Stalbridge and the larger villages rural exception sites will be permitted adjoining the settlement boundaries. Rural exception affordable housing schemes will not be permitted within or adjoining the settlements of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton.

Rural exception affordable housing schemes (including schemes that propose small numbers of market housing units) will only be permitted if a local need for rural exception affordable housing can be demonstrated in an appropriate up-to-date local needs survey.

Where an appropriate up-to-date local needs survey for a parish (or group of parishes) identifies a local need, a rural exception affordable housing site should be sought, in the first instance, at the most sustainable settlement in that parish (or group parishes) in terms of population, facilities and accessibility.

When searching for a rural exception site at a settlement, a rural exception affordable housing site should be sought, in the first instance, on a site with a capacity for no more than nine dwellings in total (including both affordable and market elements) and for the smaller villages within the existing built-up area of the settlement. Where no such suitable site exists within the relevant settlement a scheme should be provided on a site adjoining the existing built-up area of the settlement.

A rural exceptions housing scheme will only be permitted if:

- a the number of proposed affordable homes does not exceed the identified local affordable housing need identified in an appropriate up-to-date survey; and
- b all the proposed affordable homes are of a size, type and form (or mix of forms) of tenure that will meet, or contribute towards meeting, the identified local affordable housing need identified in an appropriate up-to-date survey.

## **POLICY 9 (CONT): RURAL EXCEPTION AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

At the Council's discretion, a small number of market homes, which should not exceed one third of the total number of homes being proposed (including the affordable and market elements) may be permitted on a rural exception site, as part of a rural exception affordable housing scheme.

Such small numbers will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated to the Council by way of an open book viability assessment that:

- c having examined all other potential sources of funding, it would not be possible to provide the affordable homes on the site without a market element; and
- d the market homes are required to contribute towards closing a funding gap for the provision of the rural exception affordable homes on that scheme; and
- e the number of market homes proposed is the minimum necessary to deliver the affordable element of the scheme in a manner that addresses the affordable housing needs of the local community.

If the Council accepts that a market housing element is required on a rural exception affordable housing scheme, the scheme will only be permitted if:

- f no market home is larger than the largest affordable home on the site; and
- g no market home exceeds the size of comparable types of affordable housing that is being provided on the site; and
- h the market homes are integrated with the affordable homes to form a single housing scheme.

Any affordable homes provided on a rural exceptions site should remain available to meet local housing need in perpetuity.

## Policy 10 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

### National Policy

- 5.154 National planning policy, as set out in the NPPF<sup>135</sup>, seeks to provide a supply of housing which meets the needs of present and future generations. This includes meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 5.155 The traditions and culture of these groups means that they typically live in mobile homes or caravans, even if they have ceased travelling, either permanently or temporarily. Such a lifestyle gives rise to particular accommodation needs, not only for permanent residential sites but also for transit sites and emergency stopping places.
- 5.156 Through the national planning policy guidance Planning Policy for Traveller Sites<sup>136</sup> the Government also seeks to ensure fair and equal treatment for Gypsies and Travellers in a way that respects the traditional and nomadic way of life while also respecting the interests of the settled community.
- 5.157 In order to achieve this, the Government's aims are:
- that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning;
  - to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites;
  - to encourage local planning authorities to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale;
  - that plan-making and decision-taking should protect Green Belt<sup>137</sup> from inappropriate development;
  - to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites;
  - that plan-making and decision-taking should aim to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective;
  - for local planning authorities to ensure that their local plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies;
  - to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an

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<sup>135</sup> Paragraph 7, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>136</sup> Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>137</sup> There is no Green Belt in North Dorset, although the South East Dorset Green Belt surrounds the Bournemouth / Poole conurbation.

appropriate level of supply;

- to reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities in plan-making and planning decisions;
- to enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure; and
- for local planning authorities to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment.

### Identifying Accommodation Needs

- 5.158 The Council has a responsibility as the housing authority to assess and meet the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements, with an additional buffer of 5%.
- 5.159 This is reiterated in the associated Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, which states<sup>138</sup> that when preparing their local plans, 'local planning authorities should identify, and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of sites against their locally set targets' and 'identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years six to ten and, where possible, for years 11-15'.
- 5.160 In order to establish locally set targets for the provision of sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople an assessment of their accommodation needs is required. An assessment was produced in 2007<sup>139</sup> based on data from 2005 and earlier.
- 5.161 The Government expects local planning authorities to make their own assessment of need for planning purposes and use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of local plans<sup>140</sup>. A new assessment<sup>141</sup> was produced in 2013 which shows a continuing requirement for sites in Dorset and North Dorset.

### Meeting Identified Needs

- 5.162 National policy relating to the provision of Traveller sites<sup>142</sup> indicates that local planning authorities should consider producing joint development plans that set targets on a cross-authority basis, to provide more flexibility in identifying

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<sup>138</sup> Paragraph 9 (a) and (b), Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>139</sup> Dorset Traveller Needs Assessment, Anglia Ruskin University (March 2007).

<sup>140</sup> Paragraphs 4 and 6 (c) Planning Policy for Traveller Sites - DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>141</sup> Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment, Opinion Research Services (September 2013).

<sup>142</sup> Paragraph 9 (c), Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, DCLG (March 2012).

sites, particularly if a local planning authority has special or strict planning constraints across its area. This reflects the duty to cooperate that local planning authorities have on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries.

- 5.163 All the local planning authorities across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole have jointly commissioned consultants to prepare the Dorset-Wide Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD).
- 5.164 As work progresses on the DPD, a better understanding of actual levels of need for accommodation will emerge, as well as the needs of different groups and their locational requirements. Figures setting out the future level of need in North Dorset, based on the 2013 accommodation assessment, will be incorporated into the DPD.
- 5.165 A methodology has been developed in the Dorset-Wide Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations DPD to assess the availability, suitability and achievability of potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. On the basis of this assessment, it is intended to identify and allocate sufficient sites and pitches to meet the needs identified in North Dorset (and across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole).
- 5.166 Once a locally set target for the provision of sites or pitches has been established, the Council will report on performance against it in its Annual Monitoring Report.

### **Considering Planning Applications**

- 5.167 It is hoped that the DPD will result in planning applications for sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople coming forward on sites which have been allocated. However, this may not always be the case. The criteria that will be used to determine planning applications relating to proposed sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, whether identified in the DPD or not, are set out in Policy 26 - Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

### **The Great Dorset Steam Fair**

- 5.168 The Great Dorset Steam Fair takes place at Tarrant Hinton in North Dorset each year. In association with this event there is a need for a transit site with the capacity for 100 temporary pitches for a few weeks each year. This need is not addressed in the Dorset-Wide Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations DPD. However, the District and County Councils will seek to provide such a site within a reasonable distance of the Steam Fair site each year, for as long as the event is located within the District.

**POLICY 10: GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE**

The Council will make appropriate provision to meet the identified need for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople pitches within the District through the identification of sites within the Dorset-Wide Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). The requirement for the provision of transit sites will be addressed through the same DPD.

## 6. Supporting Economic Development

### Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter is concerned with supporting economic development and includes policies relating to:
- the Council's overall approach to securing sustainable economic development in the four main towns and the countryside by taking forward a set of key actions to support the economy, including sustainable tourism (Policy 11); and
  - the Council's approach to retail, leisure and other commercial developments, which seeks to support the viability and vitality of town centres and manage proposals for main town centre uses outside town centres (Policy 12).
- 6.2 These policies will help to achieve the vision for North Dorset, one aspect of which is to have a more robust and prosperous economy (including sustainable tourism) with high quality jobs and skills, focused on locations that best support the District's growing population.
- 6.3 These policies also respond positively to the following Local Plan Part 1 objectives:
- Objective 3 – Ensuring the Vitality of Market Towns; and
  - Objective 4 – Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities.

## Policy 11 – The Economy

### National Policy

- 6.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies the economic role of the planning system as ‘contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure’<sup>143</sup>. The NPPF highlights that the economic role should not be undertaken in isolation but balanced with the mutually dependent social and environmental roles in pursuit of sustainable development.
- 6.5 National policy indicates that to help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>144</sup>. In rural areas, such as North Dorset, planning policies should support economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development<sup>145</sup>.

### Local Context

- 6.6 The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) directs investment to strengthen the Dorset-wide economy and leads on promoting economic growth across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. Many of the proposals in this Local Plan are included in the Dorset LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).<sup>146</sup> The Sustainable Community Strategy for Dorset identifies trying to foster a strong economy that offers better job opportunities for local people as a priority for the rural County<sup>147</sup>.
- 6.7 The Council’s three-year economic development strategy<sup>148</sup> aims to stimulate the economy, create economic growth and jobs, and attract resources and investment to the area. The Council’s role will be to help create an environment in which businesses can thrive.

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<sup>143</sup> Paragraph 7, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>144</sup> Paragraph 20, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>145</sup> Paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>146</sup> Transforming Dorset: Strategic Economic Plan, Dorset LEP (March 2014).

<sup>147</sup> This priority is set out on Page 15 of the Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2020, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010).

<sup>148</sup> North Dorset Economic Development Strategy for Action 2012 – 2015, North Dorset District Council (April 2012).



## **Spatial Approach to Economic Development**

- 6.8 The Council will seek to secure sustainable economic development that enables North Dorset's economy to grow and diversify in ways which support the role and function of different places within the District.

### **The Four Main Towns**

- 6.9 The key elements of the Council's approach to economic development in relation to Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton are:
- to identify and bring forward key strategic sites to meet the identified need for employment land;
  - to identify and bring forward mixed-use regeneration sites on the edge of existing town centres; and
  - to continue to improve town centres, as the main focus for retail and leisure activities (as set out in more detail in Policy 12 – Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments).
- 6.10 The broad locations for additional employment land and mixed-use regeneration at the four main towns are outlined in Policies 16 to 19. These locations will be more closely defined in Local Plan Part 2. Economic development issues in relation to the Gillingham Southern Extension are covered in more detail in Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation.
- 6.11 The approach to economic development in the four main towns is consistent with the overall approach to growth set out in Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy and reflects the approach to housing provision in Policy 6 - Housing Distribution. Most employment land and the main sites for mixed-use regeneration are located at the four main towns, where the vast majority of new housing will be located. By linking the spatial provision of homes and jobs: greater self-containment will be promoted; the need for residents to commute to find suitable employment will be reduced; and investment will be guided to locations where it will have maximum benefit.

### **Economic Development in the Countryside**

- 6.12 The key elements of the Council's approach to economic development in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the District's villages) are:
- to enable rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs, for instance through neighbourhood planning; and
  - to support certain forms of economic development through countryside policies including those relating to: the re-use of existing rural buildings; the small-scale expansion of existing employment sites; equine-related developments; and the provision of rural tourist accommodation (as set out in Policies 29 to 32).

- 6.13 This approach seeks to support and diversify the economy in the countryside to meet local, rather than strategic needs. Neighbourhood plans could allocate specific sites for economic development to enable local communities to meet their own needs, if they cannot be met through countryside policies alone.

### **Key Actions to Deliver Sustainable Economic Development**

- 6.14 Within the overall spatial approach set out above, the Council will seek to create the right conditions to deliver sustainable economic development by:
- making provision for sufficient land for economic development purposes (including land on employment sites and on sites for mixed-use regeneration) in sustainable locations to meet the needs of business, provide jobs for local people and reduce the need for commuting outside the District;
  - adopting a flexible policy approach to the uses that may be permitted on employment sites;
  - periodically reviewing the portfolio of existing employment sites in the District (including sites defined or allocated in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003) to ensure that they remain fit for purpose;
  - encouraging tourism proposals that are sustainable and which contribute to the rural economy;
  - continuing to work in partnership with landowners, developers, government agencies (for example the Homes and Communities Agency[HCA]), the Dorset LEP and local community partnerships, to help create an environment in which businesses can thrive including through the delivery of infrastructure to support business growth (such as broadband); and
  - enhancing opportunities for, and access to, training that will enable the District's workforce to develop the skills needed to meet the changing needs of employers.

### **Projected Job Growth**

- 6.15 Full time equivalent (FTE) employment growth is projected to increase by around 0.8% per annum over the 20-year period from 2011 to 2031<sup>149</sup>, which translates to a need for 4,400 FTE jobs in North Dorset over the same period.
- 6.16 FTE employment growth has been analysed by sector and projected for the two 10-year periods 2011 to 2021 and 2021 to 2031<sup>150</sup>. Approximately two thirds of the growth of FTE jobs is projected to take place in the first decade (from 2011 to 2021), with the remaining one third projected between 2021 and 2031. On

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<sup>149</sup> Appendix A, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study: Employment Land Projections 2012 Update, DCC (March 2012).

<sup>150</sup> Table 12, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study: Employment Land Projections 2012 Update, DCC (March 2012).

that basis, it is estimated that approximately 3,630 FTE jobs will be required during the plan period (2011 to 2026) with a further 770 FTE jobs required between 2026 and 2031.

- 6.17 The types of jobs in the North Dorset economy are also predicted to change over the next 20 years. In rural Dorset the sectors projected to grow most are: business services; health and social; distribution; hotels and catering; and transport and communications. During the first decade from 2011 to 2021 some growth is projected in the manufacturing sector, but it, along with agriculture and construction, is projected to decline in the second period. Public administration and defence are also projected to show significant declines across both periods.

### **Providing Sufficient Employment Land**

- 6.18 The NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should assess the existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified needs.
- 6.19 All local authorities in Dorset have worked together to assess the future needs for employment land (that is, land primarily for B Class uses) in the area<sup>151</sup>. Projections have been updated to take account of the recession and have identified a level of need based on 2.5% Gross Value Added (GVA) growth per annum across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole<sup>152</sup>. The projections also build in additional flexibility allowances of 10% and 20%.
- 6.20 The projections showed a need for 30.5 hectares of employment land for the period 2011 to 2031, including a 20% flexibility allowance. The projections indicate that 21.9 hectares are required between 2011 and 2021 and 8.6 hectares are needed in the period 2021 to 2031. On that basis, the District-wide need for employment land for the plan period (2011 to 2026) is 26.2 hectares. The availability of employment land in North Dorset was also examined and in April 2011, 49.6 hectares were identified as being available across the District, which is more than adequate to meet the overall need for employment land.
- 6.21 It is also important for each main town to have an adequate supply of employment land. Table 6.1 shows that if the overall identified need for employment land is apportioned in accordance with the proposed distribution of housing, this is the case.
- 6.22 Each of the four main towns has at least one key strategic employment site. These sites, which in April 2011 covered approximately 33 hectares, are:

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<sup>151</sup> Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy, GVA Grimley (2008).

<sup>152</sup> Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study: Employment Land Projections 2012 Update, Dorset County Council (March 2012).

- part of the Brewery site, Blandford St. Mary, about 3.0 hectares;
- land off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford Forum, about 4.8 hectares;
- Brickfields Business Park, Gillingham, about 11.7 hectares;
- land south of the A30 at Shaftesbury, about 7.0 hectares; and
- North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton, about 6.3 hectares.

6.23 The availability of more than sufficient employment land at the four main towns means that there is no need for additional employment land in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) to contribute towards meeting the identified strategic need. However, in April 2011, 6.7 hectares of employment land was identified as being available outside the four main towns, which can be developed to contribute towards meeting local economic development needs in the countryside.

Figure 6.1: Need and Availability of Employment Land in North Dorset (in hectares)<sup>153</sup>

Location	Need for Employment Land 2011 to 2026	Available Employment Land at April 2011
Blandford	6.0	10.3
Gillingham	9.2	17.5
Shaftesbury	7.1	8.4
Sturminster Newton	2.4	6.7
Rest of District	1.6	6.7
North Dorset	26.2	49.6

In addition to the provision of sufficient employment land, a proportion of jobs will be provided through homeworking. Working from home is likely to become more prevalent particularly with changing work patterns and improved broadband connectivity.

### Sites for Mixed-Use Regeneration

6.24 About 40% of the employed population have jobs in non-B Class use sectors such as retail, health, education and tourism. These jobs play an important role in the local economy and the Council supports these employment opportunities even though they are not generally located on employment sites. 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

<sup>153</sup> Figures do not sum due to rounding.

for office and non-B Class employment uses. The Council also recognises the role of residential uses above town centre uses within regeneration areas to help secure their vitality.

- 6.25 Three employment sites were identified as requiring further investigation with regard to their future role (and their potential for mixed-use regeneration) through the employment land review (ELR) process<sup>154</sup>. These sites, which now are (or form part of larger areas) identified for regeneration in this plan, are:
- the Brewery, Blandford. This site 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;
  - Station Road, Gillingham. The ELR site forms part of a larger area identified for regeneration in this plan. Part of the site has planning permission for retail development; and
  - the Creamery, Sturminster Newton. The ELR site forms part of a wider area identified for regeneration in this plan. The Creamery 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 housing development. The Creamery site was developed in accordance with the community-led development brief for the wider Station Road area<sup>155</sup>.
- 6.26 Land between Shaftesbury Town Centre and Christy's Lane, much of which is in public ownership, is also identified as a site for mixed-use regeneration in the Local Plan Part 1 (Policy 12 – Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments and Policy 18 – Shaftesbury).

### Uses on Employment Sites

- 6.27 Uses on employment sites are often limited to those that fall within Class B1 (business), Class B2 (general industrial) and Class B8 (storage and distribution). However, since the level of supply is above the projected level of future need, the Council has adopted a more flexible approach and will permit other uses that provide employment, but do not fall within the B Class use definitions. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 also provides an opportunity to convert a Class B8 (storage and distribution) use to residential purposes under certain circumstances. These residential conversions, when completed, will be counted as part of the housing land supply.
- 6.28 This approach could help to support businesses and encourage the provision of a wider range of jobs, but the Council will not permit inappropriate

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<sup>154</sup> Employment Land Review: Review of Existing Sites, North Dorset District Council (April 2007).

<sup>155</sup> Station Road Area Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by the Matrix Partnership Ltd (April 2008).

developments on employment sites, including: retail developments, other than those that are small-scale and ancillary to a B Class use; any town centre use for which a sequentially preferable site can be found (Policy 12 – Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments); and any form of housing development.

- 6.29 On employment sites, in addition to B Class uses, the Council may permit:
- community uses, such as community halls;
  - healthcare facilities, such as doctors’ and vets’ surgeries (but not any healthcare facility with a residential element, such as a care home);
  - education facilities, including training facilities for businesses and pre-school nurseries; and
  - small-scale retail, which is ancillary to a B Class use.
- 6.30 Land on Kingsmead Business Park is identified as the preferred location for the local centre for the southern extension of Gillingham. In the event that this site is developed as a local centre, a wider range of uses may be permitted, as set out in Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation.

### **Ensuring Employment Land is Fit for Purpose**

- 6.31 The first stage of the Council’s ELR identified that the vast majority of employment sites met the needs of the market and were in sustainable locations. A number of sites were identified for review and some of these are now proposed for, or have been developed as, mixed-use regeneration schemes, as explained above.
- 6.32 The Council will monitor the effects of its more flexible approach to uses on employment sites and will periodically review the suitability of the employment sites in the District in the context of this approach.

### **Sustainable Tourism**

- 6.33 Tourism in North Dorset supports 6% of employment and generates £76 million per annum<sup>156</sup>. It also brings in visitors who support the wider rural economy by using local services and facilities. Tourism also raises issues such as limited employment opportunities, low-waged and seasonal jobs, and visitor pressure on attractions (such as the District’s landscape and heritage).
- 6.34 Tourists visiting North Dorset primarily come to enjoy the character of the District’s historic settlements and its attractive countryside. The Council intends to build on this market by:
- supporting tourism that enables visitors to enjoy the District’s historic market towns and their facilities, including town centres, small museums, local exhibitions and tourist shops;

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<sup>156</sup> Volume and Value of Tourism, South West Research Council (2009).

- supporting local food-based heritage, promotion, employment and training; and
  - supporting rural tourism that enables people to enjoy the District's landscapes and recreational opportunities such as the road-based North Dorset cycleway, the North Dorset Trailway and long distance footpaths such as the Stour Valley Way and Jubilee Trail.
- 6.35 Additional tourist facilities and larger hotels are generally considered to be town centre uses and should be located in town centres, where sites are available. Smaller-scale tourist accommodation, including guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments and self-catering accommodation are not considered to be town centre uses and may be permitted elsewhere within the settlement boundaries of the four main towns. Proposals for tourist accommodation outside the four main towns will be assessed against Policy 31 - Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside.

### **Working with Partners**

- 6.36 Over the plan period the Dorset LEP will develop strategies and put in place programmes to deliver growth. The Council will work with the Dorset LEP to support and take forward these strategies and programmes, insofar as they relate to North Dorset, including through the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).
- 6.37 The Council will continue to work with partners, including landowners, developers, government agencies (such as the HCA) and local community partnerships to: develop key strategic employment and mixed-use regeneration sites; to assist in developing existing businesses and attracting new businesses; and to promote the District as a place to do business.
- 6.38 At the local level, the Council will support communities that wish to take forward economic development in their town or village. This may involve supporting local people in the preparation of their neighbourhood plan, or through other initiatives, such as the production of the community-led development brief for North Dorset Business Park at Sturminster Newton, which gives particular support to the local food-based sector<sup>157</sup>.

### **Skills and Training**

- 6.39 The Council's spatial approach and the key actions it intends to take to deliver sustainable economic development will help to create suitable conditions to attract inward investment. However, in order to attract the right kind of new businesses, particularly knowledge-based companies, a skilled workforce is needed.

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<sup>157</sup> The North Dorset Business Park Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by the Matrix Partnership Ltd (March 2012).

- 6.40 Further education in North Dorset is limited, but the Council will work with partners, such as Yeovil College, Kingston Maurward College and Equilibrium (who provide vocational skills training for NEETs<sup>158</sup>) to provide better training facilities for young people. Skills can also be enhanced by developing links with existing employers, such as the Royal Signals at Blandford Camp.

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<sup>158</sup> Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).



## **POLICY 11: THE ECONOMY**

### **Spatial Approach to Economic Development**

The economic development of the four main towns (i.e. Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton) will be supported by:

- a the development of key strategic sites to meet the identified need for employment land; and
- b the mixed-use regeneration of sites on the edge of existing town centres with a focus on office and non-B Class employment generating uses; and
- c the continued improvement of town centres (in accordance with Policy 12) as the main focus for retail, leisure and other commercial activities.

Economic development in the countryside (including at Stalbridge and the District's villages) will be supported by:

- d enabling rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs, particularly through neighbourhood planning; and
- e countryside policies (Policies 29 to 32) which may permit: the re-use of existing buildings; the retention and small-scale expansion of existing employment sites; the provision of certain forms of tourist accommodation; and equine-related developments.

### **Jobs, Employment Land and Sites for Mixed-Use Regeneration**

About 3,630 new jobs will be needed in North Dorset by 2031.

About 49.6 hectares of land will be developed primarily for employment uses in North Dorset between 2011 and 2031. This will include the development of the following key strategic sites primarily for employment uses:

- f part of the Brewery site, Blandford St. Mary (about 3.0 hectares);
- g land off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford Forum (about 4.8 hectares);
- h Brickfields Business Park, Gillingham (about 11.7 hectares);
- i land south of the A30 at Shaftesbury (about 7.0 hectares); and
- j North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton (about 6.3 hectares)

## **POLICY 11 (CONT'D): THE ECONOMY**

The following sites, adjacent or close to existing town centres, have been identified for mixed-use regeneration:

- k Brewery site, Blandford St. Mary;
- l Station Road area, Gillingham;
- m Station Road area, Sturminster Newton; and
- n Land between the town centre and Christy's Lane, Shaftesbury.

### **Uses on Employment Sites**

Existing employment sites and sites identified for future employment uses will be protected from other forms of development. On such sites, the Council will permit employment (B Class) uses and, where it would support businesses and/or provide a wider range of jobs, may also permit:

- o community uses, such as community halls; and
- p healthcare facilities, such as doctors' and vets' surgeries (but not any healthcare facility with a residential element, such as a care home); and
- q education facilities, including training facilities for businesses and pre-school nurseries; and
- r small-scale retail, which is ancillary to a B Class use.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 also provides an opportunity to convert a Class B8 (storage and distribution) use to residential purposes under certain circumstances. These residential conversions, when completed, will be counted as part of the housing land supply.

### **Sustainable Tourism**

Tourist facilities and larger hotels will be encouraged in town centre locations in accordance with the sequential approach to the location of town centre uses in Policy 12 – Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments.

Smaller hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments and self-catering accommodation will be permitted within the settlement boundaries of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton.

Tourist accommodation in the countryside will be permitted in accordance with Policy 31 – Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside.

## Policy 12 – Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments

### National Policy

- 6.41 The NPPF states that planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres<sup>159</sup>. Local planning authorities should also apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date local plan<sup>160</sup>.

### The District Council's Approach

- 6.42 The Council recognises that town centres are at the heart of local communities and Policy 12 aims to support their viability and vitality. It:
- defines the hierarchy and network of centres in the District;
  - sets out the Council's approach to the definition of town centres, primary shopping areas, and primary and secondary shopping frontages;
  - makes clear the different uses that may be permitted in these locations, seeking to concentrate main town centre uses in town centres and retail and other A Class uses in shopping areas and frontages;
  - outlines the sites in existing town centres and edge-of-centre sites that will be developed to support town centres and meet future needs;
  - sets out how the Council will manage proposals for main town centre uses outside town centres by applying the sequential test in national policy to planning applications for such uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with the development plan;
  - sets out that the Council will seek to retain and enhance existing markets; and
  - sets out that the Council will encourage high quality shop front design in accordance with its guidance.
- 6.43 The retention (where viable) of existing local shops, village shops and other commercial community facilities, such as public house, is sought by Policy 27 – Retention of Community Facilities. In the countryside, new commercial community facilities may be permitted where an existing building is re-used under Policy 29 – The Re-Use of Existing Buildings in the Countryside. Alternatively, sites for new commercial community facilities may be allocated by local communities in neighbourhood plans.

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<sup>159</sup> How planning policies should ensure the vitality of town centres when local plans are drawn up is set out in full in Paragraph 23 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>160</sup> Paragraph 24, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

## Hierarchy and Network of Centres

- 6.44 The Council has worked with other local authorities in the eastern half of Dorset to define a hierarchy and network of centres. Studies confirm that in North Dorset, Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton all merit classification as town centres<sup>161</sup>.
- 6.45 Blandford Forum, Gillingham and Shaftesbury each have over 90 commercial outlets (Classes A1 to A5)<sup>162</sup>, including a range of convenience, comparison and service uses. Sturminster Newton has fewer (55) commercial outlets, but has many other facilities, such as a medical centre, a library and a community centre.
- 6.46 The four main towns all primarily serve their own local catchment area and have a limited draw beyond their respective boundaries.<sup>163</sup> Figure 6.2 below shows that in terms of wider retail catchments, particularly for non-food shopping, the towns in the north of the District mainly look towards Salisbury and Yeovil whereas Blandford looks south-east towards Poole.

Figure 6.2: North Dorset Town Centres and Wider Retail Catchments

Town Centre	Other Centres with a Major Influence	Other Centres with a Minor Influence
Blandford Forum	Poole	-
Gillingham	Salisbury Yeovil	Shaftesbury
Shaftesbury	Salisbury Yeovil	Gillingham
Sturminster Newton	Yeovil	Shaftesbury

<sup>161</sup> Paragraph 3.10 (Page 17), Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils: Volume 1 Capacity Analysis, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

<sup>162</sup> A Class uses are: A1 - Shops; A2 - Financial and Professional Services; A3 - Food and Drink; A4 - Drinking Establishments; and A5 - Hot Food Takeaways.

<sup>163</sup> Paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 (page 45), Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils: Volume 1 Capacity Analysis, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

## Defining Town Centres, Primary Shopping Areas and Shopping Frontages

### Defining Town Centre Boundaries

- 6.47 Town centres are the sequentially preferred location for main town centre uses<sup>164</sup> including: retail development, leisure, entertainment facilities, certain intensive sport and recreation uses, offices, and arts, cultural and tourism uses. The North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 does not show any town centre boundaries for Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. These will be defined as part of the site allocations in the Local Plan Part 2 unless a local community decide to define a boundary for their town centre in a neighbourhood plan. A town centre boundary should be drawn to include the town's primary shopping area and other areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area.
- 6.48 In the interim, the Council will use available evidence to make judgements for development management purposes about whether a particular site falls within a town centre, including:
- the draft town centre boundaries identified in the Council's 2005 Annual Monitoring Report;
  - locally produced evidence base studies, such as the Gillingham and Sturminster Newton Town Design Statements<sup>165</sup>; and
  - evidence in earlier planning applications for main town centre uses where the sequential test in national policy has been applied.

### Defining Primary Shopping Areas

- 6.49 The North Dorset District - Wide Local Plan 2003 does not show any primary shopping areas for Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. These will be defined as part of Local Plan Part 2 unless a local community define a boundary for their primary shopping area in a neighbourhood plan. Primary shopping area boundaries should be drawn to define the area of the town centre where retail development is concentrated. In the interim, the Council will have regard to the recommended primary

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<sup>164</sup> The full definition of main town centre uses is set out in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>165</sup> Gillingham Town Design Statement, Gillingham Town Design Statement Steering Group (June 2012) and Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement, The Matrix Partnership for SturQuest (July 2008).

shopping areas, as identified in the Joint Retail Study<sup>166</sup>, for development management purposes.

### Defining Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages

- 6.50 The North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 defines primary and secondary shopping frontages within Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton and these frontages will continue to be used for development management purposes, until reviewed by the Local Plan Part 2 or in a neighbourhood plan. In the interim, in making judgements about whether a site should be considered to fall within a primary or secondary shopping frontage, the Council will also have regard to the recommended primary and secondary shopping frontages, as identified in the Joint Retail Study<sup>167</sup>.

### Uses in Town Centres

- 6.51 The Council will seek to focus main town centre uses in the town centres of North Dorset. Within the town centres, development involving any of the main town centre uses should be of a type and scale that will support their market town role and function as the focal point for the catchments they serve.
- 6.52 Proposals for town centre uses within the town centres should be designed to respect their historic character. The need to respect historic character limits the scope for new development, although there is some scope to meet the need for additional town centre uses through redevelopment, change of use, the upgrading of existing facilities and, in the case of retail floorspace, reducing the level of shop vacancies.
- 6.53 Proposals for non-retail town centre uses within the town centres should not undermine the focus on retailing within primary shopping areas, or the Council's approach to ground floor uses in shopping frontages, which seeks to focus A1 - Shop uses within primary shopping frontages and A1 - Shop and other A Class uses within secondary shopping frontages. In accordance with national policy the Council recognises that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourages residential development of space over commercial property.

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<sup>166</sup> Recommended Primary Shopping Areas for the four main towns in North Dorset are shown in Appendix C of the Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils: Volume 1 Capacity Analysis, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

<sup>167</sup> Recommended Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages for the four main towns in North Dorset are also shown in Appendix C of Volume 2 of the Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

### Uses in Primary Shopping Areas

- 6.54 In the four main towns of North Dorset it is unlikely that a defined town centre will extend significantly beyond the primary shopping area and consequently the Council has not sought to adopt a more restrictive approach to retail development (as opposed to other main town centre uses) in parts of the town centre that lie outside a primary shopping area. On that basis the Council will apply the sequential test for retail (and all other main town centre uses) to town centre boundaries, rather than to primary shopping area boundaries.
- 6.55 This approach will be kept under review and may be subject to change through the preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 and neighbourhood plans.

### Uses in Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages

- 6.56 Within primary and secondary shopping frontages, the Council will seek to retain, and resist the loss of, retail and other A Class<sup>168</sup> units even when they become vacant, as explained in more detail below.

### Uses in Primary Shopping Frontages

- 6.57 In the heart of existing town centres (basically, in identified primary shopping frontages), it is particularly important that the overall level of retail provision is maintained and enhanced. In these areas, the retail offer should not be undermined by the loss of existing shops (and other A1 Class uses<sup>169</sup>). The Council will also seek to retain vacant units, as bringing such units back into use has a role to play in meeting future needs.
- 6.58 Within the primary shopping frontages, existing shops on the ground floor will be retained in order to maintain the attractiveness of these areas to shoppers. The Council will resist proposals that would result in their loss to other uses, including their loss to other A Class uses.
- 6.59 The Council will seek to retain the total extent of the retail sales area within a primary shopping frontage, in order to maintain the retail offer. The Council will also seek to retain the total extent of retail uses on streets or pedestrian thoroughfares within the frontage, in order to maintain active frontages which contribute to the vitality of town centres. In primary shopping frontages, the Council will also seek to bring vacant shops back into A1 Class use.

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<sup>168</sup> References to the different A Class uses and non-A Class uses are to those identified in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) or any replacement or re-enactment of that order with or without modification.

<sup>169</sup> Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) includes shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, dry cleaners and internet cafes etc.

## Uses in Secondary Shopping Frontages

- 6.60 It remains important to maintain a strong retail presence in secondary shopping frontages, but since the uses in such areas tend to be more mixed a wider range of uses may be permitted. A mix of shops, financial and professional services and food and drink outlets will be encouraged on the ground floor within secondary shopping frontages.
- 6.61 Within secondary shopping frontages the Council will also seek to bring vacant shops, financial and professional services and food and drink outlets back into use.

## Enhancing and Expanding Existing Town Centres

### Future Retail, Leisure, Office and Community Needs

- 6.62 The Joint Retail Assessment<sup>170</sup> identified District-wide needs for additional retail sales floorspace in the period 2007 to 2026, but the assessment pre-dated the global economic downturn and the identified needs were derived from population projections that have now been superseded. Nevertheless, the assessment highlighted a key issue for North Dorset, which is the lack of comparison goods expenditure.
- 6.63 North Dorset is well served by food stores, which reflects the comparatively high level of convenience goods (largely food) expenditure identified in the Joint Retail Assessment. However, the lack of comparison retail stores and floorspace means that there is a relatively low level of comparison goods (largely non-food) expenditure in the District. An emphasis in future provision on additional comparison retail floorspace would both provide a better balance of uses in town centres and reduce the need to travel outside the District.
- 6.64 The Gillingham Study<sup>171</sup> also evaluated the retail requirements<sup>171</sup> for the town against a number of different scenarios. In the context of the proposed growth of the town, it identified the potential for a significant increase in retail provision, with a strong focus on comparison goods.
- 6.65 Much of the baseline need for B Class uses in North Dorset is predicted to be for offices<sup>172</sup>, which have the potential to be accommodated on employment sites

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<sup>170</sup> Floorspace projections are discussed in Section 9 of the Joint Retail Assessment for Christchurch Borough and East, North and Purbeck Districts: Volume 2 - North Dorset, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (March 2008).

<sup>171</sup> Retail needs are discussed in Section 7 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

<sup>172</sup> The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study Employment Land Projections 2012 Update – Extract for North Dorset identified a baseline need for 8.7 hectares of office use for the period 2011 to 2031.



(for which sufficient provision has been made under Policy 11 – The Economy) as well as in town centre locations.

- 6.66 The Joint Retail Assessment examined the potential for additional commercial leisure uses in North Dorset's towns, but found that it was limited. However, it suggested that there could be scope for small-scale facilities, such as health and fitness clubs, a small cinema, restaurants and bars.
- 6.67 There are also needs for additional cultural, recreation and community facilities, as set out in Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure. Some of these proposals, such as new community halls, would be appropriate in a town centre (or edge of centre) location and some are also being taken forward as community-based projects.

### Approach to Meeting the Identified Needs

- 6.68 The overall approach to accommodate these needs 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.
- 6.69 The Joint Retail Assessment identified that a reduction in the vacancy rate to 5% across North Dorset could provide scope to accommodate an additional 1,900 square metres (gross) of retail floorspace. At the time the assessment was undertaken (2008), the Safeway store in Blandford was closed. This has since re-opened (as Morrisons) and the former bus station on Salisbury Road has been redeveloped to provide about 3,000 square metres of additional retail floorspace in the town.
- 6.70 In Blandford there are currently planning permissions for an extension of Tesco at Stour Park and a new Asda supermarket and petrol filling station on land off Shaftesbury Lane. In Gillingham there is planning permission for new retail units off Station Road/Le Neubourg Way. The implementation of these schemes will increase significantly the amount of retail floorspace in the District.
- 6.71 Given the historic nature of the four main towns in North Dorset, there is limited scope for additional development within the town centres. The only town centre site identified in the Joint Retail Assessment (other than the closed Safeway store – now Morrisons) was on the southern side of East Street in

Blandford Forum<sup>173</sup>. However, there is potential for the extension to the rear of a wider range of premises on the southern side of Market Place/East Street, including land around the existing Co-operative store, as outlined in Policy 16 – Blandford.

- 6.72 There are more significant opportunities for mixed-use regeneration in edge-of-centre locations (as outlined in Policy 11 – The Economy), which could include a significant element of retail development. The main sites are:
- the Station Road area in Gillingham, which has the potential to provide about 7,500 gross square metres of retail floorspace<sup>174</sup>;
  - the land between the town centre and Christy’s Lane in Shaftesbury (including the livestock market and the postal sorting office on Angel Square); and
  - the Station Road area in Sturminster Newton which has the potential to provide about 1,250 gross square metres of retail floorspace<sup>175</sup>.
- 6.73 The Brewery site at Blandford St. Mary will also be regenerated, but since this site is separated from Blandford Forum town centre by the floodplain of the River Stour, the main focus will be on meeting employment needs rather than accommodating main town centre uses.
- 6.74 Policies 16 to 19 discuss the opportunities outlined above in more detail on a town-by-town basis.
- 6.75 Neighbourhood plans are being prepared by local communities in all four of the Districts main towns and these are likely to tackle town centre issues. In Sturminster Newton proposals for the regeneration of the edge-of-centre Station Road area are set out in a community-led design and development brief.
- 6.76 The Council will work with local communities in the towns to take forward proposals for the enhancement of town centres, either in neighbourhood plans or through other community based initiatives. In the event that a local community decided not to tackle town centre issues in a neighbourhood plan, then the Council would consider allocating appropriate town centre or edge-of-centre sites in the Local Plan Part 2.
- 6.77 To maintain the vitality of town centres and to reflect the Planning Practice Guidance further retail and town centre studies will be undertaken to inform

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<sup>173</sup> Land to the rear of Stour House, 41 East Street, as described in Appendix A of Joint Retail Assessment for Christchurch Borough and East, North and Purbeck Districts: Volume 2 - North Dorset, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (March 2008).

<sup>174</sup> Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

<sup>175</sup> The Station Road Area Design and Development Brief, Matrix Partnership for SturQuest (April 2008).

Part 2 of the Local Plan and/or the neighbourhood plans for the four main towns.

### **Town Centre Uses Outside Town Centres**

- 6.78 The Council will apply the sequential test in national policy to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with the development plan, unless the application is for small-scale rural offices, or other small-scale rural development<sup>176</sup>.
- 6.79 Applicants will need to demonstrate that such proposals can satisfy the sequential test and will not have a significant adverse impact on any town centres.
- 6.80 The Council will require applications for main town centre uses to be located:
- in town centres;
  - then in edge of centre locations; and
  - only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered<sup>177</sup>.
- 6.81 When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. The Council will expect applicants to demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.
- 6.82 The Council will require a developer to produce an impact assessment for a retail, leisure or office development of 2,500 square metres or more, which is proposed outside a town centre and which is not in accordance with the development plan. This should include assessment of:
- the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
  - the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area, up to five years from the time the application is made. For major schemes where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should be assessed up to ten years from the time the application is made.
- 6.83 Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the above factors, it will be refused.

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<sup>176</sup> The sequential test in national policy is set out in paragraphs 24 to 27 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>177</sup> The full definitions of edge of centre and out of centre are set out in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- 6.84 Access to services is a key issue in North Dorset, especially in rural areas outside the four main towns. The Council wishes to ensure that existing community facilities, which may include retail, leisure or commercial developments, are retained where possible. Policy 27 – Retention of Community Facilities sets out the specific circumstances when the Council may permit the loss of a community facility and lists the factors that will be taken into consideration the decision-making process.

### Markets

- 6.85 All four main towns in North Dorset are market towns and three of them still retain their outdoor weekly markets, as set out in Figure 6.3 below.

Figure 6.3: Outdoor Weekly Markets in North Dorset

Town Centre	Location of Market	When Held
Blandford Forum	Market Place	Thursday and Saturday
Shaftesbury	High Street	Thursday
Sturminster Newton	Market Square and Station Road	Monday

- 6.86 In addition, all four main towns support other markets, such as farmers' or country (formerly Women's Institute) markets.
- 6.87 The Council supports the retention and, where possible, enhancement of the existing outdoor weekly markets in North Dorset and will seek to ensure that any proposals (for example town centre enhancements) for the sites where the outdoor weekly markets take place do not prejudice the future operation of these markets.
- 6.88 The design and development brief for the Station Road area in Sturminster Newton proposes a new square at the Station Road, Barnes Close, Market Place junction, which should provide more space for the outdoor weekly market<sup>178</sup>.

### Shop Front Design

- 6.89 The retail industry needs to adapt to changing markets and consumer preferences. However, shop fronts need to be sensitively designed both to retain the architectural integrity of individual buildings (including listed buildings) and to maintain the character of the District's towns and villages (and their conservation areas). The alteration or replacement of shop fronts generally requires planning permission and advertisements may require

<sup>178</sup> Station Road Area Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by The Matrix Partnership Ltd (April 2008).

separate advertisement consent. However, routine maintenance works such as redecoration or straightforward repairs, are permitted development and do not require planning permission.

- 6.90 The Council has produced a draft guide to shop front design<sup>179</sup>, which also covers the issues of shop signage and security shutters. When considering proposals for the replacement, alteration or restoration of a shop front, the Council will expect applicants to be able to demonstrate that they have had due regard to the Council's advice, such as the advice in the draft shop front design guide.

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<sup>179</sup> North Dorset Guide to Shop Front Design (Draft), NDDC (June 2007).

## **POLICY 12: RETAIL, LEISURE AND OTHER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Hierarchy of Centres**

For the purposes of considering any proposal for retail and other main town centre uses in North Dorset Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton are designated as town centres.

### **Defining Town Centres, Primary Shopping Areas and Shopping Frontages**

The boundaries of town centres and primary shopping areas in the four main towns will be defined as part of Local Plan Part 2, unless previously defined in a neighbourhood plan.

The primary and secondary shopping frontages in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 will continue to be used for development management purposes until reviewed through Local Plan Part 2 or a neighbourhood plan.

### **Uses in Town Centres**

Development for retail and other main town centre uses, including mixed-use schemes that may include an element of residential element, will be supported within a town centre provided that:

- a it is of a type and scale that will maintain or enhance the role and function of the town in the catchment it serves; and
- b it is designed to respect the historic character of the town centre; and
- c in the case of non-retail main town centre uses, the proposal does not undermine the focus on retailing in primary shopping areas.

### **Uses in Primary Shopping Frontages**

Within the primary shopping frontages of town centres, development resulting in the change of use from an existing ground floor A1 Class use within a unit fronting a street or pedestrian thoroughfare will not be permitted where this would result in any loss of retail frontage or ground floor net retail floorspace.

### **Uses in Secondary Shopping Frontages**

Within secondary shopping frontages, development resulting in the change of use of an existing ground floor A Class use within a unit fronting a street or pedestrian thoroughfare will not be permitted. Change of use from A1 Class use to financial and professional services (Use Class A2), restaurants and cafes (Use Class A3), drinking establishments (Use Class A4) and hot food takeaways (Use Class A5) will be permitted.

## **POLICY 12 (CONT'D): RETAIL, LEISURE AND OTHER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Enhancing and Expanding Existing Town Centres**

The Council will seek to meet the identified needs for main town centre uses by:

- d working to reduce vacancy rates in town centre shops;
- e encouraging the implementation of extant planning permissions for additional retail floorspace;
- f permitting retail and other main town centre uses in town centres and on sites identified for mixed-use regeneration on the edge of Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton town centres, as identified in Policy 11 – The Economy and Policies 17 to 19; and
- g working with local communities to take forward proposals for town centre enhancement and growth through neighbourhood planning or other local, community-based initiatives.

### **Town Centre Uses Outside Town Centres**

Proposals for retail and other main town centre uses that are not in an existing town centre and are not in accordance with the development plan will only be permitted if:

- h they satisfy the 'sequential test' in national policy; and
- i they will not have a significant adverse impact on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- j they will not have a significant adverse impact on town centre vitality and viability.

### **Markets**

The Council will seek to retain and enhance existing outdoor weekly markets in North Dorset and will not permit development on the sites where the outdoor weekly markets take place that would prejudice their future operation.

### **Shop Front Design**

Proposals for the replacement, alteration or restoration of a shop front should be designed having had due regard to the Council's advice on shop front design.

## 7. Infrastructure

### Introduction

#### National Policy

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sees the provision of infrastructure as an integral part of planning fulfilling its economic, social and environmental roles. The provision of infrastructure is a key element of many of national policy's core planning principles and local planning authorities are encouraged to identify and address any lack of infrastructure in developing their planning policies.
- 7.2 The NPPF states that a local plan should 'plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of this Framework'<sup>180</sup>. It also states that local plans 'should include strategic policies to deliver:
- ...the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management ...;
  - the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities; ...<sup>181</sup>
- 7.3 In North Dorset, the provision of infrastructure and its timely delivery will support housing and economic development, make settlements more self-contained and help to achieve Objective 6 of the Local Plan Part 1 – Improving the Quality of Life. It will also ensure the continued vitality of the District's market towns and help to maintain sustainable communities in rural areas.

#### The District Council's Approach

- 7.4 The Council's overall approach is to ensure that infrastructure is delivered at the right time and in the right place to support the growth proposed in this Local Plan and any other documents that make up the development plan.
- 7.5 This section sets out the Council's policies for the provision of different types of infrastructure, namely:
- grey infrastructure ,for example transport, utilities and drainage (Policy 13);
  - social infrastructure, for example community, leisure, cultural, education and health facilities (Policy 14); and

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<sup>180</sup> Paragraph 157, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>181</sup> Paragraph 156, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).



- green infrastructure, for example linked networks of open space including informal recreational areas and wildlife corridors (Policy 15).
- 7.6 The main grey, social and green infrastructure projects required in the four main towns are discussed in Policies 16 to 19 and Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation. Policy 20 – Countryside may permit new or relocated community facilities on the edge of the built-up area of a settlement in the countryside to support a rural community if it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for it to be located in the countryside.
- 7.7 Sites to provide essential infrastructure may also be identified in the Local Plan Part 2 or through the neighbourhood planning process.

### **Establishing Infrastructure Needs and Costs**

- 7.8 The infrastructure needs of the community have been established from a number of sources including:
- the 2003 Local Plan and interim planning guidance<sup>182</sup>: The 2003 Local Plan established infrastructure requirements to 2011 and the accompanying interim guidance set out the needs and levels for developer contributions towards the provision of education facilities, community buildings, recreational open space, play areas, indoor sports facilities and transport improvements in different parts of the District. Some of these projects have been carried forward in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP);
  - the community planning process: Each Local Community Partnership has its own community strategy which establishes community needs for the District's four largest towns and their rural hinterlands. Local communities are active both in formulating concepts and in looking in more detail at specific proposals;
  - evidence based studies: Studies such as the Audit of Open Space have examined the adequacy of existing provision, whilst others (such as the Gillingham study) have looked at the infrastructure needed to support the growth proposed in the period up to 2031;
  - negotiations with service providers: The Council has already discussed the need for additional infrastructure to support growth with service providers, such as the Local Education Authority and local Clinical Commissioning Groups.

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<sup>182</sup> Planning Guidance Notes: Planning Obligations for the Provision of Community Infrastructure – Edition 7, North Dorset District Council (December 2011 – Revised Costs June 2011) and Interim Planning Guidance: The Development of Areas of Amenity Open Space, Play Areas and Commuted Sums, North Dorset District Council (October 2005).

## Infrastructure Delivery and Funding

- 7.9 In line with the NPPF, the Council will work with other authorities, providers and operators to:
- assess the quality and capacity of a range of different types of infrastructure including transport, water supply, wastewater and its treatment, energy (including heat), telecommunications, utilities, waste, health, social care, education, flood risk and its ability to meet forecast demands; and
  - take account of the need for strategic infrastructure, including nationally significant infrastructure, within the area.
- 7.10 The IDP provides more detail on how infrastructure projects will be delivered. It aims to set out:
- what infrastructure is required;
  - when the necessary infrastructure will be put in place;
  - what likely costs are involved;
  - how those costs will be met; and
  - who will deliver that infrastructure.
- 7.11 The Council will work with all those agencies, authorities, bodies and others concerned with the provision of infrastructure to support the development envisaged in the Local Plan Part 1. Indeed, many of these have already been involved in the preparatory work for the IDP and will continue to have an involvement as it evolves.
- 7.12 The provision of infrastructure will require the coordination of funding from a variety of sources. Where development is likely to increase the need for infrastructure, developers may be required to make or fund provision on site or contribute to the costs of provision off site or the enhancement of existing facilities, either through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or a site-based planning obligation.

## Infrastructure Provision and the Community Infrastructure Levy

- 7.13 Local planning authorities have had the ability to implement a CIL since April 2010. The CIL is a charge that local authorities are empowered, but not required, to place on most types of development in their area to support local and sub-regional infrastructure associated with growth.
- 7.14 Any Council wishing to use the CIL will have to produce a charging schedule setting out the amount to be raised from each type of development (charged at £ per square metre of residential or other floorspace). The charging schedule, the contents of which must be examined at a public inquiry, can only be brought into force once a local plan is adopted. The Council has decided to follow this process and the IDP will provide the evidence base to support the

setting of the CIL through a charging schedule. Proceeds from the CIL will then help fund items of infrastructure identified in the IDP.

### **Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Plans**

- 7.15 While work has already been undertaken on infrastructure planning, some uncertainties remain, particularly in relation to the impact of the CIL and the distribution of the element payable to communities. In order to help town and parish councils fund infrastructure or, indeed, anything else that will help address the demands that development places on the area, the Council is required to pass on a meaningful proportion<sup>183</sup> of levy receipts to town or parish councils<sup>184</sup> with adopted neighbourhood plans.
- 7.16 Communities are able to use these monies to fund projects which the community determines and these may not mesh tightly with the Council's infrastructure objectives. There is also the issue of the spatial pattern of distribution of neighbourhood plans and thus the spatial distribution of funding since it is not known how many neighbourhood plans there will be eventually in North Dorset and where they will be.
- 7.17 The Council will work closely with communities to help determine the most appropriate and effective use of CIL contributions in achieving the infrastructure required to support development in the District's settlements.

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<sup>183</sup> Local authorities are currently required to pass on 25% of levy receipts (uncapped) in an area with a town or parish council and an adopted neighbourhood plan. In the absence of a neighbourhood plan, local authorities are currently required to pass on 15% of levy receipts in an area with a town or parish council, capped at £100 per dwelling.

<sup>184</sup> Local authorities have equivalent wider powers to spend this meaningful proportion of CIL funds on the priorities identified in areas without parish councils, through consultation with local communities.

## Policy 13 – Grey Infrastructure

### Introduction

- 7.18 Grey infrastructure<sup>185</sup> describes the physical works required to support development. For the purposes of this Local Plan, grey infrastructure includes:
- transportation – including roads, cycleways, footpaths and measures to facilitate public transport use;
  - utilities – including telecommunications, electricity, gas and water supply, sewage and wastewater treatment;
  - drainage – including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and flood prevention measures;
  - waste – including its collection, transfer and disposal; and
  - public realm – including street art and urban enhancement works<sup>186</sup>.
- 7.19 Each of these elements is essential for the proper functioning of settlements and is crucial to the delivery of growth. Policy 13 is intended to bring about the provision of the grey infrastructure necessary for the effective and efficient working of the communities in North Dorset and the strengthening of the area's economy.
- 7.20 In determining what grey infrastructure is needed, as well as where and when it is required, the Council has worked with other authorities and public bodies together with providers and operators to establish these parameters as accurately as possible.
- 7.21 Some elements are dealt with elsewhere in this Plan, most notably local renewables. Renewable energy and the generation of heat or electricity from renewable or low carbon sources gives rise to a need for appropriate infrastructure. Policy 3 relates to climate change and Policy 22 deals with renewables and low carbon energy.

### Transportation

- 7.22 The NPPF sees transport policies as having an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development and contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives<sup>187</sup>. However, it is appreciated by the Government that different policies and measures will be required in different communities and

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<sup>185</sup> Grey infrastructure is defined in terms of the 'constructed' rather than the 'natural' of green infrastructure in Putting the Green in the Grey, Natural Economy North West (2007) and as 'the man-made structures that facilitate transportation, provide housing, and offer services such as water, energy, and telecommunications' in Trees - The Green Infrastructure (IQ Report) Gary Moll (2002).

<sup>186</sup> Depending on its nature, public realm infrastructure can also be seen as social and green infrastructure, containing elements of all three types, just as the Trailway does, for instance.

<sup>187</sup> Paragraph 29, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas. The Government urges local planning authorities, when preparing local plans, to look to a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport<sup>188</sup>.

7.23 The NPPF also states that developments likely to generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. However, this needs to be in the context of policies set out elsewhere in the NPPF, particularly in rural areas<sup>189</sup>.

7.24 Overall, planning policies should seek a balance of land uses so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities<sup>190</sup>.

### The North and north East Dorset Transport Study

7.25 The Council, alongside East Dorset District Council, worked closely with Dorset County Council and consultants in the preparation of the North and north East Dorset Transport Study (N&nEDTS)<sup>191</sup>. This examined the capacity of existing roads and public transport in the area and assessed the impact that projected growth would have on these networks. The analysis leads to a number of key transport infrastructure capacity issues and also takes account of constraints, including environmental constraints. The key elements of the transport strategy are:

- to manage movements by making best use of the existing transport network, improving it where possible, and by managing demand;
- to improve links between the main towns and villages in their hinterlands in order to improve access to services and reduce social exclusion, particularly in rural areas;
- to encourage more sustainable forms of transport by encouraging modal shift from the private car;
- to make key destinations, especially those in towns, more accessible by sustainable transport modes;
- to encourage the provision of travel planning for all communities.

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<sup>188</sup> Paragraph 30, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>189</sup> Paragraph 34, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>190</sup> Paragraph 37, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>191</sup> North and north East Dorset Transport Study: Emerging Transport Strategy, Buro Happold (November 2009) This Study is supported by an Existing Conditions Report (July 2009), together with a Modelling Report (July 2009).

- 7.26 North Dorset is a predominantly rural area and rural transport is consequently of particular importance<sup>192</sup>. The implementation plan for the Local Transport Plan for Dorset<sup>193</sup> (LTP3) embraces a number of key transport priorities, one of which is to support and promote a culture of community driven rural access solutions to reduce the need to travel. Community travel exchange hubs are seen as one way of achieving that.
- 7.27 All the foregoing elements support Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy, which seeks to concentrate development at the District’s four main towns with a focus on meeting local needs elsewhere.

### Strategic Highway Network

- 7.28 The Exeter to London and the Weymouth to London strategic transport corridors pass through (respectively) the northern and southern edges of the District. They are discussed in more detail in Section 2 and in the Infrastructure Background Paper. Highways England seeks to make the best use of existing strategic transport infrastructure, which it sees as key to encouraging economic growth, and looks to developers to ‘manage down’ the impact of development on strategic corridors. However, only after travel plan and demand management measures have been fully explored and applied will capacity enhancement measures be considered for the Strategic Road Network (SRN) by Highways England. As developers bring schemes forward they will need to demonstrate the impacts on the SRN and where appropriate provide mitigation to ensure safe and effective operation of the SRN.
- 7.29 Most of the development proposed in North Dorset is not likely to have a major impact on strategic transport corridors. The exception is development at Gillingham and its possible impact on the Exeter to London corridor, particularly the potential for increased congestion on the A303. Capacity enhancement to A303 junctions may be considered by Highways England if these are identified as necessary by the appropriate transport assessment. Significant development at Blandford would also need to have regard to any potential impacts on the A31/A35 corridor.
- 7.30 Consequently, the following measures will help to reduce the potential for additional trips on the A303:
- ensuring that new development at Gillingham is accessible to the town centre, employment opportunities, the railway station and the relatively frequent Gillingham/Shafesbury bus service;

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<sup>192</sup> The Dorset Rural Roads Protocol (Dorset County Council, (April 2008) recognises the overall highway environment in rural areas.

<sup>193</sup> Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan 4 (April 2014).

- enhancement of Gillingham Railway Station as a transport hub, including improvements to accommodate the improved services made possible by the construction of the enhanced passing loop at Axminster<sup>194</sup>; and
- improvement of road links south from Gillingham to encourage the use of the A30 as an alternative to the A303 for trips to Yeovil and Salisbury (notably by construction of the A30/B3018 Enmore Green link road on the edge of Shaftesbury).

7.31 The Council will continue to work with developers to ensure that the proposed southern extension of Gillingham is accessible to and connected with the town centre and with public transport services. The Council also will work with Highways England and Dorset County Council to reduce as far as possible the potential for increased trips from development at Gillingham onto the A303.

### Traffic Management

7.32 Demand management in the Exeter to London corridor and the likely general increase in trips associated with growth will increase the amount of traffic on roads in North Dorset but the N&nEDTS indicates that the technical capacity of most roads in the District will not be exceeded during the plan period. However, the Study suggests that additional traffic could give rise to issues of environmental quality for residents along busy routes and have implications for road safety.

7.33 More effective management of movements on existing networks can help to reduce potential impacts, particularly by making sure that existing transport infrastructure is fully and efficiently utilised. Amongst other things, achieving more efficient use of the highway network improves journey times and network resilience and thus brings economic benefits.

7.34 Traffic management means making more effective use of the existing road network by improving flows at pinch points and junctions through road improvements, for example, by using up-to-date traffic light phasing systems. In addition, improvements which achieve better road safety can help to reduce delays caused by accidents and encourage use by cyclists and pedestrians. Improvements of this nature will be progressed through the local transport plan process, which aims to achieve long term planning and efficient use of resources delivering local transport, whilst also having regard to the relevant national and more local transport policy frameworks.

7.35 In addition, the Council will require developers to deal with the traffic implications of their developments by way of transport assessments (TAs) or

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<sup>194</sup> Route Specifications 2012 - Wessex, Network Rail (2012). Passenger services now operate direct between Salisbury and Exeter, from Waterloo, hourly. The line is not presently electrified; however, the Network Route Utilisation Strategy – Electrification (October 2009) recommended this section for review to enable electric services from Waterloo to Exeter but there are no current plans for electrification.

transport statements (TSs). The Council will expect a TA to be prepared and submitted with a planning application for larger-scale development and a TS for smaller schemes where the proposed development is likely to have significant transport implications. The TA will set out the transport issues relating to the proposed development, the anticipated impacts and the necessary measures to deal with those impacts. In particular, it will address accessibility and safety issues and show how increased use of alternative modes to the car will be achieved. Consequently, the TA can be used to determine whether the impact of a development on transport is acceptable. Developers will normally be required to produce a TA where the size or scale of a scheme is above the thresholds for different types of development set out in government guidance<sup>195</sup>. The Council will expect developers to pay particular attention to public transport in the TA or TS.

### Public Transport

- 7.36 The NPPF sets out a number of core planning principles which Local Plans must embrace with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. One of these is to 'actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable'<sup>196</sup>.
- 7.37 Public transport, particularly buses, can provide an alternative to the car for trips between towns and to key destinations within towns, such as town centres, major employment sites and schools. Public transport is also important in rural areas, particularly for those without other means of accessing facilities. However, in many cases the viability of the public transport service is an issue.
- 7.38 The operation of public transport in and serving North Dorset is currently being reviewed by Dorset County Council and the outcome of this review is likely to have implications for the future provision of bus services in the District. In particular, it is likely that demand responsive transport solutions will be promoted as a way of improving rural public transport services. These could include more innovative and coordinated solutions, such as the development of community travel exchange hubs, which could help bring services to rural settlements and enable residents to travel to other services and facilities outside their village. The N&nEDTS also suggests that some improvements to scheduled services may be possible, particularly serving settlements along the A350, A357 and A30.
- 7.39 The Council appreciates the importance of rail travel as an alternative to the private car and will work with its partners and other stakeholders in supporting

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<sup>195</sup> Guidance on Transport Assessment, Department for Transport (March 2007).

<sup>196</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).



and seeking enhancements to rail services through Gillingham. In addition, the Council will continue working with the County Council and Network Rail to further enhance Gillingham Railway Station as a transport hub serving Gillingham and the surrounding area. Policy 17 – Gillingham embraces the enhancement of Gillingham Railway Station as a transport hub.

- 7.40 Travel plans<sup>197</sup> (TPs) offer a means of managing demand and are often one of the outcomes of a TA. TPs are an important tool for delivering sustainable transport to new development, whatever the use, and help to combat over-dependency on cars by promoting alternatives to single occupancy car use. When considering planning applications involving a significant number of employees or visitors or applications for sites not well served by public transport, the Council will be looking for developers to submit an appropriate TP (or TP statement) with their application which fully assesses the existing and future role of public transport in relation to the development.

### Walking, Cycling and the North Dorset Trailway

- 7.41 The form and internal layout of a development, together with its relationship and connections with its setting, can significantly influence the balance of trips by different modes of transport. In order to achieve this, Policy 24 - Design promotes new developments with permeable layouts, designed to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists. This approach also gives opportunities for people to incorporate activity into daily lives, which can have health benefits.
- 7.42 The N&nEDTS highlights a number of places where walking and cycling facilities can be improved or provided within and between settlements. Of strategic importance is the conversion of the former Somerset and Dorset railway line to a pedestrian and cycle trailway. The Council and Dorset County Council have worked together put sections of the Trailway in place; completion of the route will link a number of villages from Spetisbury in the south, through Blandford to Sturminster Newton and towards Stalbridge in the north.
- 7.43 The N&nEDTS identifies a number of schemes to improve facilities for walking and cycling both in the main towns and in rural areas. Links of this nature (for example, the existing footway/cycleway between Blandford and Pimperne) can enable trips to be taken by more sustainable modes.

### Parking Provision and Management

- 7.44 The availability of car parking has a major influence on the choice of mode of transport, even in locations well served by public transport. Consequently, the Council's overall approach seeks to manage car parking to encourage public

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<sup>197</sup> The main types of travel plan (TP) are workplace TPs and residential TPs and can include measures such as car sharing schemes, a commitment to improve cycling facilities, a dedicated bus service or restricted car parking allocations.

transport, walking and cycling to take priority when people consider how to make different trips.

- 7.45 Policy 23 – Parking relates to the Council’s residential parking standards. These were derived from a Dorset-wide residential parking study<sup>198</sup>, which took into consideration expected levels of car ownership and established the principle that residential parking provision should be sufficient to cater for the reasonable needs of the occupants and to enable them to have a choice in the mode of transport they choose for any particular journey.
- 7.46 The local planning authorities in Dorset will also work together to develop guidance and standards for destination parking, which will enable the provision of sufficient spaces to allow for use of the car but also to encourage other forms of transport. In the interim, current national and local standards and/or guidance will apply, as set out in Policy 23 – Parking.
- 7.47 The number and type of spaces in off-street car parks and the time for which they can be occupied need to be carefully organised. On-street spaces also need to be similarly managed so that there is appropriate accessibility and turnover. Many car parks in the District are owned and managed either by the Council or by other public bodies. A strategy will be developed to achieve a more effective and sustainable use of this resource.

### Utilities

- 7.48 Various companies are responsible for the provision of gas, electricity, water and telecommunications, together with their means of transmission. These companies have their own delivery plans<sup>199</sup> and programmes for the coming years, which need to ensure that planned growth can be accommodated.

### Gas

- 7.49 The National Transmission System (NTS)<sup>200</sup> is a high pressure, large diameter gas pipeline network running from shoreline terminals via compressor stations to pipeline systems and off-takes which serve consumers. There is a distribution station at Mappowder on the high pressure gas main which runs across the District, in the local distribution zone owned and managed by Welsh and West Utilities. There are numerous gas suppliers who use this system and

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<sup>198</sup> Dorset Residential Car Parking Study, WSP Development and Transportation and Phil Jones Associates, (2009).

<sup>199</sup> For example, Gas Transportation Ten Year Statement, National Grid, (December 2009); Operating the Electricity Networks in 2020 - Initial Consultation Document, National Grid Electricity Transmission, (June 2009); 2009 GB Seven Year Statement 2009/10 to 2015/16 inclusive, National Grid Electricity Transmission, (May 2009); Water Resource Management Plan, Wessex Water, 2009; Securing Water Supplies, Wessex Water, (June 2008).

<sup>200</sup> Operated and maintained by National Grid Transco.

applications for new connections must be made to them. Depending on the level and location of new development, Transco has indicated that the existing network of medium and low pressure distribution mains may need to be extended to support new neighbourhoods.

### Electricity

- 7.50 Electricity supplies are provided by the high-voltage electricity transmission system in England and Wales, which National Grid owns and maintains together with operating the system across Great Britain. The District is traversed by a high-voltage transmission line and has various sub-stations and underground lines serving settlements. Scottish and Southern Electric have stated that these may need to be upgraded and extended to serve new developments in the future.

### Water

- 7.51 Water supply in the District is the responsibility of Wessex Water. Some 80% of the water supplied comes from groundwater sources in Wiltshire and Dorset. Policy 3 – Climate Change seeks greater water efficiency in new buildings and encourages the prudent use of water resources. In addition to these measures, Wessex Water has pointed to a potential need to upgrade supply networks during the plan period to serve new developments, notably west of Blandford St Mary.

### Telecommunications

- 7.52 Modern telecommunications play a significant role in the life of local communities, especially in rural areas. They also have a particular role to play in promoting sustainable communities by reducing the need to travel for work, education/ learning, shopping and leisure. The NPPF states unequivocally that 'Advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth'<sup>201</sup> and 'In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband'<sup>202</sup>.
- 7.53 Broadband availability across North Dorset is not widespread; indeed, a few areas have no access to broadband at all while others have slow or very slow connection speeds. The Council is working with Dorset County Council and others<sup>203</sup> in efforts to remedy the situation but there will still be blackspots to be addressed.

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<sup>201</sup> Paragraph 42, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>202</sup> Paragraph 43, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>203</sup> 'Superfast Dorset' is supported by the Council and the County Council and 'Trailway Broadband' is a community-led project.

- 7.54 The main aims of national policy are to ensure that people have a choice as to who provides their telecommunications service, have a wider range of services offered from which to choose and have equitable access to the latest technologies as they become available. The Council will make planning decisions in relation to telecommunications development, including radio and mobile phone masts, in accordance with national planning policy, which supports the growth of existing and new telecommunications systems while minimising environmental impact.

### **Drainage and Flood Prevention Measures**

- 7.55 It is made clear in the NPPF that development should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding<sup>204</sup>. Policy 3 – Climate Change also establishes that new development in North Dorset should not be at risk from flooding. If development is necessary then it should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. In order to help manage flood risk, there is also a need to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)<sup>205 206</sup>. Site specific flood risk assessments, taking into account all sources of flood risk including surface water management and the impact of climate change, will be required to accompany planning applications.
- 7.56 Site level SuDS features can be multi-functional and incorporated into the green infrastructure network on and beyond the site, although should avoid flood risk areas including fluvial floodplains, creating safe amenity features. Permeable surfaces should be laid to facilitate infiltration of surface water whilst enabling disabled access. Where an existing SuDS scheme is within close proximity to a development site, the Council will expect connection to and improvement of the network to be considered, as should the provision of surface water management via SuDS to existing properties.
- 7.57 The NPPF urges local authorities to work with other authorities and providers and to frame strategic policies to deliver the provision of infrastructure for

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<sup>204</sup> Paragraph 100, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>205</sup> The Flood and Water Management Act 2012 encourages the uptake of sustainable drainage systems by removing the automatic right to connect to sewers and providing for unitary and county councils to adopt SuDS for new developments and redevelopments. The Act does this by including the requirement that developers include sustainable drainage, where practicable, in new developments, built to standards which reduce flood damage and improve water quality. Also, it makes the right to connect surface water runoff to public sewers conditional on meeting the new standards. It gives responsibility for approving sustainable drainage systems in new development, and adopting and maintaining them where they affect more than one property, to a SuDS approving body, generally the Lead Local Flood Authority. In a Written Ministerial Statement dated 18 December 2014 the Government stated that SuDS should be incorporated in all new development of ten dwellings or more.

<sup>206</sup> It is anticipated that developers will refer to appropriate guidance, especially Designing for Exceedance in Urban Drainage, Construction Industry Research and Information Association (2006).

dealing with flood risk<sup>207</sup>. Flood management is the responsibility of various bodies, including the Environment Agency which deals with flood defences at Blandford Forum, Gillingham and elsewhere. The Agency intends to continue with its current flood risk management policy, which includes assessing the potential for improving current flood defences and seeking to ensure that there is no increase in runoff from new developments while also seeking opportunities to reduce runoff wherever possible.

- 7.58 Generally, surface water should be separated from the foul sewerage system as this minimises the risk of foul water flooding after heavy rainfall and makes more efficient use of the existing foul sewer capacity. Separation may be achieved by discharging surface water to soakaways, to other SuDS or, if necessary, to separately piped surface water drainage systems.
- 7.59 Treatment of the District's urban wastewater<sup>208</sup>, which flows through the system of public and private sewers<sup>209</sup>, is the responsibility of Wessex Water, utilising a number of treatment works in the District. These networks may need to be upgraded during the plan period to serve new developments. Wessex Water has commented that an anaerobic digestion plant at Gillingham Sewage Treatment Works will require significant investment and that development proposed west of Blandford St Mary would require further engineering appraisal to determine the nature and scope of capacity improvements to sewerage networks.

## Waste

- 7.60 The Dorset Waste Partnership<sup>210</sup> (DWP) is responsible for running waste services on behalf of a partnership of the seven Dorset authorities, including North Dorset District Council. Since April 2011, residents in North Dorset have had their refuse and recycling collections dealt with by the DWP. Household recycling centres, the treatment and disposal of waste and waste reduction promotions across Dorset are also managed by the DWP.
- 7.61 The Council will continue to work with DWP to ensure appropriate arrangements are made to deal with the waste produced by new development.

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<sup>207</sup> Paragraph 156, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>208</sup> Wastewater is the used water that is discharged by homes, communities, farms and businesses. Wastewater notably includes domestic sewage and industrial waste from manufacturing sources. Urban wastewater is any domestic wastewater, mixture of domestic and industrial wastewater and/or rainwater.

<sup>209</sup> In 2008 the Government announced the transfer of ownership of private sewers and lateral drains from private individuals to water and sewerage companies.

<sup>210</sup> The Partnership was officially formed in December 2010 after the signing of a legally binding Inter Authority Agreement and went live in April 2011..

Construction and demolition continues to present problems in terms of the waste hierarchy<sup>211</sup>. Using sustainable and recycled materials in terms of new build and separating waste in 'streams' will contribute to the reduction of this waste to landfill.

### Public Realm

- 7.62 Infrastructure in the public realm could be seen as a cultural element of social infrastructure. Similarly, town centre enhancement schemes frequently focus on hard landscaping and surfacing but may also include soft landscaping more usually seen as green infrastructure. However, because of its frequent and usually predominant constructional or 'hard' character, infrastructure in the public realm is dealt with here as grey infrastructure. The design process for these Infrastructure schemes should take full account of the needs of people with disabilities so that all sections of the community are able to gain benefits.
- 7.63 Often seen as public art<sup>212</sup>, public realm infrastructure is not widespread in the District and, as a consequence, the Council will seek to have incorporated in large- scale new developments (that is, developments of over 200 dwellings or 1000 square metres of retail, industrial or commercial floorspace) such art elements as may be appropriate, and support their introduction into existing developments.
- 7.64 Public art is significant in achieving high quality design and encouraging public art enhances the appearance of buildings and public spaces, can provide local landmarks and promotes a strong sense of place. When the local community is involved in shaping its environment then community pride is also embraced. Increasingly, many aspects of the built environment are seen as legitimate candidates for consideration as, or locations for, public art, including street furniture and lighting and the Council will encourage this in new development. As the main objective of public art is to enhance the quality of a place, it should be an integral part of the design process for the overall development.
- 7.65 Highway roundabouts are very visible in the public realm and offer significant potential for enhancement. While many authorities have placed public art works on roundabouts, many roundabouts also offer scope for attractive hard and/or soft landscaping. Dorset County Council has a scheme whereby businesses and others can sponsor a roundabout and take responsibility for the landscaping and maintenance of the roundabout or the placing of a piece of

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<sup>211</sup> The waste hierarchy has been transposed into UK law through The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

<sup>212</sup> The term 'public art' often refers to works of art in any medium that have been planned and executed with the specific intention of being sited or staged in the public domain. Such works are usually outside and accessible to all, and have often been produced with community involvement and collaboration.

artwork<sup>213</sup>. The Council will work with the County Council in the elaboration of such schemes to enhance the highway environs.

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<sup>213</sup> A recent example is the placing on a roundabout on the A354 at Blandford of 3 larger than life badgers within a wildflower area, made by a local artist and sponsored by the local brewery.

**POLICY 13: GREY INFRASTRUCTURE**

By working alongside developers, agencies, and other partners, the Council will ensure that the necessary grey infrastructure is put into place to support growth, development and North Dorset's economy.

The adequacy, availability and provision of grey infrastructure will be key considerations when planning applications are considered. Development will be expected to maintain, enhance and provide grey infrastructure, as appropriate to the particular development, by way of direct (on/off site) or indirect (by way of financial contribution) provision.

**Transportation**

A more sustainable approach to transport in North Dorset will be developed by:

- a supporting measures to manage demand in the Exeter to London corridor associated with the proposed growth at Gillingham, in particular measures to reduce the potential for increased trips on the A303; and
- b supporting measures to make more effective use of the existing route network including: improvements to traffic flows at 'pinch points' and key junctions; and schemes to improve environmental quality on busy routes or to improve road safety; and
- c the use of Transport Assessments and Transport Statements, which the Council will require to be submitted by developers to assess the impact of new development on the existing highway network, clarify its consequences and put forward mitigation measures, when considering planning applications; and
- d seeking improved scheduled bus services between the main towns in and beyond the District and within the main towns; encouraging community-led transport schemes in rural areas; seeking improved demand responsive public transport services; and improved rail services to and from Gillingham; and
- e the production of Travel Plans in association with Transport Assessments/Statements with emphasis on public transport and which will be expected from developers; and
- f providing and enhancing walking and cycling facilities in the main towns and in rural areas, particularly between villages and nearby towns; and completing the North Dorset Trailway as a strategic walking and cycling route; and
- g developing and enforcing parking standards and guidance both for residential development and other uses and the development of a strategy for off-street parking, focusing on Council and other publicly owned car parks.



## **POLICY 13 (CONT'D): GREY INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Utilities**

The Council will work with statutory undertakers, utility companies and other agencies and providers to upgrade and maintain existing utilities, including broadband provision, and provide new utilities to support development.

### **Drainage and Flood Prevention**

The Council will work with the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies to make provision for dealing with flood risk, the transfer and treatment of wastewater and the introduction of sustainable drainage systems.

Sustainable drainage solutions appropriate to the development and underlying ground conditions should be incorporated into all new development of ten dwellings or more and connect with the overall surface water management approach for the area.

### **Waste**

The Council will work with the Dorset Waste Partnership to manage and ensure the effective collection and disposal of household waste in North Dorset.

### **Public Realm**

For all large-scale development proposals, and proposals on prominent sites, the Council will seek the incorporation of public art and will encourage liaison with local artists. Developers should consider the visual impact of infrastructure such as street and other lighting at the development design stage and take full account of the needs of people with disabilities.

## Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure

### Introduction

- 7.66 One of national policy's core principles is for planning 'to take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs'<sup>214</sup>.
- 7.67 Policy 14 aims to deliver these principles and to ensure that the social infrastructure that our communities need is planned for positively. In particular it aims to deliver:
- education facilities (including pre-school childcare, primary and secondary, further and community learning and special needs education);
  - health services (hospitals, general surgeries and health centres);
  - emergency services (police, fire and rescue and ambulance);
  - cultural facilities (libraries, art galleries, arts centres and museums);
  - recreation and sport facilities (indoor sports facilities and youth centres); and
  - community facilities (non-commercial) (facilities such as community halls, places of worship and cemeteries).
- 7.68 To make our towns vibrant places we also need a range of commercial community facilities such as shops, cafes, bars and other activities within our town centres, as discussed in Policy 12 - Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments. Village shops, post offices and public houses also provide a key focus for rural communities and the retention of such commercial facilities is discussed in Policy 27 - Retention of Community Facilities. Community facilities (both commercial and non-commercial) are encouraged in Policy 29 - The Re-Use of Existing Buildings in the Countryside as they make the best use of existing resources whilst at the same time improving access to services for local people.
- 7.69 Local communities also have the opportunity to address economic development issues and the provision and retention of commercial and non-commercial community facilities through the neighbourhood planning process and the Government's Community Rights.
- 7.70 The provision of outdoor recreation and sport facilities is discussed in Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure.
- 7.71 The Council has worked with other authorities and providers to assess the quality and capacity of existing social infrastructure, to identify future needs and to ensure that these future needs are met.

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<sup>214</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

## Education Facilities

- 7.72 The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that there is a sufficient choice of school places available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. They require local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. The Government also give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools or education providers<sup>215</sup>.

## Pre-School Childcare

- 7.73 There is a range of childcare provision catering for the needs of pre-school age children in the District ranging from children's centres, day nurseries<sup>216</sup>, pre-school/play groups<sup>217</sup> to registered childminders.
- 7.74 In 2011 the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment<sup>218</sup>, carried out by Dorset County Council Children's Services, assessed the supply and demand of pre-school childcare across the County and whether it met the demands of local families. It identified a key role for children's centres in delivering an integrated approach to family support.
- 7.75 There are three children's centres in North Dorset and they are located in the main towns of Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury and there is an outreach base in Sturminster Newton. Children's centres enable all children to have the best possible start in life and act as a central point where families can access information and a range of services. In Blandford and Shaftesbury the children's centres also have on-site day nurseries.
- 7.76 The assessment showed that in North Dorset day nurseries and pre-school/play groups provided the greatest number of places for pre-school child provision and in 2010 there were 39 day nurseries and pre-school/playgroups in the District. The distribution of day nurseries and pre-school/play groups mirrors the distribution of the population with the highest concentration of providers in the market towns.
- 7.77 Childminders were also part of the assessment and research showed that in 2010 there were 73 registered childminders providing 330 places in North Dorset. Childminders are key in providing a service in rural areas where demand is not sufficient for group providers to offer a viable service.

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<sup>215</sup> Paragraph 72, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>216</sup> Group childcare and are open for a minimum of 45 hours per week over five days or more compared.

<sup>217</sup> Group childcare for 0-5 year old but are open for less than 45 hours per week.

<sup>218</sup> Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011, Dorset County Council (2011).

- 7.78 The assessment did not identify any geographical gaps in childcare provision in North Dorset although it did acknowledge the challenges for childcare providers in a rural area where populations are sparse and demand fluctuates and that childminders could play an important role in meeting needs in these areas.

### Primary and Secondary Education

- 7.79 The Council has worked with Dorset County Council (DCC), as the Education Authority, to assess the likely future schooling needs of the District over the plan period. Evidence shows that there is a need for additional accommodation, both at primary and secondary school levels in all four of the District's main towns.
- 7.80 At a primary level DCC has provisionally identified a need for 2 additional forms of entry (2FE) in each of the District's main towns and their provisional plans are to build a new primary school in each.
- 7.81 However, more detailed feasibility work shows that the situation in Blandford may be resolved through careful use of the existing capacity in the school pyramid and by extending the existing primary schools in the town. In Gillingham expansion of St Mary the Virgin Primary School from a 1FE to a 2FE and capacity for a new 2FE primary school is required to accommodate the proposed growth associated with the southern extension. In Shaftesbury DCC are looking to provide a new 2FE primary school within the town, but on a site that is sufficiently large to accommodate a 3FE school if required in the future. Finally, in Sturminster Newton housing growth is likely to produce just under an additional half form of entry and DCC is considering relocating and expanding the existing primary school and redeveloping the existing site on Bridge Street.
- 7.82 There is also a primary school at Blandford Camp to meet the needs of military personnel and their families. Class sizes fluctuate with MOD rotations and DCC will consider expansion needs if and when required.
- 7.83 In addition to the new schools and expansions proposed, the Education Authority is committed to improving existing schools within the plan period. In 2014 work commenced on the replacement primary school at Pimperne.
- 7.84 No new secondary schools are proposed in the plan period. Increases in secondary school enrolments during the plan period will be managed on their existing sites.
- 7.85 In addition to the state-funded schools there are also a number of independent schools in North Dorset catering for a wide age range of children from 2 to 16 and beyond. Independent day and boarding schools are important to the rural economy and offer a wide choice of educational providers for local residents and to those from further afield. Many have high quality sports and recreational facilities that are shared with local communities and some offer child care/holiday clubs outside of term times. The continued support and

development of independent schools and their links with local communities are encouraged.

### Further Education and Adult Learning

- 7.86 There are no higher education establishments in the District, but further education is offered by a number of providers. In Shaftesbury there is the North Dorset Skills Centre at Wincombe Lane, Shaftesbury, which is part of Yeovil College. In Sturminster Newton there is the EQ Skills Training Base at Butts Pond that helps young people struggling to engage in academic education to gain employment skills and self-confidence. The District also has strong links with Kingston Maurward College, an agricultural college based in Dorchester which provides subsidised transport for a significant number of students in the area. The Council welcomes these ties and would react positively to further outreach provision in the District.
- 7.87 Community learning is also available in the form of adult courses at a variety of venues and through work-based learning. These opportunities need to be retained and enhanced so that the existing and future workforce can receive the training they need to meet the changing requirements of local employers.

### Special Education Needs

- 7.88 There are two schools catering for special needs within the District. These are the Yewstock School in Sturminster Newton, a day community school taking pupils from age 2 until 19 years who have profound, multiple or complex learning difficulties; and the Forum in Shillingstone, a special boarding school catering for pupils with autism aged 5-12 years. In 2014 DCC commenced work on a project to improve the 14-19 facilities at Yewstock School by providing a new base on the Sturminster Newton High School site. Both schools are located within existing residential areas and the implications of expansion will need to be assessed in line with other policies within the Local Plan.

### Health Services

- 7.89 As part of the changes to the NHS brought about by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Primary care trusts and strategic health authorities ceased to exist on 31 March 2013. Their responsibilities were taken over by a range of new organisations.

### Hospitals

- 7.90 Under the auspices of Dorset Health Care University NHS Foundation Trust there are two community hospitals in North Dorset. The Trust has a long-standing commitment to engaging patients, service users, carers and the wider community in the development and delivery of the services it provides. They believe it is essential that the services they offer are informed and influenced by local people's views and participation. The Blandford Community Hospital and

the Westminster Memorial Hospital in Shaftesbury provide many services including elderly care inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient appointments, therapy services, radiology and minor injury services. The Council supports the retention and enhancement of community hospitals in the District.

- 7.91 The Council also supports the Trust in joining forces with Dorset County Council, other local authorities and NHS bodies in looking at ways of delivering health and social care services in Dorset as a whole under the new initiative, 'Better Together' that seeks to make the best use of available resources.

### General Surgeries and Health Centres

- 7.92 At a local level clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are made up of local GPs, nurses and other professionals who are now responsible for commissioning services for local communities. The Dorset CCG supports people in Dorset to lead healthier lives and it is divided into localities. With the exception of the surgery in Silton, which due to its close proximity to the county boundary is in the Wiltshire CCG, the remaining 12 surgeries in North Dorset are within either the North or Mid Dorset Locality.

- 7.93 To accommodate the proposed growth in the District over the plan period new or expanded health facilities are required in Blandford and Shaftesbury. The Council is aware of the pressures which a number of medical practices in North Dorset are facing in terms of outdated or undersized premises and of actual or potential increases in the number of patients. The Council will work with local general practitioners, commissioning bodies and other stakeholders to ensure suitable sites for the location of new surgeries or health centres are identified and brought forward for development. In addition, the location of new residential development in Blandford will require careful assessment of the need for, and location of, new facilities in the town. At Gillingham, where this assessment has already taken place, a local centre is proposed to meet the needs of the new southern extension, with new health facilities including a doctors' surgery, dentist and pharmacy.

- 7.94 Policy 20 – The Countryside may permit a new or relocated surgery or health centre on the edge of the built-up area of a settlement in the countryside to support a rural community, if it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for a countryside location.

### Emergency Services

- 7.95 Community safety and emergency services (police, fire and rescue and ambulance) are important elements of social infrastructure. Their capacity and location are vital in supporting sustainable communities. The authorities responsible for providing these services have no immediate plans for expansion within the District however provision in Gillingham is likely to be reviewed as the southern extension is delivered.

## Cultural Facilities

- 7.96 The provision of cultural facilities is important for the health and well-being of the community. Over the plan period as the population of the District grows the need for well located, easily accessible libraries, art galleries, art centres and museums will increase. Buildings that are well designed, allow for a range of uses and that complement existing facilities are encouraged in the main towns. Outside the towns cultural facilities and their provision will be a matter for local communities to decide and delivered through the neighbourhood planning process unless an over-riding need can be demonstrated.

### Libraries

- 7.97 Library services in the District are currently provided by Dorset County Council. There are four core libraries in each of the main towns in North Dorset and a mobile library service that serves the rural areas. There is also a community library in Stalbridge that is run by local volunteers, but supported by the County Council, which also acts as a hub for community activity in the locality. The Council will seek to retain all libraries in the District and supports the sharing of resources and facilities to secure the primary use.

### Art Galleries and Arts Centres

- 7.98 Currently there are no public art galleries in North Dorset, but there are a number of permanent facilities for music and performing arts that also display works by local artists. The two main performance spaces are The Exchange at Sturminster Newton and the Arts Centre in Shaftesbury. Both function as arts centres as well as a focus for community and leisure activities involving music, theatre and film.
- 7.99 On a smaller scale there is also the Slade Centre in Gillingham that offers art classes, workshops and exhibitions and at the time of submitting this plan The Fording Point project, an arts centre incorporating theatre, cinema and other facilities in Blandford town centre had been granted planning permission.
- 7.100 Outside the main towns the larger village halls such as Durweston and Fontmell Magna are used for Arts Reach Theatre events and the Moviola travels around a number of villages showing films to local audiences.
- 7.101 The Council supports existing art galleries and arts facilities and the development of new facilities in the District's four main towns depending on their scale and the area they serve.

### Museums

- 7.102 There are many small local museums around the District telling stories of rural life in bygone days, battlefield communications through the ages and geological displays. All are valuable educational resources and contribute to the local

tourism industry. These types of development are encouraged and supported especially in the main towns where there are good transport links.

### Recreation and Sport

- 7.103 National policy<sup>219</sup> requires local planning authorities to work with public health leads to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports, recreation and places of worship).
- 7.104 The Dorset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)<sup>220</sup> in its needs assessments for physical activity recognises the need for a joint physical activity strategy in which existing sport and leisure centres, together with community halls and the natural environment play a key role in ensuring that those who want to be active can find activities they enjoy.

### Formal and Informal Indoor Facilities

- 7.105 There are three indoor sport and leisure centres in Blandford, Gillingham and Sturminster Newton. All are now managed by the local community and provide local residents with an opportunity to participate in formal and informal indoor exercise ranging from recreational swimming to exercise classes. These facilities are also shared with the secondary schools in the towns. In addition to these community run centres many of the District's independent schools also share their indoor facilities with local communities.
- 7.106 There are also youth and community centres in Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton and outreach youth clubs based in village halls and other community halls in Stalbridge and Okeford Fitzpaine.
- 7.107 The Council seeks to retain existing formal and informal indoor sport and recreation providers to inspire as many individuals as possible to take up physically active behaviours. The development of new or expansion of existing facilities in the District's four main towns will be supported depending on their scale and the area they serve. The assessment of future needs and the opportunities for new provision should ideally be identified by local communities through the neighbourhood planning process. Alternatively, if identified, provision could also be made in the Local Plan Part 2

### Formal and Informal Outdoor Facilities

- 7.108 Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. In addition, it can contribute to relieving recreational pressure on areas of high wildlife value. Whilst formal and informal outdoor recreation and

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<sup>219</sup> Paragraph 171, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>220</sup> Health and Wellbeing in Dorset, 2012 refresh of the Dorset Strategic Needs Assessment, NHS Dorset (2012).



sport facilities perform a social function, they are primarily covered by Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure.

### **Community Facilities (Non-Commercial)**

7.109 The provision of community halls and places of worship add vibrancy to the District's towns and villages and can provide a focus for activities. For example, a community hall can host a range of activities catering for all ages from young children with mother and toddler meetings to gardening clubs and the Women's Institute. Places of worship and their associated halls are also a focal meeting point for many, especially in more rural areas. Cemeteries and burial grounds are often associated with places of worship but in recent years natural burial sites have become a popular alternative. The Council considers these types of community facilities to be non-commercial in relation to policies in the Local Plan.

### **Community Halls and Places of Worship**

7.110 During the plan period the following measures will be taken to ensure that the community venues in the main towns are adequate to cater for planned growth:

- Blandford – the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange, to provide a multi-purpose hall for community use;
- Gillingham – the provision of a community hall to serve the proposed southern extension to the town and a hall adjoining Riversmeet, both of which will embrace multi-functional space; and
- Shaftesbury – the provision of a community hall, details of which have not yet been determined.

7.111 In Sturminster Newton the multipurpose Exchange is a community, arts and learning centre that offers much potential for community, leisure and entertainment activities. Its continued success is important not only to the town, but as a live entertainment venue for the District as a whole.

7.112 Outside the four main towns many rural communities already have a village hall, but some are in need of replacement, extension or refurbishment to bring them up to modern standards. The Council is keen for rural and often isolated communities to maintain a communal meeting facility as this not only enhances vibrancy but also minimises the need to travel. A new or relocated community hall may be permitted on the edge of the built-up area of Stalbridge or the District's villages to support a rural community, if it can be demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and no suitable sites exist within the relevant settlement.

## Cemeteries and Burial Grounds

- 7.113 There are a number of cemeteries throughout the District, both in the main towns and the countryside, where they are primarily associated with churches. The Council wishes to see the retention of all cemeteries as they form an integral part of the historic character and often contain mature vegetation which is of ecological value.
- 7.114 However, some cemeteries are nearing capacity and during the plan period new cemetery provision will be required. At present there is an identified need for extra capacity in the towns of Gillingham and Shaftesbury.
- 7.115 Town and parish councils are responsible for cemetery provision and prior to any allocation of land in the towns, whether through the Local Plan Part 2 or through the neighbourhood planning process, detailed surveys are required to determine the most appropriate location for a new cemetery. In particular the Environment Agency needs to be consulted to ensure that ground conditions are suitable for this purpose and there is no danger of pollution of watercourses or groundwater.
- 7.116 The development of cemeteries, whether an extension to an existing site or a new site including natural burial sites, will be allowed in the countryside provided that they meet the identified needs of local communities and accord with the other policies in the Local Plan, including those relating to the landscape, residential amenity and access.

## **POLICY 14: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Council will work with partners and developers to ensure that the level of social infrastructure across the District is maintained and enhanced through the retention and improvement of existing facilities and new provision, where required.

Development should support the maintenance and enhancement of existing social infrastructure and the provision of new social infrastructure, through provision on site and/or contributions to provision off site, as appropriate.

Through these measures the Council will ensure that:

### **Education Facilities**

- a the needs of existing pre-school facilities and providers in the towns and villages are met; and
- b provision is made to accommodate the additional forms of entry required at primary and secondary school levels across the District including, if necessary, new primary schools in Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton; and
- c further education and community learning opportunities are retained and improved to provide the District's workforce with the skills necessary to meet the changing needs of local employers; and
- d schools catering for children and young adults with special needs are supported.

### **Health Services**

- e community hospitals are retained and enhanced; and
- f sufficient general surgeries and health centres are in place with new or expanded surgeries provided in Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury.

### **Cultural Facilities**

- g existing libraries are retained and developed as valuable community hubs; and
- h multi-functional art galleries and arts centres are encouraged in the main towns; and
- i existing museums are protected and enhanced as valuable educational resources for the community as a whole.

## **POLICY 14 (CONT'D): SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Recreation and Sport**

- j existing formal and informal indoor facilities are protected and enhanced. Applications for new facilities in the main towns depending on their scale and the area they serve will be supported.

### **Community Facilities (Non-Commercial)**

- k existing community halls, places of worship and other non-commercial community facilities are protected and new facilities provided where there is an identified need. In the countryside, such facilities may be permitted on the edge of the built-up area of Stalbridge or the District's villages to support a rural community, where no suitable sites exist within the relevant settlement; and
- l sufficient land is provided for cemeteries and burial grounds.

## Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure

### Introduction

- 7.117 Green infrastructure encompasses both the traditional open space sites and other environmental features in an area, which should be designed and managed to create an interconnected network that offers a range of benefits to people and the environment. For the purposes of the Local Plan, green infrastructure is defined as the strategic network of accessible multifunctional sites and features (such as trees, parks, gardens, woodlands, formal and informal open spaces and nature reserves) and the linkages between them (such as hedgerows, rivers and their floodplains, footpaths, cycle ways and other transport routes and wildlife corridors) that improve quality of life and enhance the environment, sustaining many of the ecosystem services outlined in Policy 4 – The Natural Environment.
- 7.118 National policy requires local planning authorities to set out a strategic approach to green infrastructure. This approach should positively plan to create, protect, enhance and manage the green infrastructure network<sup>221</sup>. Development should help deliver green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement as part of a strategy to address climate change mitigation and adaptation<sup>222</sup>. In addition, green infrastructure plays an important role in creating sustainable communities by reducing the negative consequences of urban growth and change, creating places where people want to live, and enhancing the urban environment.

### Green Infrastructure Elements

- 7.119 Green infrastructure incorporates elements at all spatial scales from the town centre to the open countryside. It not only includes a range of different sites, but also the links between them and other green elements of the urban and natural environment such as roadside trees and verges. Each element of green infrastructure has a primary function but it can also function in other ways to improve the quality of life of residents or secure environmental benefits. This multifunctionality can be enhanced through the appropriate design and management of individual sites and the overall green infrastructure network. Examples include the planting of native fruit trees around sports pitches and play areas.
- 7.120 Green infrastructure elements should ideally be accessible to the whole community and it is important that these community assets are not restricted in their use to their primary owners, unless part of private amenity space such

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<sup>221</sup> Paragraph 114, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>222</sup> Paragraph 99, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

as a private garden. An example could be the use of a school playing pitch by a local football club in addition to its use for school sports activities.

- 7.121 The different types of site that make up the green infrastructure network in North Dorset and their primary functions are set out in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Types and Functions of Green Infrastructure

Type	Examples	Primary Functions
Outdoor recreation facilities, parks and gardens	Sports pitches and greens, playgrounds, urban parks, formal gardens	Offer opportunities for sports, play and recreation and to enable easy access to the countryside (for example Blandford Leisure Centre and recreation ground)
Amenity greenspace	Informal recreation spaces, housing green spaces, country parks, landscape planting, green roofs, domestic gardens, trees, village greens, urban commons, other incidental space	Creating attractive and pleasant built environments, providing community and private outdoor leisure space (for example The Slopes in Shaftesbury)
Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces	Nature reserves, woodland and scrub, grassland, heathlands, moors, wetlands, ponds, open and running water, landscape planting	Creating areas for biodiversity, access to education associated with the natural environment (for example Butts Pond Nature Reserve in Sturminster Newton)
Green corridors	Rivers and canals including their banks and floodplains, trees, hedgerows, dry stone walls, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, pedestrian paths, rights of way	Creating a sustainable travel network promoting walking and cycling, enhancements to semi-natural habitats and integrating micro green infrastructure into urban areas (for example up and downstream of Lodden Bridge in Gillingham)
Local character areas	Churchyards, treed areas, roadside verges, landscape screening, setting of a building, open gaps, views	Creates a sense of character within a settlement contributing to the attractiveness of an area or building. (for example Church Field in Shillingstone)
Other	Allotments, community gardens, orchards, cemeteries and churchyards	Providing accessible facilities to meet needs within settlements, enable local food production (for example Pond Walk allotments in Stalbridge)

## **A Green Infrastructure Strategy**

- 7.122 The Council will produce a green infrastructure strategy to inform the production of the Local Plan Part 2. This will enable the coordinated provision of an integrated green infrastructure network across the whole District where individual elements contribute to achieving the wider objectives of the Local Plan. The green infrastructure strategy will set out a strategic approach to the provision, design and management of an integrated network of green spaces, green links and other green elements (including those set out in Figure 7.1). The key benefits that the green infrastructure strategy and the Council more generally will seek to deliver are set out in Figure 7.2. These key benefits of green infrastructure fit within the broad ecosystem services categories as outlined in Policy 4 – The Natural Environment.
- 7.123 An assessment of current resources was prepared in the Council’s Open Space Audit & Assessment of Local Need. This Audit assessed a range of sites including recreational grounds, amenity spaces and formal gardens, allotments, cemeteries and sports pitches. Although the Audit assessed a wide range of sites, not just those with sport and amenity uses, their value was assessed primarily from an open space, access and quality perspective, rather than in terms of the wider green infrastructure benefits they could offer.
- 7.124 The Council will use the results of the Audit, updated to reflect the latest best practice and guidance, to aid the development of its green infrastructure strategy by:
- assessing the existing situation;
  - assessing the multifunctionality of sites to capitalise on the benefits of green infrastructure;
  - identifying areas where there are deficiencies in provision or where links can be made through the development of local standards where appropriate;
  - linking to other initiatives and plans (such as the South West Nature Map, the North Dorset Trailway Project and the Local Community Partnerships) to help deliver their objectives; and
  - prioritising areas where development will take place as these offer opportunities for improving green infrastructure provision.
- 7.125 Across the District there are opportunities to enhance green infrastructure provision both quantitatively but also qualitatively, through the green infrastructure strategy and other mechanisms. Enhancement of existing and the provision of new green infrastructure will help to support the needs of the growing population and help to deliver the wider benefits outlined in Figure 7.2.
- 7.126 In the four main towns, the green infrastructure network will be enhanced as a result of the sites identified for growth being developed. In addition, the existing green infrastructure elements will be enhanced and connected to each

other to provide a network to deliver wider benefits to the towns and surrounding areas. These linkages will, alongside other benefits, seek to provide safe walking and cycling routes to and from town centres and other key facilities such as schools.

Figure 7.2: Key Benefits of Green Infrastructure

Key Benefits	
Ecology and biodiversity	Enabling the migration of species through urban and rural areas; the creation of habitats within built up areas; enhancement of biodiversity as a whole; protection of and reduction in recreational pressure on important designated sites (supporting services)
Climate change mitigation	Absorption of CO <sub>2</sub> by vegetation; wood as a fuel from forests; incorporation of underground pipes for ground source heat pumps in parks or gardens (regulating services)
Access and transport	Cycling and walking routes from within residential areas, increasing the permeability of towns to alternatives to the car; providing safe cycling and walking routes into and out of towns (cultural services)
Climate change adaptation and water management	Storage of flood water in floodplains; SuDS to store rainwater outside of floodplains in times of flood; shading and cooling effect provided by trees and other vegetation (regulating services)
Water quality and pollution control	Rainwater permeating through green surfaces into water table; absorption of pollutants by vegetation; SuDS to control diffuse pollution (regulating services)
Community, recreation and leisure	Sports pitches, play grounds, cycling and walking routes for active recreation; places for meeting and community events; provision of allotments within towns; provision of community orchards; provision of alternative, attractive areas for recreation away from important wildlife sites (cultural services)
Education	Exposure to nature and the learning opportunities it offers (cultural services)
Health and well-being	Promotion of and access to outdoor exercise opportunities; relaxation; psychological benefits of open space; reduced healthcare costs (cultural services)
Cultural and landscape heritage	Incorporates rural heritage into urban areas; integrates the town into the landscape; screens developments from landscape views (cultural services)



Key Benefits	
Economic development	Enhanced attractiveness of the urban environment leading to desirable neighbourhoods; benefits for leisure and tourism industry; a happy and productive workforce through an attractive working environment; enhancement of the rural economy (provisioning services)

- 7.127 Rural communities live in close proximity to the open countryside, but it is not always accessible to local people. Rural communities also require their own sport and recreational facilities and require safe access to community facilities such as schools and village halls. It is important to provide green infrastructure in rural areas to improve access to the wider countryside for recreation purposes, access to community open space such as village greens and play spaces and access to facilities in towns. Access routes should be established to provide safe and convenient walking and cycling routes as well as helping to deliver the wider benefits that green infrastructure can provide.
- 7.128 The Council will seek to protect and enhance existing open space, character areas, outdoor sport and recreational facilities and to provide new facilities to support growth. This will be particularly relevant in relation to play space for children and young people but also in relation to allotments, cemeteries, nature reserves and the multiple benefits that green infrastructure elements can deliver.
- 7.129 The Council will support the development of new strategic facilities in suitable locations, well connected to centres of population. These may be identified as part of the green infrastructure strategy or may be stand-alone projects. The North Dorset Trailway is an example that provides safe recreational and commuting links for walkers, cyclists and horse riders along the route of the former Dorset and Somerset Railway. There are gaps in the route, areas where the route could be improved and the potential to connect other settlements into the route. The further development of the North Dorset Trailway is supported by the Council and contributions to its improvement will be expected from developments at settlements along its route.
- 7.130 Through the green infrastructure strategy and other mechanisms the Council will look at the potential to provide public access to wildlife sites (for example, through the designation of local nature reserves<sup>223</sup>) and the open countryside for relaxation and educational purposes, utilising natural features such as river

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<sup>223</sup> Local nature reserves have been declared at Woolland Hill and Butts Pond, Sturminster Newton. Further declarations will continue working towards the Natural England target of one hectare per 1,000 population.

corridors where possible whilst ensuring that the reason for any designation is not compromised. Designating further sites as nature reserves will enhance opportunities for biodiversity and the migration of species enabling wildlife to adapt to the impacts of climate change<sup>224</sup>. This will also help to deflect pressure from internationally designated wildlife sites.

- 7.131 In addition to working with local communities to deliver local benefits, the Council will work with neighbouring authorities to deliver strategic green infrastructure objectives. Examples include mitigation of the impact of residential development on Dorset Heathlands either through support for measures taking place in neighbouring authority areas or through connections with strategic proposals such as the Stour Valley Park<sup>225</sup>. In addition, the Council will help to protect and enhance the national long distance footpath and cycle route network. The Council will work with other partner organisations (such as the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships and the Dorset Wildlife Trust) to facilitate management of the countryside in a sustainable manner.

### Local Green Space

- 7.132 National policy makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection. These local green spaces<sup>226</sup>, where new development will be ruled out other than in very special circumstances, can only be designated through local or neighbourhood plans. The local green space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces; sites should be small in scale and in close proximity to the communities they serve.
- 7.133 Local green space can be designated due to its local significance or the fact that it is demonstrably special to the local community. Designated areas can include areas of historic significance, playing fields, wildlife sites or areas which contribute to the character and appreciation of an area. Potential sites to be designated as local green spaces will be identified through the Local Plan Part 2 document or through the neighbourhood planning process.
- 7.134 Neighbourhood plans, when produced, should seek the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in line with this policy. They should also seek to deliver the key green infrastructure benefits (as set out in Figure 7.1), including through the local green spaces designation, and contribute to the objectives of the green infrastructure strategy.

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<sup>224</sup> Important habitats are often scattered and fragmented resulting in species becoming isolated and unable to migrate as evidenced in the South West Nature Map.

<sup>225</sup> As proposed in the South East Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy 'Investing in Green Places' consultation draft January 2011.

<sup>226</sup> Paragraph 76 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

- 7.135 Policy 1.9: Important Open or Wooded Areas (IOWA) of the 2003 Local Plan has been saved. The IOWA policy protects the site from development. However, at the examination of the adopted 2003 Local Plan the Inspector recommended a review of IOWA designations, particularly their contribution in visual or amenity terms to the public areas within a town or village, with a view to deleting those which did not require complete protection. This review will be undertaken as part of Local Plan Part 2 or through neighbourhood plans. In the interim, where a robust review of the contribution of a designated site is undertaken to support a planning application, this will be taken into account in the decision-making process.

## Providing and Enhancing Green Infrastructure

- 7.136 All new development will be required to contribute towards the provision, enhancement or management of the multifunctional green infrastructure network in addition to any landscape planting required on a development site.
- 7.137 Development should provide new green infrastructure, enhance or contribute towards enhancing existing green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. This should be achieved through delivery on site unless it is not practical or viable to do so or, exceptionally, if greater benefits could be achieved through off-site measures. On- or off-site provision should be delivered in line with the standards set out below, unless a different level of provision or standards are set in other planning policies, in the green infrastructure strategy, or locally for example in a neighbourhood plan. All planting should include native species which are resilient to the changing climate.
- 7.138 Provision of outdoor sports and play space will be required in line with the Fields in Trust standards<sup>227</sup>. Developments will be expected to deliver to these standards on site, where practical to do so.
- 7.139 The Council will seek to secure the provision of one standard allotment plot for every 60 people in a settlement. A standard allotment plot is traditionally 250 square metres. Although many people would prefer a plot of this size, half-sized plots would be acceptable if discussions with the relevant parish or town council indicate that the demand is for smaller plots. Where development is proposed, the delivery of allotments on site will be required where practical to do so, at or above this level in clusters of 15 plots.
- 7.140 Allotments and burial grounds at the four main towns should ideally be provided within settlement boundaries however, where no suitable site exists, a suitable site outside a settlement boundary may be considered. For provision of burial grounds elsewhere, delivery should be in line with Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure.
- 7.141 Other elements of green infrastructure (for example, informal open space, amenity green space and the linkages between such elements) should be provided as part of developments to reduce recreational pressure on areas designated for their biodiversity interest, where practical to do so, having regard to the opportunities on site for such provision. In addition, developments will be expected to provide, enhance or make a contribution towards the enhancement of other existing elements of green infrastructure off site.

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<sup>227</sup> Current standards are those contained in 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sports and Play', Fields in Trust (2008).

- 7.142 The green infrastructure strategy will develop a strategic approach to green infrastructure and identify a range of green infrastructure elements. The Strategy will inform the preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 with development sites being required to provide on-site green infrastructure as the default position unless it can be demonstrated that it is not practical to do so or, exceptionally, if greater benefits could be provided through off-site provision. Where necessary the provision, enhancement and management of green infrastructure will be secured through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- 7.143 Prior to the green infrastructure strategy being produced, developers will be required to demonstrate how their proposed schemes would deliver key green infrastructure benefits and would not compromise the realisation of such benefits and objectives in the future. Developers will be encouraged to work with community groups and voluntary organisations to deliver benefits to communities through green infrastructure provision, design and management.

## **POLICY 15: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Council will seek to:

- a integrate the new green infrastructure to be provided in association with strategic growth at the four main towns with existing green infrastructure networks; and
- b enhance the provision of green infrastructure in the countryside (including at Stalbridge and the District's villages), especially where it helps to improve recreational opportunities; and
- c protect and enhance existing open space of importance, character areas, outdoor sport and recreational facilities and provide new facilities to support growth; and
- d take forward new and improved strategic facilities, such as the North Dorset Trailway; and
- e promote the public enjoyment of wildlife, where this is compatible with maintaining biodiversity; and
- f identify opportunities to work with partners at the local, district and sub-regional levels to deliver multiple key green infrastructure benefits.

Development will be required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. All elements of green infrastructure should be provided on site in line with standards of provision set in the development plan unless:

- g it can be demonstrated that it would not be practical or viable to do so; or
- h exceptionally, it could be demonstrated that greater benefits could be realised through off-site measures.

Where the full requirement for green infrastructure is not provided on-site, development would be expected to provide new green infrastructure off site, and/or enhance (or make a contribution towards the enhancement of) existing green infrastructure off site.

Developments will also be expected to deliver, or contribute towards the delivery of:

- i the conservation and management of existing assets; and

**POLICY 15 (CONT'D): GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

- j the creation of new sites and links including new or improved open space for children's play, outdoor sport and recreation; and
- k enhancement to the functionality, quality and connectivity of green infrastructure; and
- l area-specific packages which achieve multiple benefits including those identified in Figure 7.2.

Neighbourhood plans should consider measures that assist in delivering key green infrastructure benefits as outlined in this policy, including the designation of local green space, where appropriate.

## 8. Market Towns and the Countryside

### Introduction

- 8.1 This section explains the Council's approach to shaping the future of places within the District in the period up to 2031. It contains:
- policies for each of the four main towns that identify the broad locations for future housing and other uses such as employment in Policy 16 – Blandford to Policy 19 – Sturminster Newton. The Strategic Site Allocation for the southern extension of Gillingham is dealt with by Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation in Section 9; and
  - a policy for the countryside, where development is more strictly controlled and where there is a focus on meeting local rather than strategic needs, in Policy 20 – The Countryside
- 8.2 These policies together with all the other policies in the Local Plan Part 1 as a whole (including the supporting text and any maps, diagrams and figures) set out the strategic priorities for the future development of North Dorset and are the policies that neighbourhood plans need to be in general conformity with.
- 8.3 The Council supports local communities in taking an active role in shaping the places in which they live and work because local people know best what local needs are and how they can be met and as such it encourages the production of neighbourhood plans.
- 8.4 In the market towns, neighbourhood plans can play a key role in enabling local communities to shape strategic growth whilst in the countryside neighbourhood plans are just one of the tools available to local communities to meet local needs.
- 8.5 Further information on neighbourhood plans and the role they play in delivering growth in North Dorset is set out in Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy.



## Policy 16 – Blandford

### Introduction

- 8.6 'Blandford' comprises the main town of Blandford Forum to the north of the River Stour and the smaller built-up area of Blandford St Mary to the south. Effectively, they function as a single settlement which is the main service centre for the southern part of the District. The town lies in the Blandford Gap, where the River Stour cuts through the chalk downland and is embraced by two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the Dorset AONB.
- 8.7 Blandford has expanded significantly in recent years, more than 1,400 new homes being built between 1994 and 2012, with over 100 being completed in the last year<sup>228</sup>. This rate of growth has given rise to sustainability concerns, especially the potential for increased commuting to Bournemouth and Poole<sup>229</sup>.
- 8.8 Much of the recent development has taken place on land between the existing built-up area and the bypass. However, this has not always been in places that are accessible to key locations, such as the town centre. Recent research<sup>230</sup> suggests that there is potential for further growth in more accessible locations, which will help to support the settlement's service centre function and increase self-containment. Nevertheless, accommodating further growth within the town's environmental constraints is a challenge.
- 8.9 Although Blandford has a fairly diverse economic base, Blandford Camp (a large military site located to the north-east of the town) is a significant employer of local people and supports a variety of local businesses. It is anticipated that the Camp will remain a military establishment for the foreseeable future but changes to its role during the plan period could have implications for the local economy.

### Sustainable Development Strategy

- 8.10 Blandford's role as the main service centre in the southern part of the District will be maintained. Housing growth will be matched by employment growth and the provision of supporting infrastructure with the aim of increasing self-

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<sup>228</sup> Annual Monitoring Reports, North Dorset District Council (2004-2012).

<sup>229</sup> This issue was raised during the Examination in Public of the former draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). A brief summary of the debate is set out in paragraphs 5.38 to 5.42 of Topic Paper: Spatial Strategy for North Dorset, North Dorset District Council (August 2009).

<sup>230</sup> North Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2010, North Dorset District Council (August 2011) and the North and north East Dorset Transport Study: Emerging Transport Strategy, Buro Happold (November 2009).

containment and reducing the need for commuting, particularly to the South East Dorset conurbation.

- 8.11 The key spatial aspects of this strategy will be:
- focusing housing in accessible locations, particularly locations close to the town centre and other facilities;
  - locating mainly B Class employment uses on the northern edge of the town in locations accessible to the strategic road network;
  - focusing a mix of employment uses (including offices) on the regenerated Brewery site close to the town centre;
  - providing an enhanced green infrastructure network, focused primarily on the Stour Valley and the disused railway line that runs through the town; and
  - accommodating growth within environmental constraints, notably heritage assets, two AONBs and the floodplain of the River Stour.
- 8.12 The strategy for the town will see the building out of sites already allocated for development or with planning permission in the early part of the plan period, with additional greenfield sites beyond the bypass being brought forward after that date. New development will be supported by the necessary grey, social and green infrastructure, both to meet the overall needs of the town and the more local needs associated with each new development area.
- 8.13 Blandford Town Council together with Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Parish Councils have established a single neighbourhood area to cover all three parish areas. The three local councils are working together, under the name Blandford +, to produce a single neighbourhood plan. This will deal with non-strategic matters to supplement the policies contained in this Local Plan, which can include additional greenfield sites beyond the bypass.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

- 8.14 The main issues for Blandford resulting from climate change are most likely to include flood risk and the implications of development on groundwater resources.
- 8.15 The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment<sup>231</sup> shows that parts of Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary are at risk of flooding from the River Stour. Parts of Blandford Forum are also at risk of flooding from the Pimperne Brook. Groundwater and surface water flooding<sup>232</sup> could also be issues in Blandford.

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<sup>231</sup> Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Salisbury Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Halcrow Group Ltd (February 2008).

<sup>232</sup> Severe rainfall can raise groundwater levels rapidly, especially in chalk, and cause flooding while surface water flooding occurs where the water running from roads and other hard surfaces overwhelms the drainage system.

- 8.16 Although protected by a flood defence scheme, any proposal within the areas at risk of fluvial flooding in Blandford would be subject to the sequential and exception tests advocated in national policy, as explained in more detail in Policy 3 – Climate Change. Flood risk, from all sources, will need to be taken into account in considering new development in the town and flood mitigation measures such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), in line with Policy 3, will need to be included, where required.
- 8.17 The eastern edge of Blandford lies within a Groundwater Source Protection Area, which needs to be protected from any threats of pollution and demands for water from groundwater sources will need to be managed. All development in the town will need to comply with the principles of the Environment Agency’s groundwater protection policy<sup>233</sup> and water efficiency will be encouraged (in line with Policy 3 – Climate Change).
- 8.18 The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB lies to the north and east of Blandford and the Dorset AONB lies to the south-west. Small parts of the existing built-up area of Blandford lie within both AONBs. Any development will need to consider the potential impacts on the AONBs and, in particular, the views into and out of the designated areas. A landscape impact assessment of potential housing sites at Blandford and Shaftesbury was undertaken in 2010, which considered potential impacts on AONB landscapes.
- 8.19 The Milldown (to the north-west of Blandford Forum) and Stour Meadows (in the floodplain of the River Stour between Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary) are both local nature reserves. The Cliff, which is an area of ancient woodland on the western bank of the River Stour extending from Blandford St Mary to Bryanston, is also designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). A colony of protected Greater Horseshoe Bats is located at Bryanston and the bats feed over the Milldown and this part of the Stour Valley, including Stour Meadows. The River Stour itself also supports a range of different species, including otters.
- 8.20 Blandford is a historic town and the Georgian town centre has long been recognised as being one of the finest in England. Newman and Pevsner say that the centre of the town 'forms one of the most satisfying Georgian ensembles anywhere in England'<sup>234</sup>. A Conservation Area was designated in 1972 to preserve and enhance Blandford’s historic character. It was expanded in 1990 and sub-areas within it were subsequently identified<sup>235</sup>. The town also includes a wide range of listed buildings.

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<sup>233</sup> Groundwater Protection: Policy and Practice (GP3) Environment Agency (November 2012).

<sup>234</sup> Page 95, The Buildings of England: Dorset - Newman, J. and Pevsner, N. (1972).

<sup>235</sup> These Character Areas are identified and described the Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary section of the 2003 Local Plan.

- 8.21 The Council seeks to protect and improve the natural and historic environment of the town and all applications for growth will need to consider the impact on these features and designations.

### Meeting Housing Needs

- 8.22 It is anticipated that at least 1,200 dwellings will be built in Blandford between 2011 and 2031. In recent years, the greenfield site off Shaftesbury Lane (on the northern edge of the town) and the land behind the new Archbishop Wake Primary School (on Black Lane on the eastern edge of Blandford) have been developed for housing. There remains significant potential to meet housing needs on brownfield sites within the existing settlement boundary<sup>236</sup>. A large mixed-use regeneration scheme for the Hall and Woodhouse Brewery site in Blandford St Mary already has planning permission and other smaller sites, such as the site of the former Magistrates Court on Salisbury Road, will also come forward for housing.
- 8.23 Nevertheless, additional greenfield land will be required for housing development but there are a limited number of potential options for further growth<sup>237</sup> due to environmental constraints. Much of the land around Blandford is constrained by the Dorset AONB, the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the floodplain of the River Stour. Within these constraints, there are three main options for further growth, which are:
- land to the west of Blandford St Mary and west of Blandford Forum, largely outside the Dorset AONB (with capacity for about 500 dwellings);
  - land to the south-east of Blandford St Mary, outside both AONBs (with capacity for about 300 dwellings); and
  - land to the north-east of Blandford Forum beyond the bypass outside, but surrounded by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (with capacity for about 800 dwellings).
- 8.24 The Council's preferred approach is to develop land to the south-east and to the west of Blandford St Mary. Development in these locations would be more accessible to facilities and services and would have less impact on the natural and historic environment than the other option. These issues are discussed in more detail in the Market Towns: Site Selection Background Paper.
- 8.25 Specific sites to take forward housing growth in Blandford will be identified in the Local Plan Part 2. The allocation of specific sites will need to be supported by site-based studies including Site Level Flood Risk Assessments and Transport

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<sup>236</sup> The settlement boundaries around Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary are shown on Inset Maps 2 and 2A of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003.

<sup>237</sup> Potential housing sites around Blandford are identified in the North Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2010, North Dorset District Council (August 2011).

Assessments. Further sites may come forward through the preparation of neighbourhood plans.

### Supporting Economic Development

- 8.26 The general economic prospects for North Dorset were outlined in the 2008 Workspace Strategy,<sup>238</sup> which was updated in 2012 in respect of employment land projections<sup>239</sup>. The latter study indicates that in order for job growth to match housing growth at Blandford there is a need for at least 6 hectares of employment land to be provided by 2031. The 2012 Workspace Strategy Update showed that there was more than sufficient land already identified to meet these needs, although some of the 10 hectares available in Blandford<sup>240</sup> has subsequently been granted consent for retail uses.
- 8.27 The 2003 Local Plan allocated 5.1 hectares of employment land off Shaftesbury Lane, of which some 4.8 hectares remained in 2011. About 1.1 hectares of this site has subsequently been given planning permission for a mixed-use scheme, including an Asda supermarket and a petrol filling station. The remainder of this site will be brought forward for employment uses. 0.4 hectares of land on Stour Park now forms part of a planning consent to extend the existing Tesco store in that location. About 3 hectares of the mixed-use regeneration scheme for the Brewery site will provide a range of employment opportunities. A new brewery building (occupying 0.3 hectares) has recently been constructed and is now operational on the site. Other smaller areas of undeveloped employment land exist at Blandford Heights.
- 8.28 Together, these sites will provide a range and choice of sites to meet the town's needs for employment land until 2031. The provision of this land will help to maintain and enhance the town's employment base and give existing and new residents the opportunity to work locally, rather than having to commute to Poole or Bournemouth. The introduction of fibre optic high speed broadband will also help to consolidate Blandford's economic role in the south of the District.
- 8.29 All these sites (other than the Brewery site, which was recognised as having the potential for mixed-use regeneration) were considered to be fit for purpose in the Council's employment land review (ELR)<sup>241</sup>. The retention of existing and developing industrial estates continues to be supported, but the Council now

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<sup>238</sup> Bournemouth Dorset Poole Workspace Strategy and Delivery plan - GVA Grimley (2008).

<sup>239</sup> Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study Employment land projections update 2012 - Dorset County Council (March 2012).

<sup>240</sup> Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study Employment land projections update 2012 - Dorset County Council (March 2012).

<sup>241</sup> Employment Land Review: Review of Existing Sites, North Dorset District Council (April 2007).

has a more flexible approach to the non-B Class uses that may be permitted on such sites, as set out in Policy 11 - Economy. Additional sites could be brought forward as part of the neighbourhood planning process, augmenting the allocated sites that will be identified in the Local Plan Part 2.

- 8.30 Blandford Camp is the home of the Royal School of Signals and is a major training facility for service personnel. This was due to change with the proposed relocation of the training function to Wales, but those plans were scrapped in 2010, pending further review. Defence Estates had previously identified Blandford Camp as a Core Site (which meant that the site would remain in military use for the foreseeable future) with potential to consolidate the Signals presence<sup>242</sup>. However, the further review of military training has increased the uncertainty about how its role might change during the plan period.
- 8.31 In the event that existing buildings or other previously developed parts of Blandford Camp become available for non-military uses, the Council will investigate the possibility of using these areas for additional employment use in the longer-term, if needed.
- 8.32 Blandford town centre provides a range of shops and other services for local people. The main convenience outlets in the town centre are the Morrisons supermarket off Greyhound Square (known locally as Greyhound Yard) and a small Iceland store in Salisbury Street. The Co-operative had an edge-of-centre supermarket to the south-east of East Street now earmarked as an M&S food store with another, smaller Co-operative store in a more suburban location on Salisbury Road. A Tesco supermarket occupies an out-of-town site, on Stour Park in Blandford St Mary.
- 8.33 The town centre has reasonable representation from national multiples (such as Boots, W H Smith, Argos and Holland and Barrett) and a wide range of independent retailers, both convenience and comparison outlets, mostly occupying the town's smaller stores. The town also has range of other uses such as banks, estate agents, public houses and restaurants.
- 8.34 The Joint Retail Study<sup>243</sup> identified a need for additional convenience goods floorspace in Blandford, but recognised that this need could be met in full if the store now occupied by Morrisons supermarket were to re-open. Since the study

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<sup>242</sup> The Royal School of Signals, Blandford was identified as a Core Site in Annex B of the Defence Estates Development Plan 2008 – Defence Estates (June 2008). Paragraph 13 stated 'The Core Estate consists of Core Locations that are either: large bases or groups of sites that have an indefinite operational future; or individual Core Sites, which are expected to support Defence outputs for at least 15 years'. The Estates Development Plan 2009 updates the previous Plan and states that 'Once vacated by Defence Training Rationalisation in around 2013 there is the potential to backfill the site and create a Signals centre of gravity through co-locating 10 and 14 Sig Regts at Blandford.'

<sup>243</sup> Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

was undertaken this store has re-opened and Iceland and the Co-operative have also opened new stores in the town, providing adequate additional floorspace to meet the town's convenience shopping needs up to 2031.

- 8.35 The amount of additional convenience goods floorspace in Blandford will increase further with the extension of the Tesco supermarket at Stour Park<sup>244</sup> and the new Asda supermarket off Shaftesbury Lane on the northern edge of the town<sup>245</sup>.
- 8.36 The Joint Retail Study identified a need for additional comparison goods floorspace in Blandford. It also identified 18 shop units that were vacant at the time and could provide a further 1,000 square metres gross of additional floorspace for either convenience or comparison goods, if brought back into use. In addition, the consent for the Asda supermarket allows one third of the floorspace to be used for selling comparison goods<sup>246</sup>.
- 8.37 Land just beyond the eastern edge of Blandford Town Centre, including the former Co-operative store off Langton Road, has some potential for providing further additional convenience or comparison goods floorspace. Although much of this area is already protected by a flood defence scheme, any future scheme would need to take full account of flood risk, both from the River Stour and the Pimperne Brook.
- 8.38 South of Market Place and East Street long burgage plots<sup>247</sup> extend down to the River Stour. There may be some limited potential to extend existing retail outlets in this location, but in addition to the flooding issues, any scheme here would also have to have regard to the potential impact on the historic character and visual context of the town centre.
- 8.39 While the primary and secondary shopping frontages (as defined in the 2003 Local Plan) will continue to be used for development management purposes they will be reviewed in the Local Plan Part 2. This will also define a town centre boundary, which is important in relation to national policy and the sequential approach to the location of town centre uses. Alternatively, the neighbourhood plan group may choose to review shopping frontages and/or delineate a town centre boundary.

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<sup>244</sup> The extension to Tesco gained permission in 2012 and will increase the stores floorspace from 2,273m<sup>2</sup> to 3,941m<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>245</sup> Planning permission was granted in March 2013 for a 2,300m<sup>2</sup> Asda supermarket and petrol filling station on land off Salisbury Lane.

<sup>246</sup> This equates to potential additional comparison goods floorspace of about 770m<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>247</sup> Burgage plots are tracts of land within the medieval town which were allocated to the burgesses, who were freemen of the town, with narrow frontage development and long rear gardens. The plots are based directly on the ploughland strips of the pre-existing agrarian settlement.

- 8.40 There is a growing recognition of the importance of tourism to North Dorset's economy and in Blandford specifically. The Council will consider positively applications for development that support tourism and are compatible with the town's historic character.

### **Infrastructure**

- 8.41 Within Blandford, the emphasis in terms of grey infrastructure will be on providing better facilities for walking and cycling between residential areas and key destinations, such as the town centre, employment sites, schools and other community facilities. At present, the brewery is a private site which acts as a barrier between Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary. The mixed-use regeneration of the site will enable pedestrian and cycle links between the two parts of the settlement to be improved.
- 8.42 Public transport, cycling and walking links with the surrounding villages (and Blandford Camp) also need to be improved in order for Blandford to maintain its function as a service centre for the surrounding area. Parts of the former Somerset and Dorset Railway line have been transformed into the North Dorset Trailway, which now extends northwards from Blandford to Sturminster Newton. Better linkage is required to the part of the Trailway south of Blandford, which is likely to include a crossing of the A354 and improved signage through the town. Any scheme to develop the land south-east of Blandford St. Mary should establish the Trailway on the line of the former railway. A route for the Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall bypass should be safeguarded within the site and will be defined in Part 2 of the Local Plan.
- 8.43 It is intended that the Corn Exchange in the town centre be refurbished so that it can function as the main community venue for the whole town, a key social infrastructure component. In addition, neighbourhood facilities are required in the northern part of the town and at Blandford St Mary. At Blandford St Mary a facility will be provided as part of the regeneration of the Brewery site.
- 8.44 Blandford Leisure Centre offers a wide range of indoor and some outdoor sport activities to the local community in the south of the District. These facilities will be retained and upgraded during the plan period.
- 8.45 Residents have stressed that the growth of Blandford will require improvements to school provision. Dorset County Council has indicated that there is a need for a further 2 forms of entry (2FE) for primary education in Blandford. Feasibility work has shown that this can be achieved through careful use of the existing capacity within the school pyramid and by extending the existing Archbishop Wake Primary School and either extending the Milldown Primary School or providing one new 2FE primary school in the town. In addition the existing primary school in Pimperne, which also serves the Blandford school pyramid, is being replaced.



- 8.46 Following direct consultation with all surgeries in 2012, the Whitecliff Surgery in Blandford responded that healthcare provision is already under pressure and that a new or improved/extended surgery is required. Potential growth in Blandford will require additional medical provision which can either be provided through expansion of the existing medical centre or by the development of a new surgery. If necessary, land can be allocated through the Local Plan Part 2 or the neighbourhood planning process. Blandford Community Hospital also provides many services to people in the local area. The Council supports the retention of the community hospital and the enhancement of the range of healthcare services offered.
- 8.47 The main areas for informal recreation at Blandford are the Milldown to the north-west of the town, the North Dorset Trailway through the town and Stour Meadows between Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary. These main sites, other smaller greenspaces and green links, together with other new green infrastructure items provided with new development will provide the basis for developing a green infrastructure strategy for the town.
- 8.48 There is a need in Blandford for further sports pitches, particularly football pitches<sup>248</sup>. Land to the north of the bypass was allocated for this purpose in the 2003 Local Plan and a feasibility study<sup>249</sup> was produced with a view to taking this scheme forward. The Council has attempted to pursue the implementation of this project but without success. Consequently, Blandford Football Club, Blandford Rugby Club and the Town Council are developing an alternative approach that re-arranges the use by clubs of Larksmead Playing Field, Park Road Recreation Ground and land at Blandford School. Dorset County Council is providing a new Astroturf sports pitch and floodlit netball court at Blandford School which will be available for community use, including by local football and rugby teams.
- 8.49 The Council will seek to conserve and manage existing green spaces and aims to improve the connectivity, quality and functionality of such sites and links at Blandford, in line with Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. The Council will work with the neighbourhood plan group in developing a green infrastructure strategy for the town and, if required, additional land will be allocated either through the Local Plan Part 2 or through the neighbourhood planning process.

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<sup>248</sup> As identified in Open Space Audit & Assessment of Local Need - Strategic Leisure (February 2006)

<sup>249</sup> Blandford United Football Club, Facility Development (January 2009).

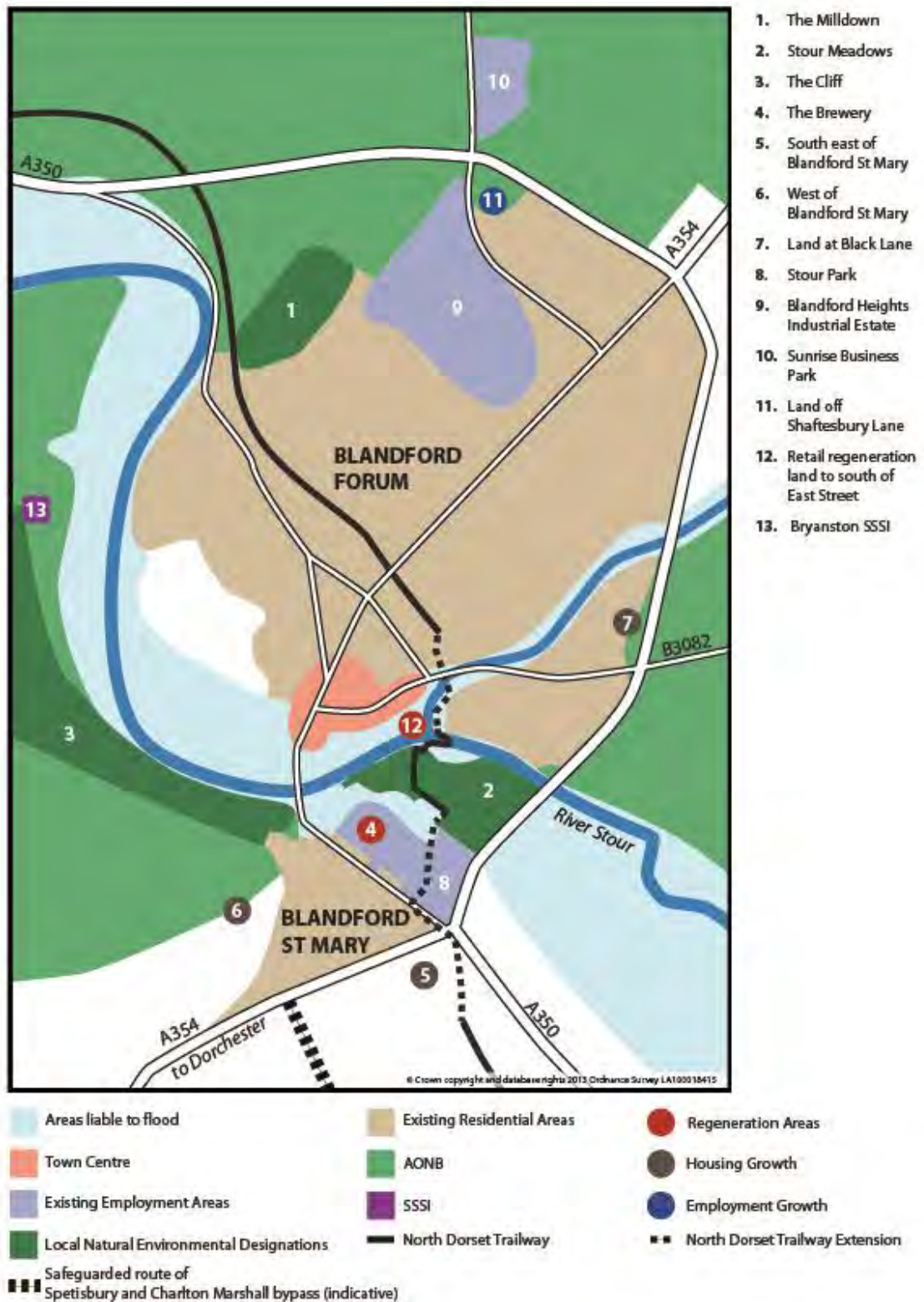


Figure 8.1: Blandford Inset Diagram

## **POLICY 16: BLANDFORD**

### **Sustainable Development Strategy**

Blandford will maintain its role as the main service centre in the south of the district through:

- a development and redevelopment within the settlement boundary; and
- b extensions, primarily of housing to the south-east and to the west of Blandford St Mary; and
- c employment uses on land within the bypass on the northern edge of the town and the mixed-use regeneration of the Brewery site close to the town centre.

Growth will be taken forward in ways which respect the town's environmental constraints, support its role, function and identity, and contribute to making it more self-contained. Blandford's distinctive natural and historic character will be retained and enhanced.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

The impact of flooding and climate change on the town will be addressed by:

- d taking account of the risks of fluvial, groundwater and surface water flooding in new development; and
- e incorporating sustainable drainage systems into new developments; and
- f the protection and management of valuable groundwater resources.

The town's natural and historic built environment will be protected and enhanced.

### **Meeting Housing Needs**

At least 1,200 homes will be provided at Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary during the period 2011 - 2031. In addition to infilling and redevelopment within the settlement boundary, Blandford's housing needs will be met through:

- g mixed-use regeneration of the Brewery site; and
- h the development of land to the south east of Blandford St Mary; and
- i the development of land to the west of Blandford St Mary (at Lower Bryanston Farm and Dorchester Hill).

## **POLICY 16 (CONT'D): BLANDFORD**

Development of land at Lower Bryanston Farm and Dorchester Hill should only commence once a mitigation package (that includes details of implementation measures) has been agreed to the satisfaction of Natural England.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

Employment needs in the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through:

- j the mixed-use regeneration of the Brewery site; and
- k the development of land off Shaftesbury Lane; and
- l the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and
- m the retention of existing employment sites.

In the period up to 2031, additional retail floorspace will be provided through:

- n the extension of the existing Tesco supermarket at Stour Park; and
- o the provision of a new supermarket off Shaftesbury Lane.

Town centre regeneration will embrace a range of town centre uses, not only retail and commercial but community and leisure as well as residential uses, and will be encouraged. An important element of town centre regeneration will be land to the south of East Street, including land around the existing retail store. On appropriate sites, all development and redevelopment schemes which support town centre regeneration, such as the extension of existing retail units south of Market Place and East Street, will be viewed positively within the recognised constraints of heritage and flooding considerations. The emerging neighbourhood plan for Blandford will have a key role to play in identifying regeneration opportunities in the town.

### **Infrastructure**

In the period up to 2031, grey infrastructure to support growth will include:

- p the provision and enhancement of walking and cycling links within Blandford between residential areas and key destinations, such as the town centre, employment sites, schools and other community facilities; and
- q the provision and enhancement of public transport, cycling and walking links between Blandford and nearby villages (and Blandford Camp); and

### **POLICY 16 (CONT'D): BLANDFORD**

- r the improvement and extension of the North Dorset Trailway along, or close to, the route of the former Somerset and Dorset Railway line for cycling and walking; and
- s the identification of a safeguarded route for the Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall Bypass as part of the development of the land south east of Blandford St Mary;

In the period up to 2031, social infrastructure to support growth will include:

- t the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange to form the main community venue for the town and the provision of neighbourhood halls to serve new development in the northern part of the town and Blandford St Mary; and
- u the retention of Blandford Leisure Centre in community use and the upgrading of its facilities; and
- v the extension of the Archbishop Wake school and either extension of the Milldown school or provision of a new 2 forms of entry primary school; and
- w a new doctors' surgery or the expansion or relocation of existing doctors' surgeries.

A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Blandford, focusing on linking existing sites (such as the Milldown and Stour Meadows) and providing new sites and links to serve the residents of both the new and existing developments in the town. New or improved facilities will include:

- x new sports pitches and associated facilities on land within the settlement boundary of Blandford.

## Policy 17 – Gillingham

### Introduction

- 8.50 Gillingham has been one of the fastest growing towns in the South West over the period from 1990 to 2010. Housing growth has been matched by economic growth as the town has managed to attract and retain a range of general industrial businesses. However, rapid growth has not been without its problems, such as the limited retail offer in the town centre, a lack of community facilities and infrastructure, and limited success in achieving regeneration.
- 8.51 A detailed assessment of the town’s growth potential for the period up to 2026 and beyond<sup>250</sup> underpins much of Policy 17. The assessment draws on many of the evidence base studies already produced and identifies the potential for medium- and longer-term growth. The assessment recognises the potential for Gillingham to develop its economic and service centre functions in the medium term and the relative lack of environmental constraints adjoining the existing urban area. However, it also identifies a number of issues that may limit long-term (post-2026) growth including economic potential, town centre capacity, transport and other infrastructure issues and environmental constraints.

### Sustainable Development Strategy

- 8.52 Gillingham’s role as the main service centre in the north of the District will be enhanced through higher quality housing growth, the creation of a more diverse economy and the provision of a better range of services and community facilities. This growth will help to consolidate the town’s role as a key service centre.
- 8.53 The parish of Gillingham is producing a neighbourhood plan, which will be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider area as set out in the Local Plan Part 1. The agreed themes that will underpin the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan vision are closely aligned with the components of sustainable communities as identified in the Egan Review<sup>251</sup>.
- 8.54 The complementary approach of the Local Plan and the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan will ensure the town benefits from growth to become a vibrant and thriving place to live and work.
- 8.55 The key spatial aspects of this strategy will be:
- a strategic site allocation (SSA) to the south of the town delivering the majority of the town’s housing and employment growth along with

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<sup>250</sup> Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

<sup>251</sup> The Egan Review – Skills for Sustainable Communities (2004).

supporting infrastructure. Proposals for the SSA are set out in more detail in Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation;

- a range and choice of employment sites in various locations around the town to support a more diverse economy;
- an enhanced town centre supported by the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road area resulting in better integration of shopping, education, leisure, cultural and transport functions; and
- an enhanced green infrastructure network focused primarily on the river corridors linking new development to key locations such as the town centre.

8.56 The strategy for the town will require the bringing forward of major new greenfield sites. New development should be supported by the necessary infrastructure and community facilities, both to meet the overall needs of the expanded town and the more local needs associated with each new development area.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

8.57 Gillingham sits within a basin at the confluence of three rivers, namely the River Lodden, the Shreen Water and the River Stour. Higher ground surrounds the town at: Bowridge Hill to the east; Hungerhill and Duncliffe to the south; Thorngrove in the west; and Huntingford and Milton-on-Stour to the north. As a result of the topography, fluvial flooding is a key climate change-related issue that affects the town. The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment<sup>252</sup> shows that parts of Gillingham are at risk of flooding from the three rivers. Any proposal within the areas at risk of fluvial flooding in Gillingham would be subject to the sequential and exception tests in national policy, as explained in more detail in Policy 3 – Climate Change.

8.58 The development proposed at Gillingham will need to take account of flood risk from all sources and will have implications for the capacity of the natural environment and the sewer network to absorb surface water, especially during periods of heavy rainfall. All development will be planned and built to minimise the impact on the capacity of the natural environment to absorb water, through the provision of flood mitigation measures, such as sustainable drainage systems, in line with Policy 3 – Climate Change.

8.59 Gillingham has relatively few environmental constraints, but the town design statement (TDS) recognises the value local people place on the town's landscape setting, river corridors and views to the countryside<sup>253</sup>. New development will need to: maintain a sensitive transition between the town

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<sup>252</sup> Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Salisbury Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Halcrow Group Ltd (February 2008).

<sup>253</sup> See Design Guidelines 1, 3 and 4 in The Gillingham Town Design Statement, Gillingham Town Design Statement Steering Group (June 2012).

and surrounding rural areas; retain and enhance the river corridors; and avoid adversely affecting views out to the countryside.

- 8.60 The 2003 Local Plan identifies the Gillingham Royal Forest Project Area to the east of the town. Within the Royal Forest Project Area, which is a former deer park, the 2003 Local Plan<sup>254</sup> aims to enhance the landscape through additional woodland planting and promote low-key countryside recreation and tourism activities.
- 8.61 The Gillingham Conservation Area, which covers part of the town centre, was designated in 1985. It is centred on a cluster of listed buildings around The Square and St Mary's Church, the site of which has been occupied by a church since Saxon times<sup>255</sup>. Historic England is concerned about the effect of the economic downturn on Gillingham Conservation Area and is supportive of community efforts, which include the Gillingham Town Team and the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan Group, in tackling both the immediate issues and planning for longer-term solutions. The Wyke Conservation Area, to the west of the town was designated in 2012.
- 8.62 Two scheduled monuments (including King's Court Hill Fort) and several sites of archaeological importance are located in the Gillingham area. Excavations have shown archaeological artefacts that indicate there were possible settlements at Gillingham in Neolithic times.
- 8.63 The Council seeks to protect and improve the natural and historic environment of the town and all applications for development at Gillingham will need to consider the impact, and mitigation measures for the potential effects, on these features and designations.

### Meeting Housing Needs

- 8.64 Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy identifies Gillingham as one of the four main towns at which the vast majority of growth will be delivered. Policy 6 – Housing Distribution sets out that the four main towns will deliver housing to meet the District-wide need, and that Gillingham will deliver at least 2,200 dwellings over the plan period. It also identifies Gillingham SSA as a key strategic delivery mechanism to deliver housing up to 2031.
- 8.65 In Gillingham the Council will seek 25% affordable housing across the town and 25% will also be sought on the SSA site subject to viability testing.
- 8.66 The Gillingham Study<sup>256</sup> assessed a number of future growth scenarios for the town. The scenario that concentrated development to the south of the town

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<sup>254</sup> Policy GRF 1, Page 114, North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003.

<sup>255</sup> Gillingham: The Making of a Dorset Town, John Porter, Gillingham Local History Society (2011).

<sup>256</sup> Set out in Section 4 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Atkins (November 2009).



was identified as the most sustainable option. More detail on the selection of sites for growth at Gillingham is provided in the Market Towns: Site Selection Background Paper. The SSA will be released and developed in a coordinated and phased manner to ensure that the supporting infrastructure is provided in a timely manner and that issues such as landscape impact, flood risk, traffic growth and the provision of access are fully taken into account.

- 8.67 The allocation of the strategic site requires an extension to the settlement boundary. This extension to Gillingham is detailed on the proposals map accompanying Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation.
- 8.68 Infill and redevelopment within the settlement boundary will continue in the town during the plan period and other sites in Gillingham identified to meet housing needs include:
- land in the Station Road area, which will be regenerated with a mix of retail, employment and residential uses; and
  - land to the south and south-west of Bay.
- 8.69 Land in the Station Road area was identified as an employment site that can be released for regeneration<sup>257</sup>. Employment, retail, offices, and other town centre uses will form the primary uses for the site to support economic led regeneration. Residential use (particularly homes above offices and shops) will be permitted to complement the town centre uses at this edge-of-centre location.
- 8.70 The land at Bay will accommodate about 50 dwellings. Development will need to respect the character of Bay and should also include good links to the adjacent leisure and education uses and the town centre.
- 8.71 Further housing sites may be allocated through the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan.
- 8.72 For sites other than the SSA, more work will be required to determine the precise extent of the areas to be allocated in the Local Plan Part 2 or the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan. The allocation of any site will need to be supported by site-based studies including a Site Level Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, a Transport Assessment and a more detailed assessment of associated infrastructure requirements.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

- 8.73 An analysis of the economy of Gillingham in 2009 showed significant potential for further economic growth<sup>258</sup>. The past trends and future potential identified

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<sup>257</sup> Employment Land Review: Review of Existing Sites, North Dorset District Council (April 2007).

<sup>258</sup> As set out in Section 5 and Appendices A and B of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

in the study indicated that the economy of the town had the capacity to be able to expand faster than the economy of the wider sub-region<sup>259</sup>. This is desirable in order to support the town's enhanced role as the main service centre in the north of the District and to encourage greater self-containment.

- 8.74 The economy of Gillingham has grown rapidly from a small base with a strong focus on general industrial businesses, including manufacturing and distribution, and this type of business has generated lower-value employment with lower incomes, requiring lower levels of skills. In order to improve its performance in the future, the town needs to diversify its economy and encourage the creation and retention of knowledge-based industries. The introduction of high-speed broadband to Gillingham in 2013 should assist with this.

### Employment Land

- 8.75 Policy 11 – The Economy outlines the District-wide employment land situation and indicates that in order for job growth to match housing growth at Gillingham, there is a need for a minimum of 9.2 hectares of employment land to be provided by 2031. It is estimated that about 17.5 hectares of employment land is already available at Gillingham on sites already identified for employment use. The provision of a range and choice of employment sites will help to stimulate demand and these sites should be brought forward in step with housing development to provide a range of employment opportunities for residents and those migrating into the area, reduce the need for commuting, create a more balanced community and increase the self-containment of the settlement.
- 8.76 Mixed-use regeneration in the Station Road area (about 4.3 hectares, as identified in the Council's employment and Review) will provide a focus for office development among other town centre uses in a location close to the existing town centre. General industrial uses will be accommodated by the continuing development of the existing employment sites<sup>260</sup> at Kingsmead Business Park and Park Farm (about 3 hectares remaining) and the southern end of Brickfields Business Park (about 11.7 hectares).
- 8.77 Part of the Kingsmead Business Park to the east of Shaftesbury Road, and the adjacent employment site to the west of Shaftesbury Road, is the preferred location for a local centre for the SSA. Wherever the local centre for the SSA is located, it will generate employment in services provided at the local level, including local shops, a medical centre and a primary school.

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<sup>259</sup> The economic prospects of the Dorset Sub-region as a whole are analysed in the Bournemouth Dorset Poole Workspace Strategy and Delivery Plan, GVA Grimley (2008).

<sup>260</sup> As allocated in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003.

- 8.78 Sigma Aldrich, who own and occupy a large portion of Brickfields Business Park, has secured planning permission to build a new head office building on the southern end of the site. Any development nearby should respect the high quality design and landmark nature of the proposed new building. Higher value business will also be encouraged at vacant land (at least 1 hectare) on the existing Neal's Yard Remedies site at Peacemarsh, where Neal's Yard aspire to expand their existing high value business, and where any new development should complement the existing landmark building.
- 8.79 Diversification of the economy will need to be supported by other measures in order to make the town an attractive location for employers. Such measures will include: high quality education; workforce training; business support; and infrastructure improvements, such as the enhancement of the town centre and transport links.

### Retail, Other Town Centre Uses and Mixed-Use Regeneration

- 8.80 Gillingham's town centre is polycentric in nature with several hubs that accommodate different functions. These include:
- the main town centre shopping area on the High Street;
  - larger retail units at Station Road crossroads;
  - the 'anchor' supermarket (Waitrose) off Le Neubourg Way;
  - the historic core at the western end of the High Street;
  - education and leisure uses on Harding's Lane; and
  - the transport hub at Gillingham Station.
- 8.81 As the town grows it will be important to maintain and enhance these elements and to improve the linkages between them to create an expanded, more integrated and vibrant town centre capable of offering a better range of shops, services and facilities to the local population. Critical to this success will be the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road area for employment and retail, along with leisure and other main town centre uses, residential uses and the revitalisation of the town centre itself.
- 8.82 The Joint Retail Study shows that the town centre does not provide an adequate range of shops and other services for local people. Although the need for convenience shopping can be largely met by the three existing supermarkets (Waitrose, ASDA and Lidl), the town centre lacks national comparison retailers, clothing, footwear, jewellery and hobby shops and a department store. The Gillingham Study suggests that there is potential for a significant increase in retail provision with a strong focus on comparison goods. An enlarged town centre would also benefit from the provision of other additional main town centre uses such as leisure and entertainment, offices, arts, culture and tourism.

- 8.83 Key themes for regeneration are:
- the revitalisation of the High Street, based on the potential for the upgrading and provision of new retail units towards the eastern end and the potential for a wider range of town centre uses based on the attractive range of listed buildings at the western end (in the Gillingham Conservation Area);
  - the promotion of improved links between Waitrose and the town centre, and Station Road crossroads and the town centre, encouraging greater footfall particularly for the High Street and the new town centre public open space;
  - the mixed-use regeneration of the land between the town centre and the railway station to provide: employment opportunities (particularly office accommodation); an increased amount and improved range of mainly comparison shopping; improved leisure, cultural and community facilities to serve the town and surrounding area; and a limited amount of residential development (especially above shops and offices); and
  - the improvement of links between the town centre and the leisure and education facilities off School Lane and Harding's Lane.
- 8.84 By focusing regeneration and the provision of facilities, particularly town centre uses, on land close to the town centre and railway station, car dependence should be minimised and the use of other modes, including walking, cycling and public transport should be maximised.

### Grey Infrastructure

- 8.85 Gillingham is located in the Exeter to London strategic transport corridor, which includes both the A303 and a mainline railway. There are capacity issues with both of these routes, however recent infrastructure improvements on the mainline railway have improved service links and times and the Government has committed to a feasibility study for improvements to the A303. The Gillingham Study<sup>261</sup> recognises that some growth can be accommodated within the transport constraints, provided that measures are put in place to make the best use of existing infrastructure and manage demand. The study also recognises that significant improvements to the strategic road network (in particular the A303) would be required if the town is to grow further beyond 2026.
- 8.86 The proposed southern focus for growth means that most additional development will be relatively close to the town centre, employment opportunities and the railway station, which will both reduce the need for trips on the A303 and encourage journeys by train. Growth to the south of the town will give rise to capacity issues on both the New Road/Shafesbury Road

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<sup>261</sup> Transport issues are discussed in Section 7: Infrastructure and Gillingham's long term growth potential is discussed in Chapter 3 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

junction in the town and on the B3081 as it approaches Shaftesbury, but these problems can be overcome by a new road through the development linking the B3081 and B3092 to the south of the town and a link at Enmore Green from the B3081 to the A30, which would encourage its use as an alternative to the A303 for trips to Yeovil and Salisbury. More detail about transport improvements at Gillingham to support the SSA are set out in Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation. The Enmore Green Link is proposed under Policy 18 – Shaftesbury<sup>262</sup>.

8.87 In addition to this strategic approach to demand management in the Exeter to London strategic transport corridor, a series of more local transport improvements will be required to integrate new areas of development with the existing built-up area including:

- enhancements to the transport hub at the railway station to improve interconnectivity between different transport modes and car parking;
- improvements to the route between the railway station and the High Street to make it more attractive to pedestrians and cycle friendly;
- better pedestrian and cycle links between Waitrose, the High Street and new areas of retail and other employment and town centre development in the Station Road area;
- local road improvements around the town, including upgrades to signalised junctions, necessary to accommodate the increased traffic associated with growth; and
- provision of, and improvements to, cycleways and footpaths linking other towns and villages and new development to the town centre, employment sites and other key locations.

8.88 The Gillingham Study examined the issues of utilities provision<sup>263</sup> and indicated a need to upgrade foul sewers in a number of locations. Upgrading of pumping stations and the town's sewage treatment works are also likely to be required.

### **Social Infrastructure**

8.89 RiversMeet is Gillingham's community, culture, fitness and sport centre and also has the capacity to be extended to provide a new community hall. The existing building meets the town's current community and leisure needs; however, it is unlikely to be adequate to meet the needs of the growing population. Developers will be expected to contribute to the further improvement or expansion of the existing facilities at RiversMeet and the provision of a new community hall.

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<sup>262</sup> Policy SB 17 of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Revision) proposes a link at Enmore Green and an alignment is shown on Inset Map 37. The location and alignment of the proposed link may change as the proposal is worked up in more detail. Any revised scheme for the link will be shown in the Local Plan Part 2.

<sup>263</sup> Set out in Chapter 10 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

- 8.90 The scale of development to the south of the town will require a new local centre to be provided. This should include a new 2 forms of entry primary school and a doctor's surgery for about 2.5 full time equivalent General Practitioners. The local centre should also include other essential local facilities such as a community hall, local shops and a pre-school nursery.
- 8.91 The proposed growth of the town will also require the expansion of St Mary the Virgin Primary School and enhancement of the existing secondary school.

### **Green Infrastructure**

- 8.92 In 2005 the Three Rivers Partnership produced the Open Spaces Group Report for Gillingham<sup>264</sup>, which recognised the major contribution the corridors of the three rivers (the River Stour, the River Lodden and the Shreen Water) make to the character of the town. This is also recognised in the Gillingham TDS. A green infrastructure strategy will be prepared, based primarily on these corridors, setting out how a more integrated network of informal green spaces and rights of way around the town can be provided.
- 8.93 The provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in association with planned growth will contribute to this overall strategy, in particular: in areas within and close to the town centre; along the corridor of the River Lodden; and within proposed new development areas.
- 8.94 Land to the south of the High Street and to the rear of the Red Lion is subject to flooding and therefore not suitable for built development. However, it has recently been enhanced to become a town park, which both provides the opportunity for informal recreation in the town centre and a more attractive link between Waitrose and the High Street. RiversMeet and a range of associated outdoor leisure facilities are located just to the north of the High Street. These facilities will be retained and the outdoor facilities will be enhanced through an increased level of pitch provision to meet the town's longer-term needs.
- 8.95 The corridor of the River Lodden runs through, or adjacent to, much of the new development proposed at Gillingham and this provides the opportunity to adopt a comprehensive approach to its future use and management all the way from Brickfields Business Park in the south to the sport's pitches to the north of the railway. The green corridor should be designed to provide a landscape setting for new and existing development, a corridor for wildlife and an alternative route for pedestrians and cyclists to various locations to the south and east of the town.
- 8.96 Adequate formal open space, both in terms of sports pitches and play areas will need to be provided in association with the proposed new housing

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<sup>264</sup> Open Spaces Group Report for Gillingham, Dorset, The Three Rivers Partnership (2005).

developments. These spaces should be linked into the overall green infrastructure network, where possible.

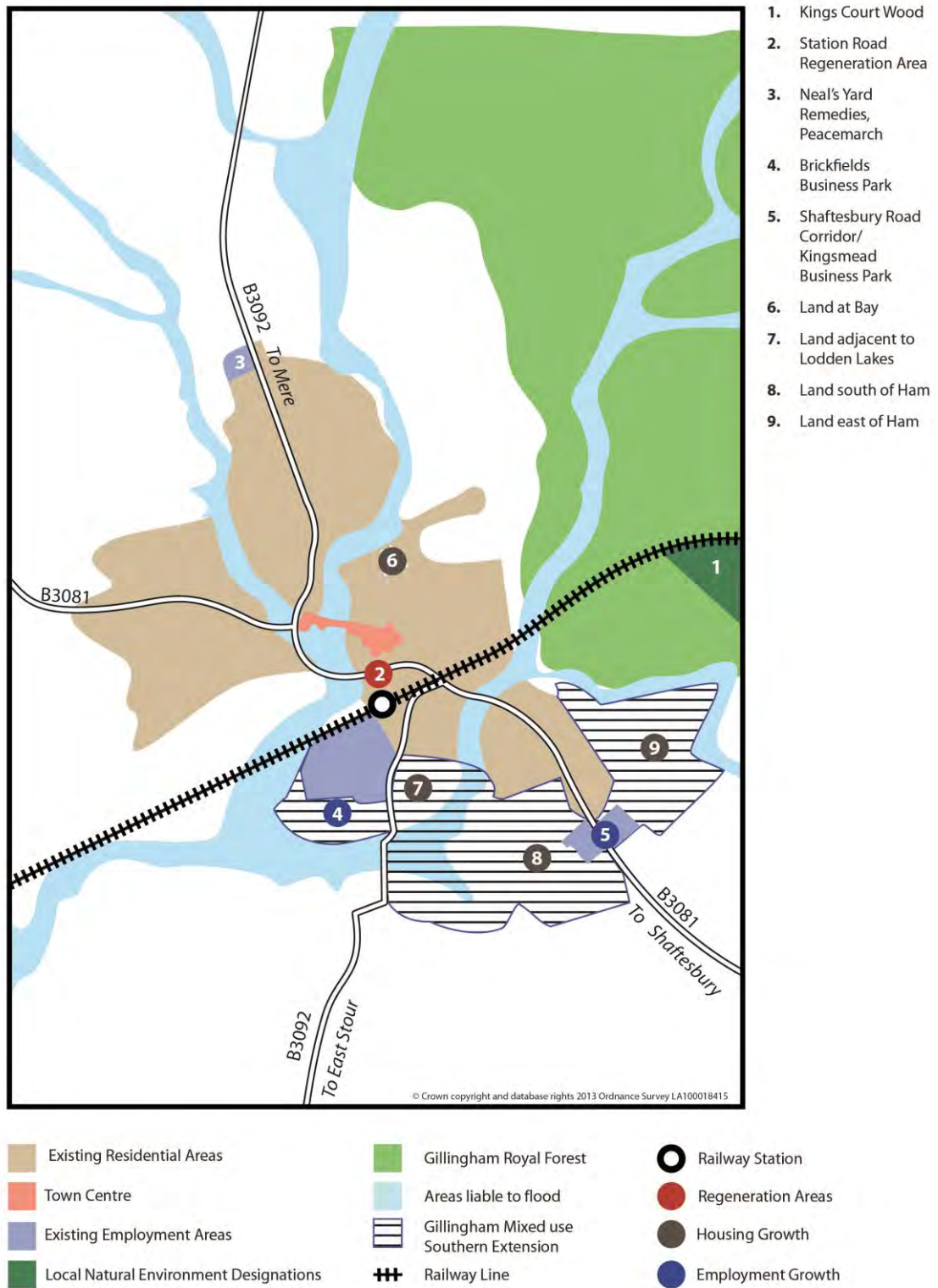


Figure 8.2: Gillingham Inset Diagram



## **POLICY 17: GILLINGHAM**

### **Sustainable Development Strategy**

Gillingham's role as the main service centre in the north of the District will be maintained and enhanced through:

- a development and redevelopment within the settlement boundary , including the enhancement of the town centre and the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road area; and
- b the development of a strategic site allocation (SSA) to the south of the town; and
- c the development of a range and choice of employment sites, including the southern extension of Brickfields Business Park; and
- d an enhanced green infrastructure network focused primarily on the three river corridors through the town.

Growth will be taken forward in ways which respect the town's environmental constraints, support its role, function and identity and contribute to making it more self-contained. The complementary approach of the Local Plan and the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan will ensure the town benefits from growth to become a more vibrant and thriving place to live and work.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

The impact of flooding and climate change on the town will be addressed by:

- e taking account of the risks of fluvial, groundwater and surface water flooding in new development; and
- f the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems into new developments.

The town's natural and historic built environment will be protected and enhanced.

### **Meeting Housing Needs**

At least 2,200 homes will be provided at Gillingham during the period 2011 – 2031. In addition to infilling and regeneration within the settlement boundary, Gillingham's housing needs will be met through:

- g the development of a SSA to the south of the town, including on land adjacent to Lodden Lakes; land east of Ham, and land south of Ham; and

**POLICY 17 (CONT'D): GILLINGHAM**

- h new homes, particularly flats above shops and offices, to support the mixed-use regeneration of land at Station Road to the south of the town centre; and
- i the development of the land to the south and south-west of Bay.

**Supporting Economic Development**

Employment needs in the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through:

- j the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road area, to the south of the town centre, for a range of employment uses, particularly offices; and
- k the development of land to the south of Brickfields Business Park for a range of employment uses; and
- l the development of land on Kingsmead Business Park for a local centre and/or for a range of employment uses; and
- m the development of land at Neal's Yard Remedies, Peacemarsh for the expansion of Neal's Yard Remedies or alternatively the provision of other high value businesses, and
- n the retention of existing employment sites.

In the period up to 2031, additional retail floorspace will be brought forward:

- o with a focus on comparison retailing as part of the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road Area; and
- p as local shops forming an integral part of the local centre to serve the SSA to the south of the town, in accordance with Policy 21.

The main focus for additional retail provision and other town centre uses will be land within the existing Town Centre and land proposed for mixed-use regeneration at Station Road.

**Infrastructure**

In the period up to 2031, grey infrastructure to support growth will include:

- q a new link road between the B3081 and B3092 through the SSA to the south of the town; and

### **POLICY 17 (CONT'D): GILLINGHAM**

- r the enhancement of the railway station as a public transport hub and the improvement of the town centre's pedestrian and cycle links with the railway station and Waitrose; and
- s the integration of new areas of housing development into the existing transport network through the provision of new routes/upgrading of existing routes, including pedestrian and cycle links to key destinations, such as the town centre, employment areas, schools and other community facilities; and
- t upgrading of foul sewers and the town's sewage treatment works.

In the period up to 2031, social infrastructure to support growth will include:

- u further improvement or expansion of the existing facilities at RiversMeet and the provision of a new community hall on the site; and
- v a new local centre to be provided as part of the SSA to the south of the town, which will include a new community hall, a new 2 form entry primary school and a new doctors' surgery; and
- w the expansion of St Mary's The Virgin Primary School and the expansion of Gillingham High School.

A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Gillingham focusing primarily on the corridors of the River Stour, River Lodden and the Shreen Water.

In the period up to 2031, green infrastructure to support proposed growth will include:

- x the retention, enhancement and extension of the sports pitches at and around the secondary school; and
- y the provision of a green corridor along the valley of the River Lodden extending from Brickfields Business Park through new and existing housing developments at Ham to the sports pitches north of the railway line; and,
- z the provision of formal and informal open spaces, sports pitches, play spaces and allotments in new areas of housing development, including the SSA.

## Policy 18 – Shaftesbury

### Introduction

- 8.97 Shaftesbury together with Gillingham serves the needs of the northern part of the District and the parts of Wiltshire immediately east of the town. The historic core occupies a hilltop location and its attractive town centre supports a good range of shops and is a popular tourist destination. In recent years growth at Shaftesbury has primarily been on land to the east of the town that was allocated in the 2003 Local Plan. Most of the land here has been granted planning permission (679 dwellings in total) and its design and layout has been guided by a development brief<sup>265</sup> that was adopted in 2003 following extensive public consultation.
- 8.98 It has long been recognised that the potential for expansion at Shaftesbury is limited by environmental (mainly landscape and biodiversity) constraints and the limited number of potentially developable sites where the town could expand further<sup>266</sup>. It is important that the remaining development opportunities are taken forward in ways which support the role, function and identity of the town, particularly in the light of the proposed expansion of nearby Gillingham.

### Sustainable Development Strategy

- 8.99 Shaftesbury's role, together with Gillingham, is to serve the needs of the northern part of the District and neighbouring parts of Wiltshire and this will be maintained. Its distinctive character will be retained and enhanced in order to build on its growing reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism. The expansion of the town, particularly on land to the east, should enhance its scope for self-containment by bringing forward both housing and employment development.
- 8.100 The key spatial aspects of this strategy will be:
- focusing housing largely on the flat plateau land to the east of the town, north of the A30 and on two smaller sites to the north of the town on either side of the A350;
  - locating B Class employment uses (including offices) on land to the south of the A30;
  - ensuring that improved public transport, walking and cycling links integrate the new development to the east of the town with the existing built-up area;

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<sup>265</sup> Development Brief 2003: land to the Eastern Side of Shaftesbury, adopted as a supplementary planning guidance note in 2003.

<sup>266</sup> More detail is provided in the Market Towns Site Selection Background Paper.

- making the land to the east of the town centre and the west of Christy's Lane the focus for regeneration that could include community facilities with supporting retail and housing provision;
  - ensuring that all development, including infilling, is accommodated within landscape and biodiversity constraints; and
  - ensuring that all development enhances the town's historic character.
- 8.101 To contribute to meeting the longer-term growth needs of the town the District Council will work with Wiltshire Council, under the duty to cooperate, to bring forward the early consideration of development (residential and/or employment) on land adjoining the identified site to the south-east of Wincombe Business Park.
- 8.102 The strategy for the town will see the building out of sites already allocated or with planning permission for housing in the early years and a more limited amount of additional greenfield land later in the plan period. Growth at Shaftesbury will be supported by the necessary infrastructure and community facilities, both to meet the needs of the expanded town and to ensure that its role and function are not adversely affected by larger scale growth at nearby Gillingham.
- 8.103 In September 2013 the parish area of Shaftesbury together with the neighbouring parish areas of Melbury Abbas and Cann were designated as a neighbourhood area. The local community are now preparing a neighbourhood plan to address the local issues affecting the town and two parishes immediately to the south.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

- 8.104 The main issues for Shaftesbury resulting from climate change are likely to include surface water flooding and the implications of development on groundwater resources.
- 8.105 During periods of rainfall, the location and topography of the town mean that water running from the roads and other hard surfaces impacts on the drainage system. New development in the town will need to recognise this and flood mitigation measures such as sustainable drainage systems (in line with Policy 3 – Climate Change) will need to be included in any development.
- 8.106 Much of Shaftesbury lies within a Groundwater Source Protection Area, which needs to be protected from any threats of pollution and demands for water from groundwater sources will need to be managed. All development in the town will need to comply with the principles of the Environment Agency's Groundwater Protection: Policy and Practice (GP3) publication<sup>267</sup> and water efficiency will be encouraged (in line with Policy 3 – Climate Change).

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<sup>267</sup> <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/144346.aspx>.

- 8.107 At over 718 feet (219m) above sea level, Shaftesbury is one of the highest towns in England. The elevated location has been a determining factor in the evolution of the town. Highly visible from the surrounding countryside, the steep, wooded slopes of the escarpment and the surrounding countryside are protected by a number of national and local designations. These include numerous sites of special scientific interest, identified areas of fragmented ancient woodlands, sites of nature conservation importance and a local nature reserve at Castle Hill. Nearby there is also the internationally protected Fontmell and Melbury Down Special Area of Conservation.
- 8.108 With evidence of a settlement in Shaftesbury as far back as Saxon times it is no surprise that the town contains a number of scheduled monuments and a large range of listed buildings. To protect and enhance its historic character the town centre was designated a conservation area in 1970 and this was subsequently extended and specific character areas were identified<sup>268</sup>.
- 8.109 The Council seeks to protect and improve the natural and historic environment of the town and all applications for growth will need to consider the impact on these features and designations.
- 8.110 Although Shaftesbury is not located within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB any development will need to consider the potential impacts on the nearby designation and in particular the views to and from the AONB. A landscape impact assessment of potential housing sites at Blandford and Shaftesbury was undertaken in 2010 which considered potential impacts on the setting of the nearby AONB.

### Meeting Housing Needs

- 8.111 It is anticipated that at least 1,140 dwellings will be built in Shaftesbury between 2011 and 2031. At the beginning of the plan period housing needs will be met largely through the development of land to the east of the town where planning permission has already been granted. However, increased densities on parts of the site have resulted in the dwellings agreed in the original outline permission and allocation being accommodated without the whole of the site being developed, which has led to an increase in the overall capacity of the site.
- 8.112 This increased capacity, which is generally to the north of the site, together with the land immediately south of Wincombe Lane (known locally as the 'Hopkins Land') will result in additional development on land to the east of Shaftesbury later in the plan period. Two further extensions have also been identified to the north of the town. These greenfield sites are:
- land to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and
  - land to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park.

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<sup>268</sup> These Character Areas are identified and described the Shaftesbury section of the 2003 Local Plan.

- 8.113 Further housing will be delivered through the mixed-use regeneration of land to the east of the town centre together with general infilling and redevelopment within the settlement boundary during the plan period.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

- 8.114 Policy 11 – The Economy outlines the District-wide employment land situation and indicates that in order for job growth to match housing growth at Shaftesbury, there is a need for a minimum of 7.1 hectares of employment land to be provided by 2031. This level of provision will support the town’s employment base and will also help to maintain its low level of out-commuting and give existing and new residents the opportunity to live and work locally.
- 8.115 A key strategic site for employment is the 7 hectares of land to the south of the A30 that is allocated in the 2003 Local Plan. This site remains fit for purpose as it meets the needs of the market and is in a sustainable location, as demonstrated in the Council’s ELR<sup>269</sup>, but the Council now support a more flexible approach to non-B Class uses on this and other employment sites in the District, as set out in Policy 11 – Economy.
- 8.116 In addition to new employment sites the Council will continue to support and will seek to retain the existing industrial estates (which are fully occupied) to provide job opportunities for local people. The Local Plan Part 2 will take forward the allocation of the land to the south of the A30 as a strategic employment site. Additional sites could also be allocated through the neighbourhood planning process.
- 8.117 In addition to allocated employment land, Shaftesbury has a vibrant town centre that provides a range of shops and services for local people. The historic built environment, including the famous Gold Hill, also makes the town centre a tourist and cultural destination. In the town centre there are a good range of both convenience and comparison shops together with a high proportion of gift related shops. There is one main convenience outlet on the edge of the town centre (Tesco) just off Coppice Street and a smaller supermarket (the Co-operative) in the centre of town on Bell Street.
- 8.118 A Retail Study<sup>270</sup> identified needs for limited additional convenience goods floor-space but a greater need for comparison goods shops in the town. Due to the compact historic layout and topographical constraints of the town there is limited scope for further retail expansion within the town centre itself, however, the retail study indicates that the mixed-use regeneration of the livestock market to the east of the town centre (beyond Tesco) and possibly

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<sup>269</sup> Employment Land Review: Review of Existing Sites, North Dorset District Council (April 2007).

<sup>270</sup> Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

also the postal sorting office on Angel Square could provide sufficient additional retail floorspace to meet the town's longer-term needs<sup>271</sup>.

- 8.119 The primary and secondary shopping frontages, as defined in the 2003 Local Plan will continue to be used for development management purposes, but will be reviewed in the Local Plan Part 2. A town centre boundary, which is important in relation to national policy and the sequential approach to the location of town centre uses, will be defined as part of the Local Plan Part 2. Alternatively the review of shopping frontages and the definition of a town centre boundary may be issues that the neighbourhood plan group choose to deal with.
- 8.120 The Council recognises the role of tourism in Shaftesbury and will consider positively opportunities for development that will complement the historic character of the town and will ensure that it remains competitive in the tourist market.

### Infrastructure

- 8.121 Two key elements of the strategy for the town are the greenfield expansion to the east and north and the mixed-use regeneration of land to the east of the town centre. To ensure these elements are integrated improved pedestrian and cycle links between the new housing and the expanded town centre are required and measures to make the existing A350 (Christy's Lane) less of a barrier to pedestrian and cycle movements need to be introduced. Making Christy's Lane less of a 'road' and more of a 'street' is identified as an opportunity in the Development Brief for land to the Eastern Side of Shaftesbury.
- 8.122 The proposed level of development at Shaftesbury for the period up to 2031 can be accommodated without the need for an outer eastern bypass, which would relieve traffic on the existing A350. However, the line of the road (as shown in the 2003 Local Plan) remains protected from development as there is no other realistic option for traffic relief if it is required in the longer term. The route of the road will be reviewed in Part 2 of the Local Plan or through the neighbourhood planning process.
- 8.123 Proposed growth at Gillingham will increase traffic flows on the B3081 between the town and Shaftesbury. The Gillingham Study<sup>272</sup> indicates that the tight bend at the junction with the Motcombe Road limits the overall capacity of the whole

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<sup>271</sup> These sites are shown in Appendix A of Volume 2: North Dorset Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (March 2008).

<sup>272</sup> Transport issues are discussed in Section 6 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).



route between the two towns. The study recommends the provision of a new link between the B3081 and the A30 at Enmore Green<sup>273</sup>. This will both make it easier for traffic from Gillingham to gain access to the A30 and improve road safety and amenity at the Shaftesbury end of the B3081.

- 8.124 Parking has been identified as an issue by local residents and this will be examined either through the Local Plan Part 2 or in the neighbourhood plan being produced for Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann.
- 8.125 In terms of social infrastructure for the town the need for a new community hall has been identified to serve the whole of Shaftesbury, but predominately to meet the needs of an incoming population. Land to the east of the town centre has the potential for regeneration which could accommodate a community hall. Any regeneration project may wish to rationalise the existing provision of halls in the town that are owned or used by different organisations. The site to the east of the town centre, that includes the livestock market, Shaftesbury Football Club and the Youth Centre, not only benefits from being centrally located but if coupled with enhanced pedestrian and cycle links would help to promote social integration between the new development to the east of the town and the existing community. However other locations for a community hall may be considered if the above approach cannot be taken forward where there is support from the local community.
- 8.126 The need for improved further education and training facilities, especially for young people, to develop local skills and to reduce the need to travel for such purposes was also identified by the community. Yeovil College currently has a campus in the town at Wincombe Business Park that offers courses in plumbing, security, electrical installation, construction, hairdressing, beauty therapy, health and social care and transition to work (Foundation Learning). The site caters for 14-16 year olds, full-time students, apprentices and adults. Although in recent years the campus has expanded and redeveloped, the Council continues to support the expansion of further education facilities in the town as this would not only serve the local population but would improve further education provision in the District as a whole. The preferred approach for any new facilities is for them to be centrally located, and ideally part of a larger regeneration scheme, but the provision of facilities on separate or in different locations would be considered.
- 8.127 With the proposed growth of Shaftesbury the extension of existing primary and secondary schools will be required. At the time of preparing this plan the preferred approach of Dorset County Council, the education provider, is for a new 2 forms of entry primary school in the town together with an expansion of facilities at the secondary school. A site for the new primary school has yet to

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<sup>273</sup> This link is currently proposed under Policy SB17 of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003.

be confirmed but additional capacity at a primary school level will be required by 2016. The site for the new primary school site will be allocated in the Local Plan Part 2.

- 8.128 The growth in Shaftesbury will also require additional medical provision in the town. This can either be provided through expansion of the existing medical centre or with the development of a new surgery. Any final decision on medical provision will be a matter for the local clinical commissioning group to decide and if necessary land can be allocated through the Local Plan Part 2 or the neighbourhood planning process. The Westminster Memorial Hospital in Abbey Walk will be retained on its current site.
- 8.129 The multiple benefits of green infrastructure and green spaces in delivering quality of life and quality of place have long been recognised and are explored in more detail in Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. In Shaftesbury there are a number of attractive and accessible recreational spaces ranging from the centrally located Barton Hill recreation ground to the recreation ground at Wincombe Lane that serves the new development to the east of the town. However, due to the environmental constraints of the town opportunities for new formal recreation are limited, especially for teenagers. The retention and improvement of existing areas for formal recreation will be supported.
- 8.130 The setting of the town is enhanced by its informal open spaces, with the open and wooded areas around the Slopes being of particular importance to its historic, hill-top character. New areas of open space will be created in association with the development to the east of the town.
- 8.131 The Council will seek to conserve and manage existing green spaces and aims to improve the connectivity, quality and functionality of such sites particularly in relation to relieving pressure on nearby high value wildlife sites at Shaftesbury in line with Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. The Council will work with the neighbourhood plan group in developing a green infrastructure strategy for the town and, if required, additional land will be allocated either through the Local Plan Part 2 document or through the neighbourhood planning process.

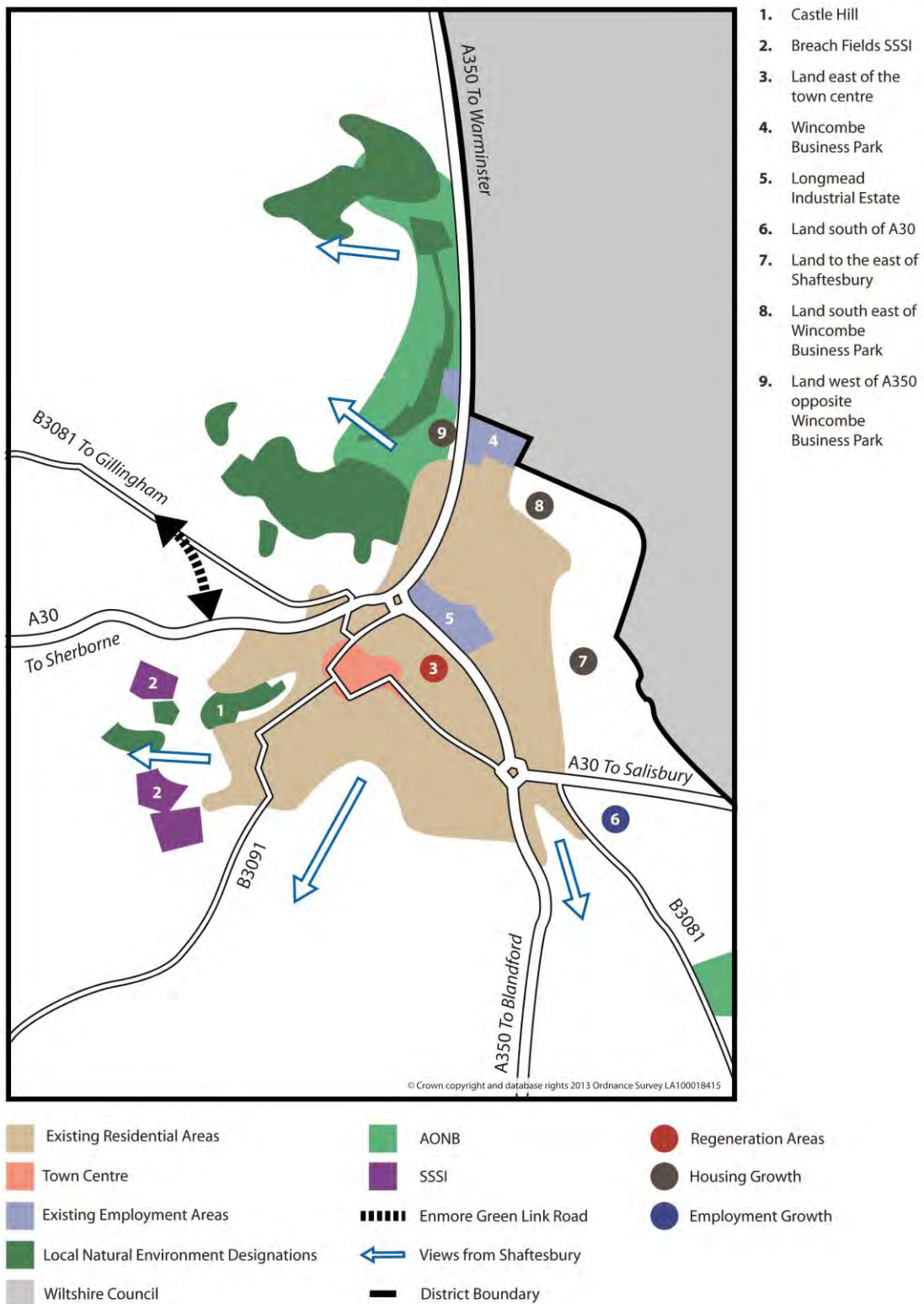


Figure 8.3: Shaftesbury Inset Diagram

## **POLICY 18: SHAFTESBURY**

### Sustainable Development Strategy

Shaftesbury will maintain its role to serve the needs of the northern part of the District through:

- a development and regeneration within the settlement boundary;
- b extensions, primarily of housing, to the east and north; and
- c an extension to meet employment needs to the south-east.

Growth will be taken forward in ways which respect the town's environmental constraints, support its role, function and identity, and contribute to making it more self-contained. Shaftesbury's distinctive natural and historic character will be retained and enhanced and the town's reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism will be reinforced.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

The impact of flooding and climate change on the town will be addressed with measures put in place to reduce risk through:

- d the provision of sustainable drainage systems in all developments; and
- e the protection and management of valuable groundwater resources.

The town's natural and historic built environments will be protected and enhanced.

### **Meeting Housing Needs**

At least 1,140 homes will be provided at Shaftesbury during the period 2011–2031. In addition to infilling and regeneration within the settlement boundary, Shaftesbury's housing needs will be met through the development of land:

- f to the east of the town (including the Hopkins land); and
- g to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and
- h to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

Employment needs of the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through:

- i the development of land to the south of the A30; and

## **POLICY 18 (CONT'D): SHAFTESBURY**

- j the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and
- k the retention of existing employment sites.

Mixed-use regeneration will be encouraged on land within and to the east of the existing town centre. Within the town's settlement boundary, opportunities for tourist-related development that is sensitive to the landscape and historic setting of the town will be considered favourably.

### **Infrastructure**

In the period up to 2031, grey infrastructure to support growth will include:

- l the provision of a new road link from the B3081 to the A30 at Enmore Green, north of Shaftesbury; and
- m improved walking and cycling links between the town centre and residential development to the east of the town.

The route of the Shaftesbury Outer Eastern Bypass will continue to be protected from development that would prejudice its implementation in the longer-term.

In the period up to 2031 social infrastructure to support growth will include:

- n the provision of a new community hall for the town; and
- o a new 2 forms of entry primary school, an extension to the secondary school and expanded further and adult education provision in the town; and
- p a new doctors' surgery, or the expansion or relocation of the existing doctors' surgery.

A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Shaftesbury focusing on linking existing sites, such as the Slopes, and providing new sites and links to serve the residents of both the new and existing development in the town. This will include:

- q informal recreation space associated with the development of sites to the east of the town to reduce recreational pressure on nearby high value wildlife sites.

## Policy 19 – Sturminster Newton

### Introduction

- 8.132 Sturminster Newton comprises the main town of Sturminster on the northern side of the River Stour and the smaller village of Newton to the south. The settlement, together with Stalbridge and Marnhull, provide services to the rural west of the District.
- 8.133 In the recent past, Sturminster Newton has experienced moderate levels of growth including housing on greenfield land on the northern edge of Sturminster and the allocation of a large employment site (known as North Dorset Business Park) on the western edge of Newton. The housing has largely been completed but much of the business park remains undeveloped.
- 8.134 Historically, Sturminster Newton played an important role in serving the surrounding agricultural hinterland and once was the home of the largest livestock market in Britain. This closed and was demolished in 1998, and was joined shortly thereafter by the closure of the town's prize-winning creamery. The local community, recognising the impact this would have, decided to create a new heart for the town and in 2008 The Exchange, a multipurpose community building, was opened with its associated medical centre, supermarket and small-scale office and retail development.

### Sustainable Development Strategy

- 8.135 The role of Sturminster Newton in serving the communities in the west of the District will be maintained through limited growth. Housing development will be of a smaller-scale than at the three other main towns reflecting Sturminster Newton's size and role as a local service centre.
- 8.136 The key spatial aspects of this strategy will be:
- focusing housing development within the settlement boundary and in locations close to the town centre, with some more limited peripheral greenfield expansion to meet longer-term needs;
  - continuing the regeneration of the town centre to include an improved range of services and employment opportunities alongside new housing development;
  - developing North Dorset Business Park to meet the employment needs of communities in the western part of the District; and
  - extending the North Dorset Trailway to Stalbridge.
- 8.137 Development will be supported by the necessary grey, social and green infrastructure and will be guided by the Sturminster Newton Town Design

Statement (TDS), which has been adopted by the Council as a supplementary planning document<sup>274</sup>.

- 8.138 In addition, the Station Road Area Design and Development Brief<sup>275</sup> has helped to shape the proposals for the redevelopment of the former Creamery site and remains a key document in guiding the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road area.
- 8.139 To stimulate and guide development at North Dorset Business Park, SturQuest (the local community partnership) commissioned a design and development brief<sup>276</sup>. Endorsed by the Council in 2012, the brief outlines the range of employment uses that are appropriate for the site. It is hoped that the brief will provide a basis for the community to work with landowners and developers to ensure that a high quality development that respects the character of Newton and Sturminster Newton is delivered on the site.

### Environment and Climate Change

- 8.140 Some of the effects of climate change on Sturminster Newton are likely to be an increased frequency and severity of flooding from the River Stour and increased flooding from surface water, particularly after severe rainfall events. New development in the town will need to recognise these issues and flood mitigation measures, such as sustainable drainage systems (in line with Policy 3 – Climate Change) will need to be included in any development.
- 8.141 Leading the way with renewable energy generation, the town became the first on the River Stour to have an operational hydro-powered electricity generator at nearby Fiddleford Mill. This became operational in 2013.
- 8.142 The town is situated on a low limestone ridge in a meander of the River Stour with the flat and pastoral riverside meadows forming a key feature of historic and cultural importance to the town. From the town there are fine views both east and west out towards the distinctive rolling clay vales of the Blackmore Vale. To the south of the town is Piddles Wood, an ancient woodland that is a designated site of special scientific interest. In the undulating farmland of the Blackmore Vale there are numerous sites of nature conservation importance and within the town itself is Butts Pond Local Natural Reserve.
- 8.143 Through the centuries the landscape has helped shape the town from its origin as a historic fording point on the Stour to the use of locally distinctive building

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<sup>274</sup> Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document, prepared for SturQuest by Matrix Partnership (July 2008).

<sup>275</sup> Station Road Area Design & Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by Matrix Partnership (April 2008).

<sup>276</sup> North Dorset Business Park Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by Matrix Partnership (April 2012).

materials such as stone and brick in the construction of its buildings.

Sturminster Newton was recorded as a town in Saxon times, but it was not until the 16<sup>th</sup> Century that the distinctive six-arch bridge and embankment crossed the flood plain. Widened in 1820, the bridge is one of a number of scheduled monuments in and around the town.

- 8.144 The historic core of the town, with its many 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century thatched cottages, stone buildings and brick structures, lies within Sturminster Newton Conservation Area. Designated in 1976, the conservation area seeks to not only protect the character of the town's historic core, but to also preserve its setting and relationship with the River Stour.
- 8.145 The Somerset and Dorset Railway ran through the town from 1863 until 1966 when it was dismantled as part of the Beeching Axe. The station and goods yard were demolished in the mid-1970s and the area was transformed into the Station Road Car Park and Railway Gardens. Some of the goods sheds (one of which is now occupied by the home furnishings retailer Streeters) remain.
- 8.146 The Council will seek to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment of the town and all applications for growth will need to consider the impact on these features and designations.

### Meeting Housing Needs

- 8.147 It is anticipated that at least 395 dwellings will be built in Sturminster Newton between 2011 and 2031. Infilling and redevelopment within the settlement boundary will continue during the plan period, especially within the 'Central Regeneration Area' identified in the TDS. This lies between the historic old town, south of the former railway line and the new town that lies to the north. Within this area various development opportunities were identified, a number of which have since been developed. Brownfield opportunities remaining include:
- the Station Road area including the Station Road Car Park, Streeters, Hansons and the Factory Shop;
  - the vacant plot at the junction of B3091 and Station Road; and
  - the builders' yard at the junction of the B3091 and B3092.
- 8.148 Three greenfield sites have also been identified for housing development. These are:
- the fields on Market Hill, immediately north of the former Livestock Market site, that are allocated for housing in the 2003 Local Plan;
  - land to the north of Northfields, off Honeymead Lane on the northern edge of the town; and
  - land to the east of the former Creamery site (now known as Stourcastle) on the eastern edge of the town.



- 8.149 Development on all of these sites will need to include pedestrian and cycle links to key destinations in the town centre and with the schools, with the aim of increasing the permeability of the town.
- 8.150 The changing appearance and function of Sturminster Newton and its relationship with the surrounding countryside are major challenges for the future. The principles, policies and concepts produced by the local community through various initiatives (such as the TDS, design briefs and a neighbourhood plan) will be fundamental to managing change, along with the policies in this Local Plan.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

- 8.151 Policy 11 – Economy outlines the District-wide employment land situation and indicates that there is a need for about 2.4 hectares of employment land to support growth at Sturminster Newton in the period up to 2031. The small town of Stalbridge and the large village of Marnhull are located nearby, so any employment land at Sturminster Newton would also serve these settlements.
- 8.152 In 2012 study<sup>277</sup> showed that 6.3 hectares of employment land was available at North Dorset Business Park on the western edge of Newton. This combined with the re-use and regeneration of other employment sites in Sturminster, is more than sufficient to meet local economic development needs in the period up to 2031.
- 8.153 North Dorset Business Park has been an allocated employment site for a number of years, but has remained largely undeveloped. SturQuest (the local community partnership) produced a design and development brief in 2012<sup>278</sup>, which included proposals such as a food-based cluster on the frontage of this site. The planning permission, which has since been granted, includes a masterplan for the site and in 2013 key pieces of infrastructure were installed on site. Any proposals that come forward on North Dorset Business Park should have regard to both the design and development brief and the masterplan for the site.
- 8.154 The Council will continue to support and will seek to retain existing industrial estates to provide job opportunities for local people and space for local businesses. The Local Plan Part 2 will take forward the allocation of the land at North Dorset Business Park as a strategic employment site. Additional sites could also be allocated through the neighbourhood planning process.

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<sup>277</sup> Bournemouth Dorset Poole Workspace Study: Employment Land Projections 2012 Update, Dorset County Council (March 2012).

<sup>278</sup> North Dorset Business Park Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by Matrix Partnership (April 2012).

- 8.155 Sturminster Newton is a thriving market town with a shopping area concentrated in the Market Place and Market Cross area of the historic town. The shopping area also extends along Station Road and beyond, with retailers such as Streeters, Hansons, The Original Factory Shop and Harts. The retailing presence in this area has been consolidated with the development of The Exchange, Co-operative Food store and smaller retail units.
- 8.156 The Retail Study<sup>279</sup> identified needs for additional comparison and convenience goods floorspace at Sturminster Newton, but the levels of provision will not require new retail allocations. It is envisaged that the need for additional floorspace could be met by making better use of vacant premises, the conversion of other properties within the primary shopping area to shops, and through the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road area.
- 8.157 There are a number of existing small-scale retail warehouse units in the Station Road Area and an equivalent level of retail floorspace will need to be provided as part of any regeneration scheme. The development brief envisages the relocation of the retail warehouse units to land at the junction of Station Road and Barnes Close, which will effectively extend the town centre eastwards along Station Road. This will enable the creation of a new square opposite The Exchange building, providing an attractive area for weekly markets and other community events.
- 8.158 The primary and secondary shopping frontages, as defined in the 2003 Local Plan will continue to be used for development management purposes, but will be reviewed in the Local Plan Part 2. A town centre boundary, will be defined as part of the Local Plan Part 2 to enable the application of the sequential approach to town centre uses. Alternatively the review of shopping frontages and the definition of a town centre boundary may be issues that the community decide to deal with through the neighbourhood planning route.

### Infrastructure

- 8.159 Improved pedestrian and cycle links between new areas of housing, the town centre, mixed-use regeneration in the Station Road area, schools and employment sites, including North Dorset Business Park, will need to be provided.
- 8.160 The North Dorset Trailway extends south from Sturminster Newton to Blandford Forum on the route of the former Somerset and Dorset Railway. At present there is no link towards Stalbridge to the north-west. The Trailway currently ends in the Station Road Car Park, but the redevelopment of this area in accordance with the development brief would require an extension of the

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<sup>279</sup> Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

Trailway as part of any regeneration scheme. Beyond Railway Gardens, the redevelopment of the builders' yard at the junction of the B3091 and B3092 for housing will enable the first part of the route north from Sturminster Newton to be put in place. A bridge over the River Stour will also be required to join up with existing public rights of way, which can be used to form pedestrian and cycle links between Sturminster and North Dorset Business Park.

- 8.161 The Exchange building with its meeting facilities, cinema/theatre and space for community events acts as a hub for the community both in the town and the wider area. The building also incorporates some of the history associated with the livestock market, reminding the town of its heritage and links with rural life. The Exchange has established the town as an important centre with a new cultural and community role.
- 8.162 With The Exchange, improvements to the Trailway, the proposed food hub at North Dorset Business Park and the annual Cheese Festival, there is potential to increase the tourist trade in the town to benefit of the local economy.
- 8.163 The proposed growth of Sturminster will require an extension of the existing primary and secondary schools. For Sturminster Newton High School growth will be managed on the existing site. However to accommodate the additional pupils at primary level, Dorset County Council are looking to relocate the William Barnes School to the north of the town.
- 8.164 The town is proud of its community managed leisure centre, located off Honeymead Lane, as it offers a range of opportunities for sports and recreation for local residents. Its retention and, where necessary, upgrading and expansion will be sought as the town grows.
- 8.165 The growth of the town will not require any additional medical provision as the new purpose built medical centre at The Exchange, with its outreach surgery in Marnhull, has sufficient capacity to accommodate further growth.
- 8.166 The multiple benefits of green infrastructure and green spaces in delivering quality of life and quality of place have long been recognised and are explored in more detail in Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. In Sturminster Newton, the principal open spaces within the town are identified in the TDS. They are:
- the principal recreation ground at the end of Ricketts Lane;
  - Railway Gardens with its fine views to Hambledon Hill;
  - the local nature reserve and fields at Butts Pond; and
  - the open space in the Rixon development that includes a children's play area.
- 8.167 Further open space will be sought on the Market Hill allocated housing site to provide a buffer between Butt's Pond Industrial Estate and the proposed new residential development.

- 8.168 Together, these open spaces, the Trailway and existing and proposed footpaths and cycleway routes will form the basis of the green infrastructure strategy for the town. They will help to connect Sturminster to the wider countryside and to important historic sites such as Sturminster Mill, the protected environments at Piddles Wood and Butt's Pond and surrounding scheduled monuments such as Fiddleford Manor.
- 8.169 Allotments are also an important element of a green infrastructure strategy and offer recreational and health benefits to local residents. In Sturminster Newton there are currently two allotment sites. The main site is off Filbridge Rise and there is a smaller site to the rear of Chinnocks. As part of the greenfield housing allocation on land to the east of the former creamery, new allotments will be provided .
- 8.170 The Council will seek to conserve and manage existing green spaces and aims to improve the connectivity, quality and functionality of such sites and links at Sturminster Newton in line with Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. The Council will work with the local community in developing a green infrastructure strategy for the town and, if required, additional land will be allocated either through the Local Plan Part 2 or through the neighbourhood planning process.

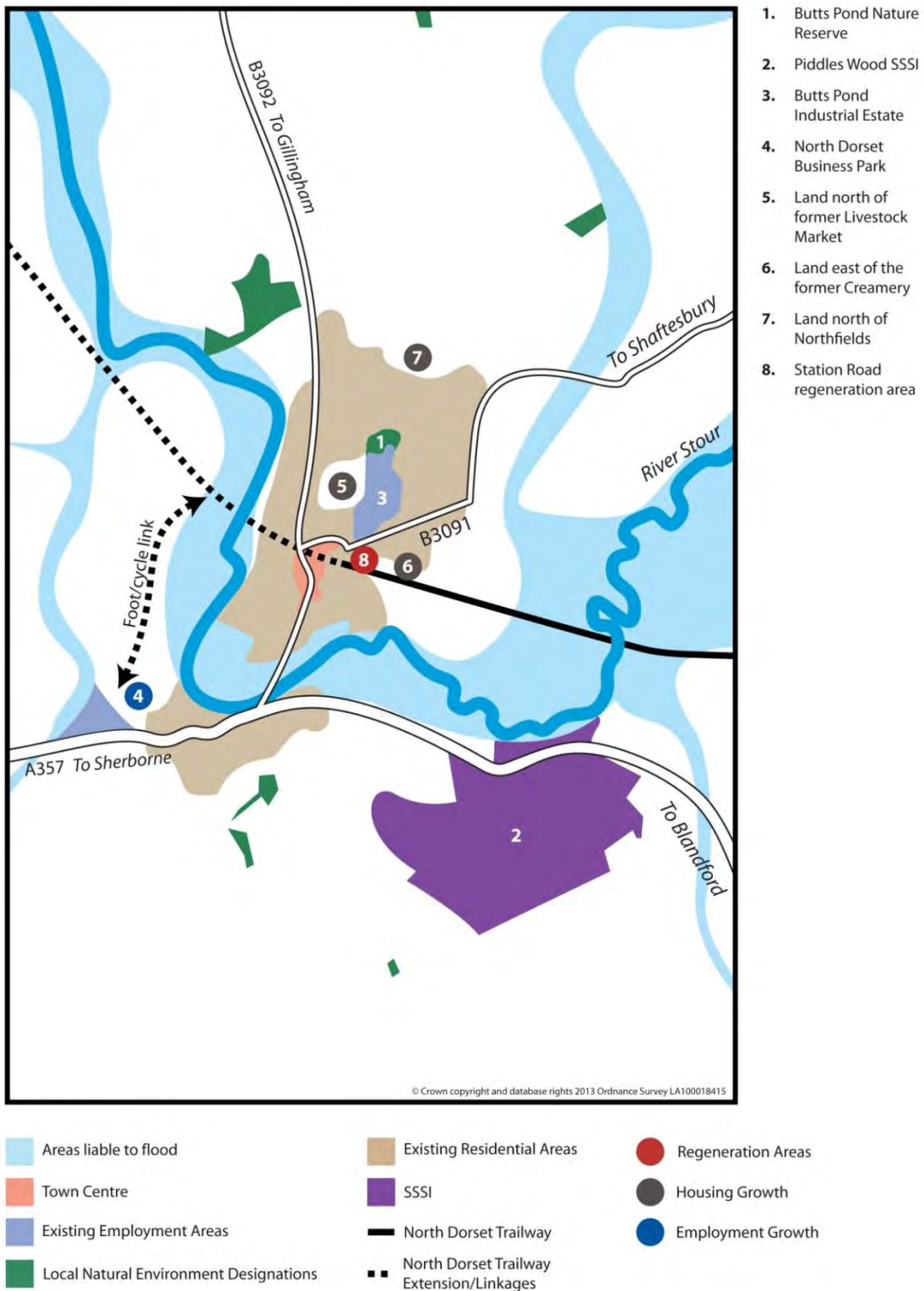


Figure 8.4: Sturminster Newton Inset Diagram

## **POLICY 19: STURMINSTER NEWTON**

### **Sustainable Development Strategy**

Sturminster Newton will continue to function as the main service centre in the rural west of the District through:

- a development and redevelopment within the settlement boundary; and
- b development of the greenfield land at Market Hill to the north of the former livestock market; and
- c small greenfield extensions to the north and east of Sturminster; and
- d development of North Dorset Business Park at Newton.

All developments will need to reflect the policies, principles and design concepts identified through the Town Design Statement and design and development briefs produced by the local community.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

The impact of flooding and climate change on the town will be addressed with measures put in place to reduce the risk of flooding from the River Stour and from surface water within the town through the provision of sustainable drainage systems in all development.

The town's natural and historic built environments will be protected and enhanced.

### **Meeting Housing Needs**

At least 395 dwellings will be provided at Sturminster Newton during the period 2011 – 2031. Housing needs will be met through:

- e infilling and redevelopment within the settlement boundary, including the redevelopment of land in and around the Station Road area;

together with the development of the following greenfield sites:

- f land to the north of the former livestock market at Market Hill; and
- g land to the to the north of Northfields; and
- h land to the east of the former Creamery site.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

Employment needs in the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through:

- i the development of North Dorset Business Park; and
- j the retention of Butts Pond Industrial Estate.

## **POLICY 19 (CONT'D): STURMINSTER NEWTON**

Any development on North Dorset Business Park should be designed to reflect both the design and development brief and the masterplan for the site.

The main focus for additional retail provision and other town centre uses will be the existing town centre and the redevelopment of the Station Road area. Any scheme for the Station Road area should be designed in accordance with the design and development brief for the area.

### **Infrastructure**

In the period up to 2031, grey infrastructure to support growth will include:

- k improved walking and cycling links between the town centre and new developments; and
- l the extension of the North Dorset Trailway to the north west of the town, including the provision of a pedestrian/cycle bridge over the River Stour; and
- m the improvement of pedestrian/cycle links between Sturminster and North Dorset Business Park.

In the period up to 2031, social infrastructure to support growth will include:

- n the promotion of The Exchange building as a community and cultural hub; and
- o the retention and expansion of the leisure centre; and
- p an extension to the secondary school and the relocation and expansion of the primary school.

A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Sturminster town and Newton village based on existing sites, such as Butts Pond Local Nature Reserve, and strategic links such as the North Dorset Trailway.

In the period up to 2031, green infrastructure to support growth will include:

- q a green buffer between Butt's Pond Industrial Estate and new housing development on land north of the former livestock market; and
- r additional allotments on land to the east of the town at Elm Close Farm.

## Policy 20 – The Countryside

### National Policy

- 8.171 National core planning principles<sup>280</sup> recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the need to support thriving rural communities within it.
- 8.172 The Government considers that planning policies should take a positive approach to sustainable new development to support economic growth in rural areas<sup>281</sup>. New dwellings should be located where they will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances<sup>282</sup>.
- 8.173 National policy also gives local people a powerful set of tools through Community Rights to get the right types of development for their community, although the ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.

### Definition of the Countryside

- 8.174 For the purposes of the Local Plan, the countryside is defined as all land outside the settlement boundaries of the District's four main towns, Stalbridge and the eighteen larger villages. Countryside policies will apply to all other settlements unless new settlement boundaries are defined in neighbourhood plans or the Local Plan Part 2.

### Sustainable Development Strategy

- 8.175 Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy establishes that in the countryside (including Stalbridge and all the villages) the focus is on meeting local, rather than strategic, needs. The Council considers that this light touch approach in the rural areas is appropriate, given that the growth to meet local needs will be largely additional to the strategic growth in the District's four main towns. This approach enables a fine-grained assessment of the needs of Stalbridge and the villages to be made by local communities, which can then be addressed primarily through neighbourhood planning.
- 8.176 Although the emphasis of policy in the countryside is on restraint, the Council will permit some forms of development to support the rural economy and meet essential rural needs in line with the strategic policies for the District as a whole.

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<sup>280</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>281</sup> Paragraph 28, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>282</sup> Paragraph 55, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).



8.177 This will be achieved by:

- identifying, as far as possible, those types of development that may be appropriate in the countryside and where necessary developing more detailed policies to ensure that certain types of development are carefully managed; and
- establishing a test of overriding need which any other form of development would need to meet in order to be acceptable in principle in the countryside.

### **Policies Guiding Development in the Countryside**

8.178 Any development in the countryside needs to be sensitively handled so as not to undermine the general policy of restraint and to ensure no impact on areas of high wildlife value as set out in Policy 4 – Natural Environment and Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. A breakdown of the types of development that may be appropriate in the countryside is given below and the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 that guide development in the countryside are summarised in Figure 8.5.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

8.179 To mitigate climate change the Council supports the production of energy from renewable and low carbon sources as set out in Policy 3 – Climate Change. Due to their nature some renewable or low carbon energy developments may be large-scale and require a countryside location. Development management Policy 22 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy sets out the Council’s approach to development proposals for, or that incorporate, renewable or low carbon energy.

### **Meeting Housing Needs**

8.180 In Stalbridge and the villages the focus is on housing to support local communities, which will be delivered through neighbourhood planning and the Local Plan Part 2. Countryside policies also permit housing in rural areas to meet local needs in certain circumstances.

8.181 Where a local need for rural exception affordable housing can be demonstrated, new affordable housing may be allowed by Policy 9 – Rural Exception Schemes. Policy 20 also includes criteria setting out when small numbers of market housing may be permitted in such schemes.

8.182 Special circumstances when new isolated homes may be permitted in the countryside are defined in national policy. In line with national policy, the Council may permit isolated:

- occupational dwellings, where functional and financial tests demonstrate an essential need;
- dwellings that would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of a heritage asset; and

- dwellings that re-use redundant or disused buildings, where an economic development or community use would not be feasible, and that would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.

8.183 National policy requires the Council to plan for the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, recognising that for such development, a countryside location may be appropriate. Provision is being made for sites and pitches through the Dorset-Wide Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document, as discussed in Policy 10 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Policy 26 – Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sets out the criteria that will be used to determine planning applications for such developments.

### Supporting Economic Development

8.184 In Stalbridge and the villages new employment sites will be delivered through neighbourhood planning, and through the Local Plan Part 2. Countryside policies also support economic development in rural areas in other ways.

8.185 In the countryside the Council encourages:

- the re-use of existing buildings for employment purposes, including commercial community facilities, such as village shops;
- the redevelopment or limited expansion of existing employment sites for employment purposes;
- equine related developments; and
- rural tourist accommodation in sustainable locations, or which supports an existing farm business.

### Infrastructure

8.186 In Stalbridge and the villages the provision of new or upgraded non-commercial community facilities (such as village halls, places of worship and cemeteries) would help to address the issue of poor access to services in the countryside and help to meet the needs of the District's rural communities. Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure encourages such facilities in, or adjacent to, the built-up areas of Stalbridge and the villages. Policy 27 – Retention of Community Facilities also encourages the retention of both commercial and non-commercial community facilities.

Figure 8.5: Policies Guiding Development in the Countryside

Local Plan Section	Type of Development	Main Policy	Development Management Policy
Environment and Climate Change	Renewable energy schemes	3	22
Meeting Housing Needs	Rural exception schemes	9	-
	Occupational dwellings	6	33
	Re-use of heritage assets	5/6	29
	Re-use of redundant or disused buildings	11	29
	Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople	10	26
Supporting Economic Development	The re-use of existing rural buildings	11	29
	Redevelopment or expansion of existing employment sites	11	30
	Equine-related developments	11	32
	Rural tourist accommodation	11	31
Infrastructure	Retention of community facilities (commercial and non-commercial)	14	27
	New community facilities (non-commercial)	14	-

### Overriding Need

8.187 For any other type of development to be acceptable in principle in the countryside, the Council will need to be convinced that there is an overriding need for a countryside location. For some types of development, for example isolated dwellings of exceptional quality or innovative design<sup>283</sup>, the case for overriding need is supported by national policy, but for others the Council will assess the acceptability of the principle on its merits.

<sup>283</sup> As set out in Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012).

- 8.188 The Council may consider there to be an overriding need for a countryside location for certain types of agriculture<sup>284</sup>, forestry or horticulture developments, especially if they are part of a wider farm diversification project.
- 8.189 Grey, social or green infrastructure projects, which may be considered to have an overriding need for a countryside location include:
- grey infrastructure projects such as electricity pylons, gas or water pipelines and telecommunications installations;
  - certain social infrastructure projects such as essential additional facilities or accommodation for existing institutions, such as independent schools; and
  - formal and informal outdoor facilities for sport and recreation and other uses, such as allotments, that are important elements of a green infrastructure strategy especially where they are important to facilitate access to the countryside for the residents of towns and villages.
- 8.190 The acceptability of any scheme put forward in the countryside on the basis of overriding need would also be considered against all other relevant planning policies in the development plan, including those relating to sustainability, design, amenity and the protection of the environment.

### Neighbourhood Plans

- 8.191 Whilst countryside policies apply to land outside the defined settlement boundaries, the production of neighbourhood plans will enable communities to take forward proposals to meet local needs and influence the planning of the area in which they live and work. Neighbourhood plans can help local communities:
- to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood;
  - choose where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built (in addition to development that is permitted under countryside policies, as discussed above);
  - identify and protect local green spaces<sup>285</sup> or include policies to protect local character; and
  - influence what new buildings should look like.
- 8.192 Neighbourhood plans are about meeting local needs which could be achieved in different ways; some communities may seek to meet local needs by reinstating or reviewing settlement boundaries or by allocating a specific site for housing or employment.

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<sup>284</sup> Agriculture is defined in the Glossary.

<sup>285</sup> Paragraphs 76 and 77, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

**POLICY 20: THE COUNTRYSIDE**

Stalbridge and the eighteen larger villages will form the focus for growth outside of the four main towns.

Development in the countryside outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted if:

- a it is of a type appropriate in the countryside, as set out in the relevant policies of the Local Plan, summarised in Figure 8.5; or
- b for any other type of development, it can be demonstrated that there is an 'overriding need' for it to be located in the countryside .

## 9. Gillingham Southern Extension

### Introduction

- 9.1 The Council has worked closely with landowners, developers, key stakeholders and the local community over a number of years to develop the proposals for the southern extension of Gillingham. This approach reflects national policy, which seeks to encourage early and meaningful engagement in plan-making, stating that ‘A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area...’<sup>286</sup>.
- 9.2 The community was engaged in the production of the report ‘Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham’<sup>287</sup>, which identified that the town had the economic potential, the capacity (in terms of suitable and available sites) and a relative lack of constraints to enable it to accommodate significant growth. The study examined a range of potential spatial options and the scenario for growth which was considered most sustainable was the southern focus<sup>288</sup>.
- 9.3 The Council used that report to draw up proposals for development to the south of the town in its draft Core Strategy<sup>289</sup>. Following public consultation, the Council decided to develop a more detailed policy to take forward growth in the form of a strategic site allocation (SSA)<sup>290</sup>, which required further consultation.
- 9.4 The Council consulted on the options for the southern extension in autumn 2012<sup>291</sup> and held a subsequent concept plan workshop with landowners, developers, key stakeholders and representatives of the local community in March 2013<sup>292</sup>.

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<sup>286</sup> Paragraph 155, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>287</sup> Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

<sup>288</sup> Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009), page 46, Figure 4.5.

<sup>289</sup> Draft Core Policy 16, The New Plan for North Dorset – The Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD, North Dorset District Council (March 2010).

<sup>290</sup> The decision to take forward growth to the south of Gillingham in the form of a strategic site allocation was made by the Council’s Cabinet on 13 June 2011.

<sup>291</sup> Public Consultation on Options for the Southern Extension of Gillingham, North Dorset District Council (October 2012).

<sup>292</sup> The concept plan workshop was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013 and facilitated by the Homes and Communities Agency’s Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS). The results of the workshop are presented in Gillingham Southern Extension Concept Plan Workshop March 2013: ATLAS Report on the Workshop, ATLAS (July 2013).

- 9.5 The consultation undertaken to date has helped to establish a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the southern extension, which are set out in Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation.
- 9.6 The wider policy context is provided by:
- Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy, which concentrates growth at the District’s four main towns;
  - Policy 6 – Housing Distribution, which establishes that 34% of the District’s housing growth should take place at Gillingham, largely in the form of an SSA; and
  - Policy 17 – Gillingham, which provides the overall strategic policy framework for the town.
- 9.7 A neighbourhood plan is being produced for the town and the neighbourhood area covers the entire parish area of Gillingham, including the SSA site. The Local Plan Part 1 contains the strategic planning policy for the SSA, including the brief for the Master Plan Framework. The Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan complements the strategic policy for the southern extension and has scope to provide planning policy on planning issues of a local nature. The Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with Policy 21 and all other policies in the Local Plan Part 1.
- 9.8 The local community has also produced a town design statement (TDS)<sup>293</sup>, which describes the distinctive local features in Gillingham and includes a set of development guidelines. The TDS has both informed the proposals for the southern extension and will provide an invaluable evidence base study for the preparation of the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan.

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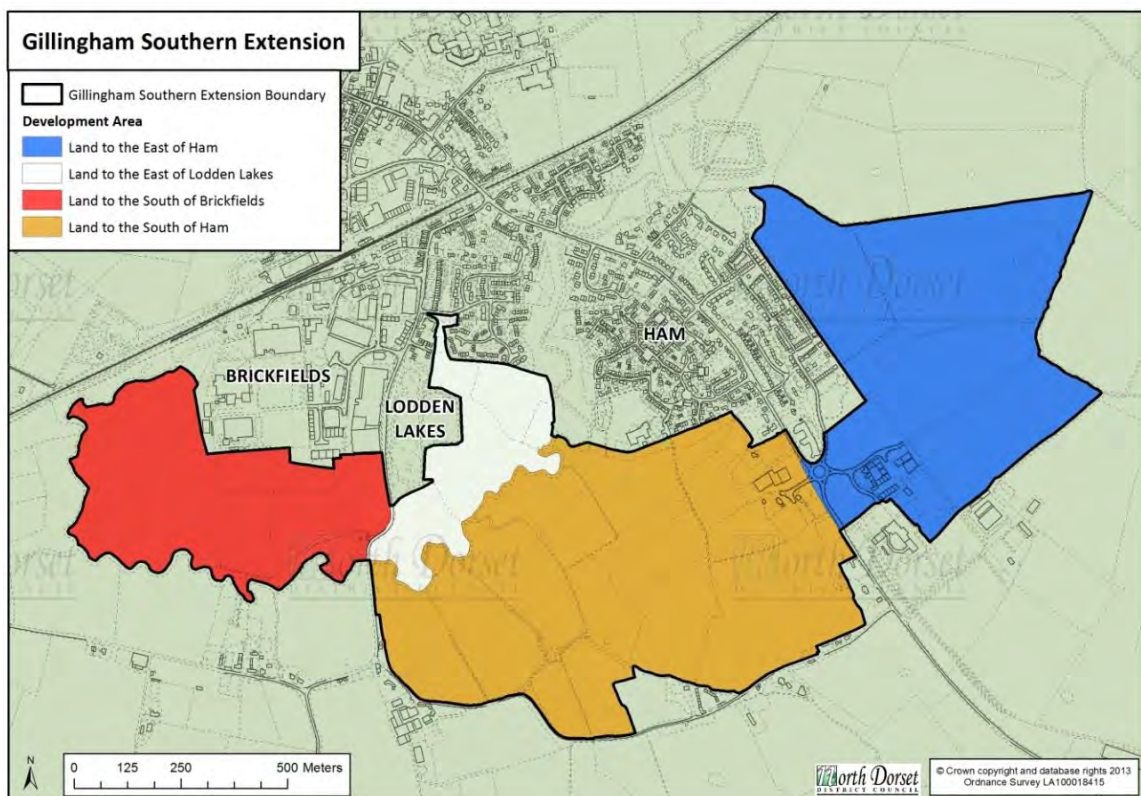
<sup>293</sup> Gillingham Town Design Statement, Gillingham Town Design Statement Steering Group (June 2012).

## Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation

### Introduction

- 9.9 The southern extension of Gillingham will take the form of a sustainable mixed-use development that will expand the built-up area of the town to the south and east. The eastern edge of the southern extension follows the floodplains of the River Lodden and the Fern Brook. Cole Street Lane forms the southern edge of the proposed development and the floodplain of the River Stour, south of the railway line, forms the western edge.
- 9.10 Within these boundaries are four main areas proposed for development, which are:
- land to the east of Ham, including part of Park Farm;
  - land to the south of Ham, including part of Newhouse Farm;
  - land to the east of Lodden Lakes; and
  - land to the south of Brickfields Business Park.

Figure 9.1: Four Main Areas Proposed for Development



- 9.11 The southern extension will be accommodated within these boundaries and areas and will be linked to the existing town by improved transport links and an enhanced green infrastructure network. The southern extension will be developed mainly with housing, with employment development to the south of



Brickfields Business Park and on Kingsmead Business Park. It will be developed with the infrastructure necessary to support growth including major items, such as a 'principal street' linking New Road (B3092) and Shaftesbury Road (B3081) and a local centre including small local convenience shops, health facilities, a primary school, a community hall and other local facilities and services.

- 9.12 Policy 21 sets out the Council's views, and reflects local community opinions, on how the southern extension of Gillingham should be taken forward to create attractive new neighbourhoods for the town in the period up to 2031.

### **The District Council's Approach to the Development of the Southern Extension**

- 9.13 The southern extension is the largest and most significant development proposed for North Dorset in the Local Plan Part 1 and will result in a significant increase in the size of Gillingham. Its development will be the primary opportunity to progress the enhancement of Gillingham as the main service centre in North Dorset and as an attractive place to live and work. Proposals for the existing town will be taken forward both through Policy 17 – Gillingham and the neighbourhood plan being prepared by the local community.

- 9.14 Concentrating growth to the south of the town is considered to offer the greatest potential for:

- housing development to be sustainably located;
- economic development to create employment opportunities for the southern extension and the town as a whole; and
- the provision of supporting infrastructure, including sustainable transport measures, to increase self-containment by integrating the new development into the existing town.

- 9.15 To assist in securing the effective delivery of this key proposal, the Council has worked with landowners, potential developers, key stakeholders and the local community to develop a conceptual framework to guide the future development of the southern extension. The conceptual framework, which is set out in more detail later in this policy, is made up of the following elements:

- the concept statement, which brings together the design ideas that have emerged through consultation to give a description of the kind of place the southern extension should be;
- the concept plan, which illustrates (on a map) the main design concepts and ideas that have emerged through consultation; and
- a set of site-specific design principles, derived from the town design statement and later consultation.

- 9.16 Policy 21 also allocates the main land uses and identifies the main infrastructure (and other) requirements to support development across the site

and integrate it with the existing town. The main land uses, together with an extended settlement boundary to accommodate growth, are shown on the proposals map for the SSA. Policy 21 provides the main policy basis for the determination of any subsequent planning applications on, or affecting, the SSA site.

### Achieving Comprehensive Development

- 9.17 It is critical that the southern extension delivers on its potential to create a sustainable mixed-use community and to achieve this there is a need for comprehensive planning and development. The need for a comprehensive approach has been a recurring theme throughout the Council's engagement with the community.
- 9.18 The Council considers that the most effective way of achieving comprehensive development is for the various landowners and developers to collaborate in the preparation of a Master Plan Framework (MPF) for the southern extension. The conceptual framework, land use allocations and identified infrastructure (and other) requirements set out in this policy, provide the brief for the preparation of such an MPF.

### Master Plan Framework

- 9.19 The Council expects Policy 21, supported by the MPF, to provide a comprehensive basis for informed decision-making on subsequent planning applications for development within the SSA. The MPF should respond positively to the brief that Policy 21 as a whole provides by: reflecting the conceptual framework (or clearly justifying any areas of departure from the concept statement or concept plan); and according with the land allocations and main infrastructure (and other) requirements set out in the policy and shown on the proposals map.
- 9.20 The Council will expect the MPF to include, as a minimum, the following components:
- the developers' collective vision for the proposed development, which the Council will expect to respond positively to the concept statement;
  - a comprehensive land use master plan for the SSA in its entirety, incorporating a budget of land uses;
  - a schedule of master plan components (e.g. local centre, public open space, and other supporting infrastructure and facilities);
  - a development framework plan illustrating the proposed layout of the development (in other words, providing an explanation of the intended structure and grain for the land use master plan);
  - an urban design strategy covering the whole of the southern extension, building on the concept statement, concept plan and design principles set out in this policy;

- a climate change plan setting out how the southern extension will seek to address issues arising as a result of climate change, such as energy efficiency in buildings and flood risk;
- a sustainable transport plan providing details relating to both on- and off-site proposals for all highway provision and improvements together with other transportation measures including the provision of pedestrian and cycleway networks and bus routes;
- a green infrastructure plan setting out the approach to the provision, design and future management of an integrated network of green spaces, green links and other green elements within and adjoining the southern extension. It should also set out how this green infrastructure network will: integrate the development into the local landscape; conserve and enhance the ecological and heritage interests on and/or close to the site and international sites within the wider area; and deliver sustainable drainage systems; and
- a phasing plan and associated implementation strategy. The Council will expect the implementation strategy to set out the developers' proposals regarding the funding and delivery of the master plan components (e.g. via planning obligations, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), etc.). It should also set out: proposals for securing appropriate financial contributions from all the southern extension development towards all relevant infrastructure; the points at which facilities and infrastructure will need to be delivered to support housing and employment development; how uninterrupted linkages between different phases of development will be secured, whether or not involving land in different ownership; and details of proposals to secure the adoption and appropriate future maintenance of infrastructure and facilities.

9.21 The Council will not support the submission of planning applications for development within the SSA until an MPF has been produced by the developers, published for public consultation and agreed by the Council.

9.22 The preparation of an MPF is critical to the successful delivery of the proposals for the southern extension and the Council considers that the developers are best placed to respond to the brief set out in this policy. The Council's preferred approach is for developers to work collaboratively to prepare comprehensive development proposals. However, in the event that an MPF is not forthcoming from developers, the Council reserves the option of producing a Master Plan Framework supplementary planning document or other planning document (or documents) to guide the future development of the southern extension.

9.23 In so far as it is relevant, the Council will look to secure financial contributions through its charging schedule produced for the purposes of the CIL.

### Pre-Application Consultation

- 9.24 Pre-application consultation is encouraged in national policy and could become a legal requirement for larger developments in the future<sup>294</sup>. The Government recognises that 'early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.'<sup>295</sup>
- 9.25 The Council considers that the landowners and prospective developers of the southern extension should use the preparation of the MPF to demonstrate to the community in Gillingham how they intend to respond to the brief Policy 21 provides. The process of preparing and consulting upon the MPF would form part of the developers' pre-application consultation for the southern extension. The Council anticipates that this process will be recorded in a statement of community engagement, which will then be submitted in support of subsequent planning applications.
- 9.26 When the MPF is submitted the Council will consider whether it represents a sound comprehensive basis for decision-making on subsequent planning applications and whether the process of preparing it incorporated appropriate engagement with the community.

### Conceptual Framework, Land Use Allocations, Infrastructure and Other Requirements

- 9.27 The remainder of the policy sets out the conceptual framework, allocates the main land uses and identifies the main infrastructure (and other) requirements for the development of the southern extension. It explains how they should be used in the preparation of the MPF and any subsequent planning application (or applications) for the site.

### Conceptual Framework

- 9.28 The three elements of the conceptual framework are the concept statement (including an overarching vision), the concept plan and a set of design principles. Based on the best information currently available, the conceptual framework describes and illustrates, in broad terms, how it is considered that the southern extension would best be developed to reflect local constraints and community aspirations. The MPF for the southern extension should be prepared to reflect all three elements of the conceptual framework, unless a

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<sup>294</sup> Section 61Y of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, sets out powers for the Secretary of State to produce secondary legislation dealing with the issue of pre-application consultation. In the event that secondary legislation is produced, pre-application consultation could become a legal requirement for developments of the scale of the Gillingham southern extension.

<sup>295</sup> Paragraph 188, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

departure from the concept statement or the concept plan can be clearly justified as proposals are worked up in more detail.

### Concept Statement

- 9.29 The concept statement<sup>296</sup> (in Figure 9.2 below) sets out an indicative potential development concept for the southern extension. It aims to provide an initial overview of the kind of place that the southern extension should be, reflecting the results of community participation undertaken so far. The concept statement, together with the concept plan and the design principles that follow, should be used to inform the urban design strategy, which will form part of the MPF for the site.

Figure 9.2: Concept Statement for Gillingham Southern Extension

Concept Statement
<p><b>Overarching Vision for the Southern Extension:</b></p> <p>Gillingham’s southern extension will be a new, sustainable mixed-use community, primarily of housing, that is fully integrated with the existing town to increase self-containment. It will be able to meet its own local needs whilst also having highly accessible links to the existing town and employment opportunities. The new community will be designed to a high standard, reflecting agreed design principles, and provided with supporting infrastructure to create a high quality environment in which to live and work.</p>
<p><b>Placemaking Overview:</b></p> <p>The southern extension will be designed to reflect the best Dorset traditions and local character, as articulated in the Gillingham Town Design Statement<sup>297</sup>. Overall the built environment will strike a successful balance between variety and harmony, and smaller, recognizable neighbourhoods within the development will be set within a network of green infrastructure.</p> <p>The southern extension will be designed to create new townscape, where intrinsic variations in development form (e.g. layout, density, scale and massing) create an easily understood pattern of streets and other spaces. Within the layout focal points, landmarks and gateways will be highlighted with distinctive buildings and spaces. Public spaces will be well designed, with suitable management and maintenance arrangements in place to ensure their continued upkeep. All public spaces and routes will be overlooked to ensure they feel safe.</p> <p>All buildings will exhibit architectural quality. The external appearance will avoid rootless or amorphous design whilst preserving contact with the best local building</p>

<sup>296</sup> The concept statement has been adapted from Figure 4 – Potential Development Concept for the SSA on page 14 of Gillingham Southern Extension Concept Plan Workshop – March 2013: ATLAS Report on the Workshop, ATLAS (July 2013).

<sup>297</sup> Gillingham Town Design Statement, Gillingham Town Design Statement Steering Group (June 2012).

## Concept Statement

traditions, not least in the use of high quality materials.

The development will promote innovation in residential, commercial and infrastructure design with a view to achieving more sustainable ways of living and a place that is future-proof.

### Tackling Climate Change:

This new part of Gillingham shall incorporate a range of site-wide features to reduce its environmental impact, including sustainable drainage systems and recycling facilities. The Council will also promote design solutions that incorporate low carbon energy generation and building performance that exceeds statutory minima (e.g. building regulations) adhering to relevant policies in the Local Plan.

### Integrating the Southern Extension into the Landscape:

The development will sit comfortably within the gently undulating landform south of Gillingham and retain and enhance the river corridors that run through the site. Particular care will be taken along its southern edges to ensure a sensitive transition between the extended town and the surrounding countryside.

### Providing a Range and Choice of Homes:

The development as a whole shall include a range of house sizes, offering choice in the amount of indoor and outdoor space provided. The mix of homes and tenure types will reflect evidenced needs and where practicable the design of housing shall provide opportunities for homeworking. Building designs shall be as robust as practicable, with careful consideration given to the adaptability of internal spaces and opportunities for future conversion or extension. In all cases sufficient space will be provided for the discreet storage of recyclables and bins, etc.

### Creating Job Opportunities:

Sufficient employment land and buildings will be provided to ensure a wide range of job opportunities, and these will be closely integrated with residential uses where practicable.

### Providing and Delivering Infrastructure:

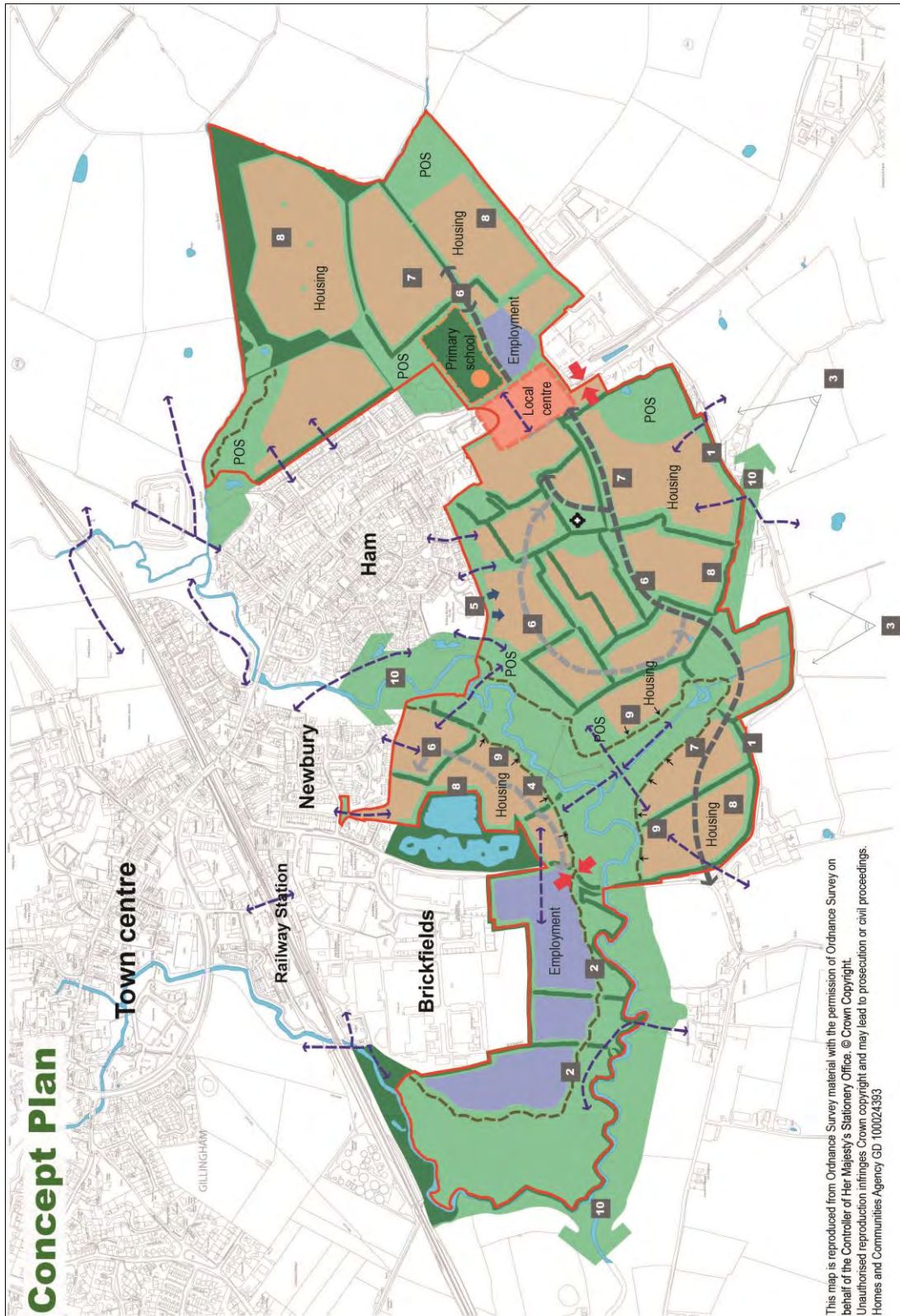
Essential infrastructure and services will be fully integrated in the design of the place from the outset and delivered in phase with the building work.

All properties will have convenient access to public transport and to a finely branched network of safe and direct walking and cycling routes, linking people to schools, work places and services, both within the development and beyond. Integration with existing streets and paths in the vicinity will ensure this new part of Gillingham is well connected to the rest of the town and the countryside beyond.

Residents will have convenient access to community facilities such as schools, local shops, healthcare and play areas.

A network of green infrastructure will successfully incorporate the retention of significant trees and hedgerows within the development. A variety of formal and informal public open spaces will also help to 'green' the place. Allotments and gardens will provide opportunities for residents to grow their own food.

Figure 9.3: Concept Plan for Gillingham



## Concept Plan Legend



Main street through the development (and potential bus route). Other key streets shown in lighter grey.



Potential location for a new primary school, adjacent the local centre. Possible expansion of St Mary the Virgin was also discussed as an option.



Mixed-use local centre, with shops and services to meet the day-to-day needs of residents and employees.



Important edges around the flood zone. Some provide opportunities for development to front onto green space.



Species rich hedgerows and existing trees incorporated within a network of Green Infrastructure (includes allotments and community orchards).



Areas that could accommodate carefully designed housing development. Density to vary accordingly.



Existing employment within the SSA, and areas that could accommodate carefully designed new employment development.



Key linkages to be established and/or retained. These primarily involve links for pedestrians and cyclists.



Potential locations for Public Open Space, integrated within the wider network of Green Infrastructure (play areas dispersed around the SSA).



Key gateways, which require special attention in terms of urban design.



High point is a key landmark.

**1**

Cole Street Lane becomes a 'green' route.

**2**

New tree planting to provide visual screen.

**3**

Note views into the site from the south.

**4**

Note views out of the site to the south.

**5**

Potential to expand St Mary the Virgin Primary School. Primary school provision needs to be resolved.

**6**

Streets not roads.

**7**

Higher density along main street/bus route.

**8**

Very sensitive approach to density/massing required along these edges.

**9**

Opportunities for housing to front onto green space.

**10**

Green Infrastructure network extends into the town centre and connects with the surrounding countryside.

## Notes

This plan seeks to illustrate, in broad terms, the ideas that emerged from the consultation workshop. It could provide the basis for an agreed concept plan for the SSA; i.e. agreed between the local planning authority and the prospective developers. The agreed concept plan could then provide the basis for more detailed site-wide master planning work.

The potential locations for formal Public Open Space (POS) provision are indicative. The appropriate quantum of formal POS and informal open space (together with the appropriate distribution of sports pitches etc.) will be resolved through subsequent master planning work.



## Concept Plan

- 9.30 The concept plan<sup>298</sup> (set out in Figure 9.3) is indicative and whilst sound reasons to depart from some aspects of it may become apparent as proposals are worked up in more detail, the characteristics of the site and the nature of adjoining uses may make it difficult to justify the relocation of certain elements of the concept plan, such as public open spaces in river floodplains or new employment uses adjoining the existing employment uses at Brickfields Business Park.
- 9.31 For other uses, such as the local centre, the principal street through the development and the position of formal open space, their precise location is less firmly fixed and there is more likelihood that it may be appropriate to seek to justify a different design solution.

## Design Principles

- 9.32 Any proposals for the development of the southern extension will be assessed against Policy 24 – Design, which sets out the Council’s approach to design. Policy 24 requires that different aspects of development form (namely, layout, density, mix, scale and appearance) respond positively to a set of design principles relating to issues such as character, ease of movement and the quality of the public realm.
- 9.33 A more site-specific set of design principles has been developed for the southern extension, reflecting important local and/or site-specific issues, identified through community participation<sup>299</sup>. In summary, these issues are:
- the successful integration of the southern extension into the Blackmore Vale landscape;
  - the retention and enhancement of the river corridors within the site;
  - the provision of a principal street, public transport and adequate parking to assist the ease of movement around the southern extension;
  - the provision of adequate storage for new homes;
  - the achievement of a high level of environmental performance, including the energy efficiency of buildings; and
  - the provision of allotments and community orchards to enable people to grow their own food.
- 9.34 The design principles set out in Figure 9.4 should be used to inform the urban design strategy, which will form part of the MPF for the site. These design

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<sup>298</sup> The concept plan is taken from page 7 of Gillingham Southern Extension Concept Plan Workshop – March 2013: ATLAS Report on the Workshop, ATLAS (July 2013).

<sup>299</sup> The design principles have been adapted from Figure 3 – Revised Design Principles on page 14 of Gillingham Southern Extension Concept Plan Workshop – March 2013: ATLAS Report on the Workshop, ATLAS (July 2013).

principles will also be used as the basis for assessing the design merits of proposals that come forward in planning applications for the development of the southern extension.

Figure 9.4: Design Principles for Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation

Design Principles
<p><b>Character - Landscape Setting:</b></p> <p>The proposed development shall be successfully integrated into its wider landscape setting through careful design of layout, scale (height and massing), density, materials and structural planting. Particular care will be taken along its southern and eastern edges to ensure a sensitive transition between the extended town and the surrounding countryside, and retain important views into and out of the whole site.</p>
<p><b>Character - Landscape Assets:</b></p> <p>Significant existing landscape and ecological assets, including river corridors and watercourses, important trees, hedgerows, ponds and other natural habitats, shall be successfully integrated within the public realm of the development. These assets will be retained and enhanced within a network of Green Infrastructure.</p>
<p><b>Character - Mix of Uses:</b></p> <p>At the macro-scale this will be a mixed-use development comprising employment, housing and community uses etc. In particular it shall include a fine-grain, mixed-use local centre, to meet the day-to-day needs of residents and employees. Whilst concentrations of certain uses will be directed towards appropriate parts of the site (e.g. employment land, or the local centre) rigid allocation of uses that would not prejudice residential amenity, or have other detrimental impacts, will be avoided.</p>
<p><b>Continuity and Enclosure – Definition of Public and Private Spaces:</b></p> <p>The distinction between public and private space shall be clearly defined throughout the development. In order to achieve this distinction in a way that is legible, buildings shall be arranged within a coherent layout that successfully defines public and private spaces.</p>
<p><b>Ease of Movement – Permeable Networks:</b></p> <p>The building layout shall take priority over the streets and car parking, so that the highways do not dominate. The building layout will help to create a permeable network of well-defined streets and spaces, which are pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly. In addition to an interconnected network of streets, a finely branched network of footpaths and cycleways, linked to existing routes, will form a highly permeable grid of movement for pedestrians and cyclists, connecting the development to destinations within the town and in the surrounding countryside.</p>
<p><b>Ease of Movement – ‘Principal Street’ and Public Transport:</b></p> <p>The layout shall incorporate a through route ensuring good connectivity with the existing main routes into the town. This route shall be designed to enable a bus service through the development to be conveniently established.</p>

Design Principles
<b>Ease of Movement – Parking:</b>
The development shall incorporate a range of car parking solutions that form part of the urban design strategy. These shall be designed to ensure that car parking is well integrated, accessible and situated so as to support rather than dominate the street scene.
<b>Quality of the Public Realm – Usable Public Spaces:</b>
The streets, squares and parks within this development will be the focus for community activity and social interaction. Streets and junctions will be designed as public spaces, accessible for all, rather than merely as functional routes for vehicular traffic.
<b>Quality of the Public Realm – Public Spaces Designed to a High Standard:</b>
All outdoor areas shall display the highest standards in terms of design, including careful consideration of materials, planting, street furniture, boundary treatment, lighting and accessibility.
<b>Legibility – Townscape:</b>
The development shall be designed to create new townscape, where intrinsic variations in development form (e.g. layout, density, scale and massing) create an easily understood pattern of streets and other spaces. Coherent street scenes will be created by striking an appropriate balance between variety and harmony in terms of external appearance.
<b>Legibility – Buildings and Landscaping:</b>
Specially designed buildings and groups of buildings, together with landscaping, will help to define important gateways, landmarks and spaces.
<b>Adaptability – Flexibility for Future Uses:</b>
Building designs shall be as robust as practicable, with careful consideration given to the adaptability of internal spaces and opportunities for future conversion or extension. In all cases sufficient space will be provided for the discreet storage of recyclables and bins, etc.
<b>Diversity – Range of House Sizes:</b>
The development as a whole shall include a range of house sizes, offering choice in the amount of indoor and outdoor space provided. Where practicable the design of housing shall provide opportunities for homeworking.
<b>Energy Efficiency and Environmental Performance:</b>
The Council will promote design solutions that incorporate low-carbon energy generation and building performance that exceeds statutory minima (e.g. building regulations) adhering to relevant policies in the Local Plan. The development shall incorporate a wide range of site-wide features to reduce its environmental impact, including sustainable drainage systems and convenient access to allotments and recycling facilities.

## Design Principles

### Safety and Security – Natural Surveillance:

A permeable network of streets faced by homes, businesses and community facilities will provide natural surveillance and reduce people's perception of their vulnerability to crime. Through successful enclosure and natural surveillance, public spaces will impart a feeling of security for all users.

## Land Use Allocations, Infrastructure and Other Requirements

- 9.35 Based on the best information currently available and the results of community participation to date, the conceptual framework provides a broad, indicative overview of the kind of place that the southern extension should be.
- 9.36 Within this framework, Policy 21 also sets out land use allocations, infrastructure and other requirements for the development of the site. These allocations are made, and requirements are set out, for the site as a whole and one of the key roles of the MPF be to demonstrate how the allocations and requirements (which are described in more detail below) can be delivered in a coordinated and phased manner, as different parts of the site are built out.

## Climate Change

- 9.37 The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension (and any subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site) should show how the proposed development would:
- incorporate measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
  - take full account of flood risk.
- 9.38 Proposals for new homes on the southern extension will need to meet the requirements of the Government's zero carbon buildings policy. Developers will need to maximise energy efficiency in the design of the new development by incorporating measures within the building fabric, such as high levels of insulation, and by making the best use of passive solar design principles through the orientation of buildings and landscaping. The incorporation of renewable and low- carbon technologies appropriate to the site, such as solar panels and ground source heat pumps are also likely to be needed to meet the requirements.
- 9.39 If the requirements cannot be met on site, developers would need to show how such requirements could be met through off-site allowable solutions, which could include:
- retro-fitting energy efficiency measures to off-site public buildings;
  - contributing to increasing the efficiency of other energy-using systems, such as street lighting; and

- fitting renewable or low carbon energy generating systems to off-site public buildings.
- 9.40 The MPF should consider the potential for a district heating scheme to serve, or to be incorporated into, the southern extension. District heating allows for the distribution of heat generated in a centralized location for commercial and/or residential heating requirements, such as space or water heating. Given the size of the southern extension and the range of neighbouring uses, there may be the potential for such a scheme, but the Council recognises that it is only likely to be feasible if the opportunity arises for a heat source to be provided in association with a new or existing employer on, or close to, the southern extension site.
- 9.41 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) will need to show how flood risk, from all sources (including surface water) will be taken into account in the development of the SSA. Also the development of the southern extension should not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere within the town or the surrounding areas.
- 9.42 The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment<sup>300</sup> shows that parts of the southern extension site are at risk of flooding from the River Lodden, the River Stour and the Fern Brook. Any proposal within the areas at risk of fluvial flooding within the southern extension would be subject to the sequential and exception tests in national policy, as explained in more detail in Policy 3 – Climate Change.
- 9.43 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) would need to show how sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) would be provided to help manage the risks of fluvial and surface water flooding. The southern extension should be designed to avoid development becoming a barrier to the natural drainage of the site and should make use of natural drainage pathways, such as existing watercourses and ditches, wherever possible.

### Environment

- 9.44 The MPF for the southern extension (and any subsequent planning applications) should show how the proposed development would conserve and enhance the locally distinctive natural and historic environment of the area, including the landscape, ecological and archaeological interests on, and close to, the site.
- 9.45 The southern extension will lie largely within the Blackmore Vale Landscape Character Area<sup>301</sup> and will form part of the landscape setting of the existing

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<sup>300</sup> Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Salisbury Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Halcrow Group Ltd (February 2008).

<sup>301</sup> Landscape Character Areas are defined in the Landscape Character Areas Assessment, North Dorset District Council (March 2008). Nearly all the site lies within the Blackmore Vale Landscape Character Area

town<sup>302</sup>. The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) would need to show how the southern extension would be integrated into the wider landscape. To achieve this, proposals for development should:

- maintain a sensitive transition between the edge of the southern extension and the surrounding Blackmore Vale landscape;
- retain and enhance the river corridors and key landscape features within the site; and
- retain a selection of views out towards the open countryside, especially to key landmarks, such as Duncliffe Hill.

9.46 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) would need to show how the habitats and species of interest currently on the site would be retained, enhanced and incorporated into the green infrastructure network. There are no designated or non-designated wildlife sites within the site although more detailed survey work has identified some ecological interest associated with the watercourses, ponds, trees and hedgerows. Species present on and/or close to the site include otters, water voles, great crested newts, bats and badgers.

9.47 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) would need to show how the archaeological heritage assets that have been identified within and close to the southern extension (and any other as yet unidentified archaeological heritage assets) would be retained and enhanced when the site is developed.

9.48 Kings Court Palace is a scheduled monument located at the confluence of the River Lodden and the Fern Brook. It will be important to protect the setting of this site in the design of the southern extension, for example by the provision of open space and landscape planting. Gillingham Park is an ancient deer park, which was formerly surrounded by a 'park pale'. Sections of the park pale to the south east of the southern extension form a scheduled monument, but the sections within the SSA, close to Kingsmead Business Park, are not subject to any designation.

### Meeting Housing Needs

9.49 The MPF should set out how the southern extension will be developed to accommodate about 1,800 homes in total. It should show how the site will be developed in phases, both spatially and over time. In broad terms, the spatial approach should be for development to commence adjacent to the existing built-up area of the town and to spread out towards the boundaries of the site.

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(LCA) although the extreme western edge adjoining Brickfields Business Park lies within the Upper Stour Valley LCA.

<sup>302</sup> As described in the Gillingham Town Design Statement, Gillingham Town Design Statement Steering Group (June 2012).

- 9.50 Policy 7 – Delivering Homes sets out the mix of house sizes (in terms of number of bedrooms) that should be provided on development sites, both for market and affordable homes. The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should seek to deliver a mix of housing reflecting the proportions in Policy 7, unless a different mix can be justified on the basis of local circumstances or viability considerations.
- 9.51 Policy 8 – Affordable Housing establishes that 25% of the total number of dwellings on the southern extension will be affordable, subject to any site-based assessments of viability. It also sets out the Council’s approach to assessing viability and resolving viability disputes. The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should seek to deliver 25% affordable housing, unless a lower proportion of affordable housing can be justified on the basis of a site-based assessment of viability.
- 9.52 The affordability of housing and an ageing population are key issues for the District, as outlined in Section 2 of the Local Plan Part 1. As the largest development in North Dorset, it is important that the southern extension contributes towards addressing these issues. Dorset County Council has identified a need for the provision of at least 50 units of extra care housing on the southern extension, which should form part of the overall provision of affordable housing. The MPF should make provision for these units of extra care housing and show where on the southern extension they will be located.

### Supporting Economic Development

- 9.53 The provision of additional employment land within the SSA will provide the opportunity for the creation of jobs to serve both its new residents and the residents of Gillingham as a whole. Land to the south of Brickfields Business Park and at Kingsmead Business Park are already allocated as employment sites in the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003<sup>303</sup> and these allocations are taken forward in this plan.
- 9.54 The MPF for the southern extension (and any subsequent planning applications for the remaining land to the south of the existing business park) should make provision for a new access from New Road (B3092) and set out how the land will be developed to provide opportunities for a range of employers. The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications for this part of the southern extension) should seek high quality job provision and high quality built design along the southern and eastern edges of this area and more general employment uses towards the western end, further away from the main views into the site.

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<sup>303</sup> Brickfield Business Park is identified as a committed site (E/15/2) under Policy 3.2. Land at Park Farm (now Kingsmead Business Park) is identified as a proposed new employment allocation (Site L) under Policy 3.2 and is allocated as Site L (E/15/6) for industrial/ business / storage uses by Policy GH8.

- 9.55 Some of the existing buildings on Brickfields Business Park are intrusive in the wider landscape and the MPF (and any subsequent planning applications for this part of the southern extension) should include proposals for strategic landscape planting to create a new, more attractive edge to the business park and better screen the site in views from the south and west.
- 9.56 Parts of Kingsmead Business Park are already developed for employment uses and further employment development may be permitted on the remaining undeveloped parts of this site in accordance with the saved policies of the 2003 Local Plan. The MPF should show the mixed-use local centre concentrated in the Shaftesbury Road corridor (as illustrated on the concept plan) with this site forming part of the same. The Council's requirements for the mixed-use local centre are described in more detail in paragraphs 9.77 to 9.79. In the event that this site does not come forward as part of the mixed-use local centre, the MPF should show it as protected employment land where development will be permitted in accordance with Policy 11 – The Economy.

### **Infrastructure**

- 9.57 Grey, social and green infrastructure need to be delivered in a timely manner both on- and off-site to achieve the vision of the southern extension becoming a sustainable mixed-use community. The provision of adequate infrastructure to serve the development also has strong community support.

### **Grey Infrastructure**

- 9.58 The provision of adequate transport-related grey infrastructure is critical to the sustainable development of the southern extension, both to accommodate the traffic generated from the development and to reflect the design principles developed for the site. The main on-site transport-related proposals that should be shown in the MPF are set out below. The MPF should also show how any off-site proposals, including those set out below, will be secured, improved and funded. The main on-site transport-related proposals should be included in any subsequent planning applications (where relevant) and planning obligations should secure the delivery of any off-site proposals, including those set out below.
- 9.59 The MPF for the southern extension (and any relevant subsequent planning applications) should make provision for a principal street through the development, linking Shaftesbury Road (B3081) in the east with New Road (B3092) in the west. The principal street should be designed to enable traffic to access Brickfields Business Park and other existing developments off New Road. It should be designed to provide the main means of vehicular access to the land south of Ham and also facilitate traffic movements south and east from the southern extension to Shaftesbury and the A30.



- 9.60 The MPF (and any relevant subsequent planning applications) should show how the principal street will be designed as a key urban design feature within the southern extension. To achieve this, it should form part of, and be at the top of, the hierarchy of the network of permeable and legible streets within the development and should be designed to enable a high frequency bus service to be conveniently established.
- 9.61 The MPF (and any relevant subsequent planning applications) should show how the principal street would be routed to avoid the main constraints on the site, namely the high point south of Ham and the floodplain of a small tributary of the River Lodden close to Newhouse Farm, as shown indicatively on the concept plan. There is some flexibility regarding where the principal street joins the Shaftesbury Road (B3081) and the nature of the junction to be provided, but the MPF should show how any arrangement would contribute positively to this 'gateway' into Gillingham and be integrated into the local centre for the southern extension (in the event that it is located on the B3081).
- 9.62 At the western end, the MPF (and any relevant subsequent planning applications) should show the principal street avoiding any part of Cole Street Lane (as shown indicatively on the concept plan) unless a suitable alternative approach can be identified and agreed with the Council. The junction at the western end of the principal street should be designed to encourage traffic from Brickfields Business Park and other areas of development off New Road to use it.
- 9.63 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for a permeable and legible network of streets within the development that are also pedestrian and cycle friendly. They should show how key 'gateways' into the town and key access points to the different areas of development within the SSA would form public spaces, accessible for all, rather than form merely functional junctions for vehicular traffic.
- 9.64 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications for the relevant part of the site) should show how a gateway to the town will be created at the southern edge of the southern extension on the Shaftesbury Road (B3081). This is the main approach to the town from Shaftesbury and also the location of the main accesses to housing developments to the south and east of Ham. The gateway should be integrated into the design of the local centre, in the event that it is located on the B3081.
- 9.65 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications for the relevant part of the site) should also show how a gateway to the town will be created on the southern edge of the southern extension around the junction of New Road (B3092) with the proposed new access roads into both Brickfields Business Park and the residential land to the east of Lodden Lakes. The gateway should be designed to reflect the need to secure high quality built design at the southern

and eastern end of Brickfields Business Park and the need to create an attractive edge to the housing development at Lodden Lakes, overlooking the floodplain of the River Lodden.

- 9.66 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should show accesses linking existing residential areas of the town to the southern extension, primarily being for pedestrian and cycle use only because they are not generally suitable to be upgraded to accommodate significant amounts of vehicular traffic. It would only be appropriate for the MPF (or any subsequent planning applications) to show a vehicular access through an existing residential area if it would be acceptable in transport, urban design and residential amenity terms.
- 9.67 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should show how the various green infrastructure elements within the southern extension will accommodate pedestrian and cycle routes and links between different areas of development to complement the network of pedestrian and cycle-friendly streets. They should also show how pedestrian and cycle routes within the southern extension would link into off-site routes to facilitate non-car borne trips to locations such as the town centre, the railway station, schools and leisure facilities. The MPF (and any subsequent relevant planning applications) should also make provision for pedestrian and cycle routes across the river corridors associated with the site.
- 9.68 The provision of the principal street will provide the opportunity for vehicular access to Cole Street Lane to be restricted to only allow access to existing properties and to prevent it being used as a vehicular through route. The principal street through the development should avoid any part of Cole Street Lane (as shown indicatively on the concept plan) unless a suitable alternative approach can be identified and agreed with the Council.
- 9.69 Subject to the above, the MPF (and any subsequent relevant planning applications): should show how Cole Street Lane would become a 'green lane' being used primarily as a route for pedestrians and cyclists with non-vehicular links into the southern extension and; should not show any new vehicular accesses from the southern extension onto Cole Street Lane.
- 9.70 There are capacity issues on the road network in Gillingham particularly at key junctions in the Shaftesbury Road/Le Neubourg Way corridor, many of which are controlled by a system of linked traffic signals. There is a particular issue with the capacity of the New Road (B3092)/Shaftesbury Road (B3081) junction and the interaction between this junction and the Le Neubourg Way/Newbury mini-roundabout. These junctions lie very close to the bridge that provides the only vehicular crossing point over the railway. The upgrading of the New Road (B3092)/Shaftesbury Road (B3081) junction and the Le Neubourg Way/Newbury mini-roundabout to increase capacity should be secured through the MPF and subsequent planning applications. Improvements to other

junctions in the Shaftesbury Road/Le Neubourg Way corridor to increase the capacity of the main north-south route through the town will be secured in the same way.

- 9.71 Developers of the southern extension will be expected to contribute towards the enhancement of Gillingham Railway Station as a public transport hub, as set out in Policy 17 - Gillingham. There are a number of gaps in existing cycle and pedestrian routes that could be completed to link the southern extension to the town centre, railway station and other facilities, for example by the provision of a footbridge over the Fern Brook at Kings Court Palace. Developers will be expected to contribute towards and work with the Council, the local community and landowners to seek the completion of these linking routes, where practicable.
- 9.72 A proportion of the traffic generated by the southern extension will travel south towards Shaftesbury and use the A30 for trips to locations such as Yeovil and Salisbury. At present traffic heading south from Gillingham on the B3081 has to ascend a steep hill, negotiate tight bends and pass through a residential area of Shaftesbury to gain access to the A30. Later in the plan period there are likely to be capacity issues on the B3081 as it approaches Shaftesbury and the provision of a link road between the B3081 and the A30 at Enmore Green is proposed in Policy 18 – Shaftesbury. Developers of the southern extension will be expected to contribute towards the provision of the link road at Enmore Green.
- 9.73 In addition to the highway and other transportation improvements outlined above, the MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) will need to show how other items of grey infrastructure will be upgraded to support the growth of the southern extension, including utilities (such as gas, electricity and water), sewage pumping stations and the town’s sewage treatment works.

### Social Infrastructure

- 9.74 The provision of social infrastructure on site will help to establish a sustainable and vibrant community on the southern extension. However, the additional population will also require the improvement of facilities elsewhere in the town. The main on-site social infrastructure items that should be shown in the MPF are set out below. The MPF should also show how off-site social infrastructure will be secured, improved and funded. Proposals for necessary on-site social infrastructure items should be included in any subsequent planning applications (where relevant) and planning obligations should ensure the provision, improvement and funding of any off-site social infrastructure items, including those set out below.
- 9.75 A mixed-use local centre will be provided within the southern extension, to meet some of the day-to-day needs of residents and employees. Given the Policy 17 – Gillingham objective of regenerating the town centre, the Council

envisages the southern extension local centre providing some small-scale retail, including some convenience shopping. The MPF should show how it will be designed as a focus for community activity and social interaction and should include:

- a new 2 forms of entry primary school and provision for a pre-school nursery;
- a doctors' surgery for about 2.5 full time equivalent General Practitioners, a dentist and a dispensing pharmacy;
- a multi-purpose community hall; and
- small-scale local convenience shops with a mixture of A1, A3 and A4 uses

9.76 The MPF (and any subsequent planning application that includes the local centre) may show some elements of residential development (including flats over shops) and commercial developments (including A2 or B1(a) Class offices) in the local centre. They should also show how the local centre will be designed to be served by buses and community transport (with a covered waiting area) and linked into the network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

9.77 The MPF should show land in the Shaftesbury Road corridor (as indicated on the concept plan), including land on Kingsmead Business Park, as the preferred location for the local centre, unless a suitable alternative location can be identified and agreed with the Council.

9.78 The MPF (and any subsequent planning application for the relevant part of the site) should make provision for the expansion of St. Mary the Virgin Primary School from 1 to 2 forms of entry. Contributions will also be required towards the expansion of Gillingham High School.

9.79 Development within the southern extension will require contributions to be made towards the provision or improvement of facilities elsewhere within Gillingham. These include: the further improvement or expansion of the existing facilities at RiversMeet and the provision of a new community hall; the expansion of the Gillingham Town Library; and the expansion of Gillingham Fire Station.

### Green Infrastructure

9.80 The development of the southern extension gives rise to a need for:

- significant areas of formal public open space;
- extensive areas of informal public open space, particularly in the river corridors;
- the retention of important trees and hedgerows;
- the establishment of a sustainable drainage system;
- the provision of strategic landscape planting; and

- financial contributions to the provision or enhancement of other green infrastructure off site.
- 9.81 The MPF for the site (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for these elements (which are discussed in more detail below) to deliver an enhanced, multifunctional green infrastructure network. They should also show how the green infrastructure network will integrate the southern extension into the wider landscape, conserve and enhance wildlife interests and provide sustainable drainage.
- 9.82 The MPF for the site (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for at least 7 hectares of sports pitches within the southern extension including football pitches, cricket pitches, all-weather pitches for five-a-side football and other sports, and tennis courts. The preferred option is for these facilities to be provided in clusters on the land to the south and the east of Ham to provide easy access for residents in different parts of the site. The location and design of any area of sports pitches should take full account of the operational impacts on adjoining land uses.
- 9.83 The MPF for the site (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for at least 1 hectare of children’s equipped play space in various locations across the southern extension. Children’s play spaces should be overlooked from nearby homes to provide natural surveillance and should be designed to provide children with an interesting, enjoyable and challenging environment in which to play<sup>304</sup>.
- 9.84 The MPF for the site (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for about 75 allotments within the southern extension to help provide opportunities for residents to grow their own food. Ideally these should be spread evenly across the site in small groups (of about 15 plots) to enable people to access them on foot or by cycle. Community orchards should also be provided in easily accessible locations.
- 9.85 The MPF for the site (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for at least 26 hectares of informal public open space<sup>305</sup> within the southern extension. This will be primarily focused along the river corridors within the site, which have the potential to provide an attractive landscape setting for development. The MPF (and any relevant subsequent planning applications) should show how new housing adjoining them will be designed to have a positive relationship with the open spaces.
- 9.86 Much of the wildlife interest on the site is associated with the river corridors and the MPF (and any relevant subsequent planning applications) should show

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<sup>304</sup> As sought in the Dorset Play Strategy 2012-2016, Dorset County Council.

<sup>305</sup> The figure of 26 hectares excludes incidental areas of informal open space, such as highway verges.

how they will be managed to conserve and enhance this interest. Within these corridors provision should also be made for alternative routes for pedestrians and cyclists to various locations within and connected to the southern extension. A non-vehicular crossing of the River Lodden should be provided to enhance the permeability of the southern extension by linking the developments to the east of Lodden Lakes and south of Ham.

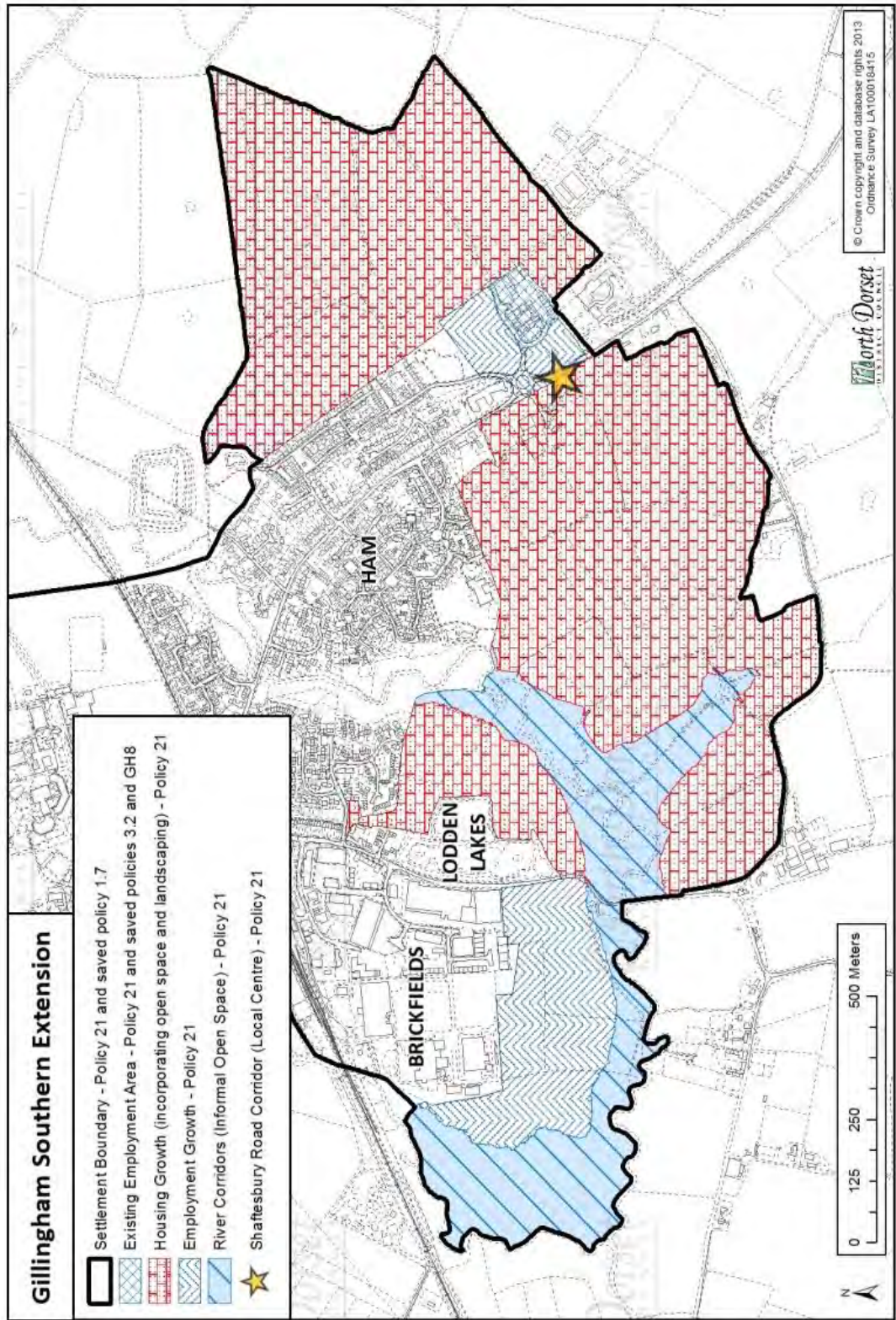
- 9.87 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should show how important trees, groups of trees and hedgerows would be retained within the southern extension. They should set out why the removal of any important tree (or trees) or section of hedgerow is necessary to achieve transport, urban design or drainage objectives. Where it is not possible to retain important trees and hedgerows within larger public open spaces, the MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for 5-metre wide publically accessible 'greenways' along their length and should avoid locating important trees and hedgerows within, or on the boundaries of, private gardens unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is inappropriate to do so.
- 9.88 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for SuDS to manage the risks of fluvial and surface water flooding. The established network of watercourses and other drainage features on the site, including ditches associated with retained hedgerows, should be used as the basis of the SuDS network wherever possible, although it is likely that some new drainage features will need to be built into the development.
- 9.89 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should seek to retain the strategic landscape planting that already exists on the site, particularly along the northern edge of the land east of Ham (Park Farm) area. Provision should be made for new areas of strategic landscape planting, particularly on the edges of the southern extension. The landscape planting should be designed to soften the edge of development by largely screening it in views from the countryside, but it should also allow some views in and out of the site.
- 9.90 The MPF (and any subsequent planning applications) should make provision for areas of new strategic landscape planting in key locations, as shown on the concept plan. These should include: on all edges of the land east of the Ham (Park Farm) area adjoining the Gillingham Royal Forest Project Area; along the southern edge of the land south of the Ham area, especially where it abuts Cole Street Lane; and along the river corridors south and west of the extension to Brickfields Business Park.
- 9.91 Green infrastructure on the southern extension has the potential to be linked with other green spaces and features adjoining or in close proximity to the site, including Lodden Lakes, the corridor of the River Lodden between the existing developments at Ham and Newbury, Kings Court Palace and areas of ancient woodland within the Gillingham Royal Forest Project Area. Developers will be

expected to contribute towards and work with the Council, the local community and landowners to create a more comprehensive green infrastructure network for the whole town.

### **Monitoring**

- 9.92 The Council will monitor the implementation of the southern extension to Gillingham using a framework which includes:
- the Annual Monitoring Report which will monitor housing and employment delivery rates;
  - the MPF which will include a phasing and implementation strategy, which will form the basis for monitoring infrastructure delivery against development progress, including that set out in the District-Wide Local Plan Part 1 Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the SSA site-specific infrastructure delivery plan; and
  - refined phasing and implementation strategy included in planning applications will provide detailed proposals from which planning obligations will be linked to the related triggers for delivery.
- 9.93 The monitoring framework for the southern extension will monitor the SSA both in terms of development progress and infrastructure delivery. Positive planning tools, such as planning performance agreements, will be used to provide effective project management and to formalise agreed programmes of pre-application and planning application work. The Council will continue to work with delivery partners, such as the Homes and Communities Agency and the Local Enterprise Partnership, to access capacity support and funding streams to enable successful delivery over the lifetime of the development. In the event that the southern extension does not deliver housing, employment and infrastructure at the anticipated rates set out in Local Plan Part 1, the MPF and the IDPs, proposed remedial actions will be set out in either Local Plan Part 2, Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan, a review of Local Plan Part 1, or a review of the MPF.

Figure 9.5: Gillingham Southern Extension Proposals Map





## **POLICY 21: GILLINGHAM STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATION**

A Master Plan Framework will be prepared for the whole of the southern extension of Gillingham to ensure that: the site will be developed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner; and facilities and infrastructure are provided and delivered in step with housing and employment development.

The Council will use the Master Plan Framework for the southern extension as a material consideration in the context of the requirements of the Local Plan which forms the main policy basis for determining any subsequent planning applications for development on the site. The Council will not support proposals for development within the southern extension prior to the production of (and consultation on) the Master Plan Framework and prior to its contents being agreed by the Council.

The Master Plan Framework (and any subsequent planning applications on or affecting the southern extension) should:

- a reflect the conceptual framework for the site (including concept plan, concept statement and design principles), unless a departure from the concept plan or concept statement can be clearly justified; and
- b demonstrate how the land use allocations, infrastructure and other requirements set out: in this policy; on the proposals map for the strategic site allocation; and in the other policies of the Local Plan, will be provided and delivered.

The Council's preferred approach is for developers to work together (and with the Council, key stakeholders and the community) to prepare the Master Plan Framework, which the Council would then agree. If necessary, the Council would consider producing a supplementary planning document or other planning document (or documents) to guide the future development of the southern extension.

### **Climate Change**

The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension (and any subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site) should show how the causes and effects of climate change will be tackled by:

- c incorporating energy efficiency and renewable energy measures in buildings, including measures to produce energy from renewables and low carbon sources to meet the requirements of the Government's zero carbon buildings policy; and

**POLICY 21 (CONT'D): GILLINGHAM STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATION**

- d consideration being given to the potential for a district heating
- e scheme to serve, or to be incorporated into, the southern extension, should a suitable opportunity arise; and
- f measures to address the risks of fluvial and surface water flooding; and
- g incorporating sustainable drainage systems into the development.

**Environment**

The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension (and any subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site) should show how the natural and historic environment will be conserved and enhanced by:

- h measures to integrate the southern extension into the wider landscape, particularly where the edge of development adjoins open countryside; and
- i measures to conserve and enhance wildlife interests, including both habitats and species within and close to the southern extension; and
- j the retention (in situ) and enhancement of significant archaeological features and their settings, including Kings Court Palace Scheduled Monument and Gillingham Park Boundary Bank Scheduled Monument.

**Meeting Housing Needs**

The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension should:

- k show how the site will be developed with about 1,800 homes in total; and
- l show how the delivery of housing will be phased over time making provision for about 1,800 homes to be delivered on the SSA in the period up to 2031; and
- m show how the delivery of housing will be phased spatially based on the approach that development will commence adjacent to the existing built-up area of the town and spread out towards the boundaries of the site; and
- n set out the mix of market and affordable homes, in terms of number of bedrooms, that should be delivered on the site, reflecting the proportions in Policy 7 – Delivering Homes, unless a different mix can be justified on the basis of local circumstances and agreed with the Council;

## **POLICY 21 (CONT'D): GILLINGHAM STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATION**

- o set out that 25% of the total number of dwellings will be affordable, unless a different percentage can be justified on the basis of a site-based assessment of viability and agreed with the Council; and
- p make provision for at least 50 affordable extra care units for the elderly, as part of the overall provision of affordable housing.

Any subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site should reflect the requirements for the provision of housing development set out above, or as amended in the Master Plan Framework.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension (and any relevant subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site) should:

- q set out how the land to the south of Brickfields Business Park should be developed: with a range of employment uses; with a new access from the B3092; to be well screened in views from the south and west; and
- r set out how the remaining undeveloped land at Kingsmead Business Park should be developed as part of a local centre in the Shaftesbury Road corridor to support the southern extension. In the event that the local centre does not include the remaining undeveloped land at Kingsmead Business Park, the Master Plan Framework (and any relevant subsequent planning applications), should show how the site will be developed with a range of employment uses.

### **Grey Infrastructure**

The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension (and any relevant subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site) should make provision for:

- s a 'principal street' linking New Road (B3092) and Shaftesbury Road (B3081), which will be designed as a bus route; and
- t a permeable and legible network of well-defined streets and spaces within the southern extension, which are cycle and pedestrian friendly, including well-designed gateways to the town and accesses to different areas of development at key points. Links from the southern extension into the existing built-up area of the town should be primarily for pedestrians and cycles; and

**POLICY 21 (CONT'D): GILLINGHAM STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATION**

- u the closure of Cole Street Lane to vehicular through traffic, other than for access; and
- v off-site highway improvements, particularly improvements to increase the capacity of the New Road (B3092) and Shaftesbury Road (B3081) junction; and improvements in the Shaftesbury Road/Le Neubourg Way corridor; and
- w off-site measures, and contributions towards off-site measures, to support the use of public transport, cycling and walking. Such improvements will include the enhancement of Gillingham Railway Station and the completion, where practicable of gaps in existing cycle and pedestrian route networks between the town and the southern extension; and
- x contributions towards the provision of a link road between the B3081 and the A30 at Enmore Green; and
- y other grey infrastructure requirements to support the development of the southern extension including the upgrading of: foul sewers; the town's sewage treatment works; utilities; and telecommunications networks, including broadband.

**Social Infrastructure**

The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension (and any relevant subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site) should make provision for:

- z a local centre in the Shaftesbury Road corridor to serve the southern extension, which will include: small scale local convenience shops; a 2 forms of entry primary school; a pre-school nursery; a community hall; health facilities (including a doctors' surgery, a dentist and a dispensing pharmacy); and other essential local facilities; and
- aa the expansion of St Mary the Virgin Primary School (from 1 form of entry to 2) including the provision of land if required; and contributions towards the expansion of Gillingham High School; and
- bb contributions towards improvements to, or the expansion of: Riversmeet (including a community hall); Gillingham Town Library; and Gillingham Fire Station.

## **POLICY 21 (CONT'D): GILLINGHAM STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATION**

### **Green Infrastructure**

The Master Plan Framework for the southern extension (and any relevant subsequent planning application, or applications, for the site) should make provision for:

- cc at least 8.5 hectares of formal public open space, including sport's pitches, children's play spaces, allotments and community orchards. At least 7 hectares should be provided as sports pitches and associated facilities. The preferred option is for sports pitches to be grouped in two clusters either side of the B3081; and
- dd at least 26 hectares of informal public open space primarily along the river corridors providing: a landscape setting for development; enhanced habitats for wildlife; and off-road routes for pedestrians and cyclists within the SSA linking to the town and countryside; and
- ee the retention, where practicable, of important trees, groups of trees and hedgerows on the southern extension site within public open spaces and publically accessible 'greenways'; and
- ff the establishment of a sustainable drainage system across the southern extension utilising, where practicable, existing watercourses, ponds, ditches and the 'greenways' associated with the retained hedgerows; and
- gg the retention of existing areas of strategic landscape planting and the establishment of new strategic landscape planting, particularly on the edges of the site to screen new development whilst also allowing views out of and into the site; and
- hh contributions towards the provision or enhancement of green infrastructure off site.