

**North Dorset District Council
Local Development Framework**

Core Strategy

Issues and Alternative Options Paper

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Contact:

Planning Policy

Tel: 01258 484201

Fax: 01258 484230

Email: planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk

North Dorset District Council

Nordon

Salisbury Road

Blandford Forum

Dorset

DT11 7LL

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1.0 Introduction

What is this document about?

- 1.1 This is the beginning of the new process of planning in North Dorset, with a greater emphasis on community consultation combined with a spatial approach. It is important that the plans produced over the next few years are truly relevant to the needs of North Dorset. It is not, however, a process that is starting from scratch as the North Dorset Local Plan was adopted in 2003 with policies relevant to 2011. This is a process that builds on what has gone before, in the context of the revised approach to planning, to address the issues, challenges and options that exist now and are likely to arise over the next 20 years.
- 1.2 The new planning system requires the Council to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF) that will set out the detailed planning strategy for the District. The LDF for North Dorset will comprise of a collection of Local Development Documents (LDD). A list of the documents the Council intends to produce is set out in the North Dorset Local Development Scheme (LDS) which was published in March 2007. The first and most important document that the Council will produce will be the 'Core Strategy' which "will provide the key spatial strategy for North Dorset and establish a clear vision and strategic objectives for the District" (LDS).
- 1.3 This consultation document lists the issues and alternative options that will guide the preparation of the Core Strategy. We hope that you will contribute by informing us of your thoughts. The results of this consultation will inform the development of 'preferred options' which we hope to consult on later in 2007.
- 1.4 This document sets out a 'spatial portrait' of where we are now (which is for information purposes only, however, we welcome your comments) followed by a draft vision for North Dorset, that sets out how the District might be in 20 years time. The vision should represent the desired outcome of the planning process. The draft vision in this document is a result of previous consultation work and we seek your views on whether it is still relevant and appropriate. Finally, the issues and alternative options for the District are set out under themes which illustrate how we could achieve the vision. We welcome your views on the suggested options and any realistic alternatives you may wish to put forward.
- 1.5 Not all issues and challenges can be resolved directly through local planning policies but, where they can, they should be identified and options agreed to tackle the issues. This is the beginning of a number of stages of plan preparation which will finally lead to the adoption and implementation of local planning policies.

What are the Issues and Options

- 1.6 The **Issues** represent the problems, difficulties and challenges that exist in North Dorset whereas the **Options** are possible solutions. An issue may arise because the aspirations of people and organisations within the District may conflict and a compromise may be needed. For example, some people may feel that new homes are needed to meet housing needs, but others may be concerned about the environmental impacts of further development. The options suggest possible ways in which such conflicts could be resolved.
- 1.7 Rather than start with a blank sheet of paper it has been possible to start with the issues already raised by the community through discussions at events and through consultations on relevant strategies. These issues are represented on the following pages and the options have been developed by taking account of both local views and national and regional planning policies. Hopefully, the alternative options demonstrate that there may be more than one solution to a planning issue.
- 1.8 Some consultation on the Core Strategy has already taken place including 'special interest group' events from 7th to 25th July 2005 and the Planning Policy Panel Core Strategy consultative meeting 27th July 2005. The issues raised at these (and other) meetings have been taken into account in developing this document. Although there has been a lapse in time between these consultation events and this present consultation, it is felt that the issues previously raised are still relevant and form a sound basis for this 'Issues and Alternative Options' consultation.
- 1.9 The main strategies that have been reviewed for issues are:
- North Dorset Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report;
 - Draft Interim Report on the Population, Housing and Economic Characteristics of the Poole/Bournemouth Periphery and North West Dorset Housing Market Areas;
 - North Dorset Young People Strategy 2006-2009;
 - North Dorset Profile 2004;
 - Dorset Community Strategy (2004);
 - DT11 Forum Action Plan;
 - Shaftesbury Area Action & Community Plan;
 - Three Rivers Partnership Draft Community Plan;
 - Sturminster Newton Area Action Plan;
 - North Dorset Annual Monitoring Report;
 - North Dorset Urban Potential Study;
 - NLUD 2006; and
 - The many Parish Plans that have been produced in the District.
- 1.10 The relevant strategies that have been reviewed for options include:
- Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 - 2026;
 - Dorset Local Transport Plan 2006 - 2011;
 - Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole Renewable Energy Strategy & Action Plan;

- North Dorset Employment Land Review;
- Audit of Open Space and Assessment of Local Need.

1.11 In addition two supporting documents are appended to this Issues and Alternative Options paper:

- *The Implications of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the Level and Distribution of Housing Development in North Dorset;* and
- *Assessment of Settlements Based on Population and Community Facilities.*

How can we be sure these are the real Issues and Options for North Dorset?

1.12 The issues listed in this document are the first attempt to compile a list of current concerns. These are an interpretation of community feelings and aspirations, policy and research and are hopefully correctly represented. However, they may be missing the point or there may be important issues that have been omitted. This is your opportunity to ensure that all important and relevant planning issues are identified.

1.13 Similarly the options may not be all inclusive and some may have been missed. This is the time to consider whether the identified options offer potential solutions to the issues and challenges. The Council will consider all the responses made to this consultation and will then develop a set of 'preferred options' for the future. The Council will also have regard to, and undertake an analysis of, the sustainability of the alternative options through a Sustainability Appraisal. Further consultation will take place on the preferred options.

What happens next?

1.14 This report forms the basis of an informal consultation stage for the Core Strategy in the planning process and should help to establish:

- A vision for the outcome of planning in North Dorset for the next 20 years;
- The important and relevant planning issues for North Dorset;
- The range of potential planning options which can realistically address the issues;
- A set of 'preferred options' to resolve the identified issues, for further consultation later in 2007.

1.15 This consultation stage will end on Friday 13th July 2007.

Please send any comments to:
Planning Policy
North Dorset District Council
Nordon
Salisbury Road
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 7LL

Fax: 01258 484230

E-mail: planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk

This document is available at: www.north-dorset.gov.uk by following the links under the 'Living' banner on the homepage to:

Planning→Planning Policy→Local Development Framework→Core Strategy

2.0 Spatial Portrait

2.1 The 'spatial portrait' of North Dorset set out below gives a brief overview of what the District is like now. It outlines:

- The physical structure of the District, in terms of the settlement pattern, environmental quality and transport infrastructure;
- The characteristics of the people who live here, in terms of age structure and recent population growth; and
- The social and economic characteristics of the area, in terms of housing, employment and community facilities.

2.2 Following on from this is a draft 'Vision' (in Section 3.0) setting out what the Council hopes the District will be like in the future. In order to achieve that vision it is considered that a number of key issues need to be addressed and Sections 5.0 to 9.0 set out a number of options on how these issues can be tackled.

Settlement Pattern

2.3 North Dorset is a predominately rural area, covering 61,000 hectares. There are no Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs – as identified in the draft Regional Plan) in the District, the nearest being Poole (15 miles south-east of Blandford), Salisbury (20 miles north-east of Shaftesbury), Yeovil (16 miles west of Sturminster Newton) and Dorchester (17 miles south-west of Blandford).

2.4 The District has a population of 65,340 (mid-2005 estimate) with 48% of residents living in the four main settlements:

- Blandford (Forum and St Mary) (10,320);
- Gillingham (10,530);
- Shaftesbury (6,750); and
- Sturminster Newton (3,560).

2.5 These towns act as the service centres for the more rural parts of the District, providing a focus for employment, shopping and leisure facilities. There are a large number of smaller settlements scattered throughout the District, the largest being Stalbridge.

Environmental Quality

2.6 The environment is generally of high quality, which is reflected in the large number of environmental designations in the District. A large part of the District (30%), the chalk downlands, is included within two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB lies to the north-east of Blandford and the area to the south-west is part of the Dorset AONB. The Blackmore Vale, a clay vale drained by the River Stour, is to the north-west and the river divides the two AONBs. The Stour and its tributaries, in particular the Winterborne and the Tarrant, can give rise to flooding under certain circumstances.

- 2.7 There are 40 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and 201 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) in North Dorset. In total, these wildlife sites cover 3,450 hectares (6% of the District).
- 2.8 The historic built environment is part of the District's cultural heritage and there are 45 Conservation Areas as well as many listed buildings.

Transport

- 2.9 Public transport provision is generally poor. The District is served by one railway station, at Gillingham, on the Waterloo to Exeter line. This is of particular importance to residents of the town and surrounding area, but also enables people to commute as far as central London. Templecombe and Sherborne stations in South Somerset and West Dorset are also used by North Dorset residents. Bus services are limited, the most frequent being the hourly service between Gillingham and Shaftesbury.
- 2.10 As a result, the residents of the District are dependant on the private car, especially those living in the villages and rural area. 86% of households owned at least one car or van in 2001. This is 13% higher than the national average. Vehicle ownership rates for the towns are lower than the District average ranging from Blandford Forum and Sturminster Newton at 79% to Gillingham at 82%.
- 2.11 The main road network is characterised by single carriageway, winding 'A' roads which connect the District with the nearest SSCT's. The A350 corridor is particularly important as it links the District with Poole and Bournemouth to the south-east and Bristol and the M4 to the north. This road passes through a number of villages where the levels of traffic reduce the quality of life for the residents. The A303 passes through the north of the District, by-passing Bourton, and the A31 cuts through the southern edge of the District for a short distance.

Age Structure

- 2.12 The proportion of people who are aged between 16 and retirement age (i.e. 60/65) (57%) is lower than the national average (61%), but higher than the County average (56%). The over 60/65 population (23%) is higher than the national average (18%), but lower than the Dorset average. At just under 20%, the proportion of the population aged 0-15 years is 2% higher than the county average, and equal to the national average. The District's age structure is influenced two unusual factors, namely the presence of several large boarding schools and a major Ministry of Defence site, Blandford Camp.

Population Growth

- 2.13 North Dorset has experienced the highest rate of population growth in the South-West region over the past decade. Most of the growth has been in Gillingham, Blandford and Shaftesbury, while many of the villages have experienced large amounts of small scale growth.

Between 1993 and 2002 the population of the District increased by 15%, which is more than double the county average (7%). Much of this population growth is due to 'net inward migration', the majority of whom have been aged 0-14 years, or 30-44 years, therefore indicating young families. The county as a whole shows a reduction in the 20 to 24 age group (i.e. the loss mainly of students who go to university and do not return, as well as the fall in the birth rate). This is also found in North Dorset with a reduction in the 20 to 29 year old range. In contrast to the rest of the county, the District has not experienced a net percentage gain in people aged 65 and over.

Housing

- 2.14 The District has experienced a high rate of housing development, exceeding the planned figures for residential development in both the Structure and Local Plans. However, house prices remain high and coupled with low wages this continues to be a major issue. North Dorset is one of the least affordable areas for first time buyers in the country (Joseph Rowntree Foundation study "Can Work – Can't Buy": 2003).
- 2.15 The average house price in North Dorset in 2005 was £213,489, but the average income in the same year was only £20,202. This gives a 'house price income ratio' of 10.6. The gross annual income needed to secure a mortgage (95% at 3.5 x salary) on this 'average house' was £57,947. An income of around £25,500 is needed to buy a one bedroom flat in Gillingham, rising to £30,100 in Stalbridge, and a 2 bedroom flat would require an income of £27,400 in Gillingham rising to £34,700 in Blandford. (North Dorset Housing Strategy: 2005).
- 2.16 In June 2002 3.6% of the District's housing stock was estimated to be unfit for human habitation. In addition, it is estimated that 13.6% of dwellings are seriously defective. However, the incidence of unfitness in the owner occupied sector is 3.1%, below the national average of 6%. There is little evidence of unfitness in the Registered Social Landlord sector but a clear problem in the private rented sector where 14.5% of dwellings in this category are unfit (North Dorset Housing Strategy 2005).

Employment

- 2.17 Employment is concentrated within public administration, education and health (28%) together with distribution, hotels and restaurants (24%). A further 15% work in manufacturing which is above the county average. (Figures for Dorset, excluding Bournemouth and Poole) There are a high proportion of part-time workers, above the national average. Unemployment rates are generally very low but more than half of those unemployed are aged 16-34 years. Average earnings are about 13% below the national average. The 2001 Census identified that the percentage of people aged 16 to 74 with no recognised qualifications (25%) in North Dorset was lower than the national and county averages of 29% and 26.2% respectively.

2.18 The development of employment land has exceeded the rate given in the Structure Plan and has kept pace with the development of residential land. In spite of this, the District has a net commuting loss, with more people commuting out than in. This movement leads to perceived traffic congestion. Blandford Camp provides employment in the south-east of the District but its future is uncertain following the Defence Training Review.

The Community

2.19 North Dorset is a healthy place to live with a good range of public open spaces. Standards of education are generally high and crime rates, and the fear of crime, are low.

2.20 Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the national and county averages and 71% of people feel that they are in good health. With the exception of Blandford, the District is well provided with formal sports facilities and their quality is generally rated a 'good' (North Dorset Open Space Audit and Assessment of Local Need: 2007).

2.21 Children at the District's state schools gained a higher percentage of GCSE's at grades C or above, than the national average, and the number of 16 to 74-year olds without qualifications is low. Literacy and numeracy skills are around the national average. Each town has a secondary school and there are a number of private schools in the district. There is no College of Further Education in the District although there is a branch of Yeovil College at Shaftesbury.

2.22 Crime rates in North Dorset are much lower than the national or county averages, with most crime taking place in the main towns of Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury. The 2001 Census shows that the fear of crime is also generally low. Nearly 100% of residents feel safe walking around their area during the day and about 77% feel safe at night.

3.0 Vision

- 3.1 This draft vision for North Dorset sets out what the District could be like in 20 years time as an outcome of the planning process. It has been derived from previous consultation work in 2005 and a decision needs to be made whether it is still relevant and appropriate or whether it needs to be amended. Since the draft vision was produced, Government guidance has been issued suggesting that the vision for a local area should include 'spatial' elements (i.e. refer to the different characteristics and needs of the different parts of the District).

The Spatial Vision

Please comment on whether you feel the vision, which is set out below:

- provides a clear strategic direction for the District;
- reflects your aspirations for the future of North Dorset;
- should be clearer about how the District's towns, villages and rural area will look in 20 years time.

- 3.2 "North Dorset will be an area where, in its market towns, villages and countryside, development will take place in a sustainable manner, respecting the unique character of individual settlements and the local community's priorities, where the quality and diversity of the built and natural environment are protected and enhanced, the local economy is encouraged to grow to provide more high skill jobs and high quality produce, affordable housing is available to meet the needs of residents and the workforce, educational opportunities are improved, community life is fostered and people's safety, health and recreational opportunities are improved."

4.0 The Five Strategic Themes

4.1 The issues already raised by the community through discussions at events and consultations on relevant strategies are represented on the following pages and the options have been developed by taking account of both local views and national and regional planning policies. Hopefully, the alternative options demonstrate that there may be more than one solution to a planning issue.

4.2 The issues and options have been grouped into the following broad themes:

Managing Future Growth
Environmental Protection and Enhancement
Economic Prosperity
Balanced Communities
Quality of Life

5.0 Managing Future Growth

Issue 1: How could future growth be accommodated in a sustainable manner?



Distributing growth between the main towns and other locations in the District

- 5.1 Past levels of growth and the way this growth has been directed in the District have given rise to concerns, such as increased pressure on the road network and a reduction in the quality of life. Lack of accessibility to suitable housing, work, services and community facilities are perceived as issues that have been exacerbated by unsustainably high levels of housing development, inadequate infrastructure provision and a lack of appropriate transport choices, particularly in the more rural areas. The balance that needs to be found is to manage future growth in a more sustainable manner.
- 5.2 National and regional Government policy is to direct growth towards existing service centres in order to achieve a higher level of self containment, thereby contributing to sustainability by supporting local services and facilities and reducing the need to travel. When the spatial policies of the draft Regional Plan are applied to North Dorset, a hierarchy of settlements emerges. The District's primary service centres (which the draft Regional Plan refers to as "Development Policy B Towns") can be considered to be the main market towns of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury. Its secondary service centres (which the draft Regional Plan refers to as "Development Policy C Small Towns and Villages") are the historic market towns of Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton and the larger villages of the District.
- 5.3 Development Policy B Towns should attract "locally significant development" and it is considered that Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury are best suited to accommodate that level of growth. Development Policy C Small Towns and Villages should attract "small amounts of development" and it is considered that Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton and the larger villages are best suited to accommodate that level of growth. Many of the District's smaller villages are not considered suitable for Development Policy C status. It is envisaged that these smaller settlements would have very little development in the future and would be subject to Countryside policies, where the emphasis is on restraint. (For more detail on how the Council has sought to apply the spatial policies of the draft Regional Plan to North Dorset, please refer to the *Assessment of Settlements Based on Population and Community Facilities* supporting document).

Options:

To determine an appropriate distribution of growth in the future:

1a	Is the recommendation that Blandford (Forum and St.Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury should have Development Policy B status acceptable?
1b	Should any other market towns be considered for Development Policy B status?
1c	Is the recommendation of Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton and the larger villages for Development Policy C status acceptable?
1d	Which villages should have Development Policy C status?
1e	Which villages should not have Development Policy C status?
1f	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 2: Identifying the spatial distribution for development up to 2016



How could growth over the next 10 years be accommodated in a sustainable manner?

- 5.4 The main driver of growth is the demand for housing and consequently the Council is required to identify sufficient land suitable for housing development. Employment is also a significant factor of growth and the Council is required to assess the supply of, and demand for, land suitable for employment use. Employment issues are discussed in more detail in Section 7.0. Mixed use developments can also contribute towards integrated sustainable development.
- 5.5 The draft Regional Plan envisages a lower growth rate for North Dorset in the future. The Council is required to accommodate 2,900 dwellings (provisional) in the period up to 2016, and 2,200 dwellings (provisional) between 2016 and 2026. Sites already identified for housing development in the existing Local Plan, together with current planning permissions that have yet to be implemented would enable about 2,000 new dwellings to be provided in the period up to 2016, leaving only a further 900 to be built over the next 10 years to meet the regional target.
- 5.6 The main issue for managing growth in the period up to 2016 is whether to focus the residual housing requirement on the main towns of Blandford (Forum and St.Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury or to allow a wider spread of development, including a higher proportion at Stalbridge, Sturminster Newton and the larger villages. Both options would help to support the functional roles of the service centres, but the smaller settlements are likely to be less self-contained. How movement


within and between the towns, villages and the rural area can be achieved in a sustainable manner needs to be taken into account when considering options for growth. Types of development that are travel intensive should be located with good access to public transport, footways and cycleways. (For more detail on the Council's assessment of how the housing provision figures of the draft Regional Plan could be applied to North Dorset, please refer to *The Implications of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the Level and Distribution of Housing Development in North Dorset* supporting document).

Options:

To focus the requirement to identify land suitable for housing development in the period up to 2016 (in addition to that already identified) should the Council:

2a	Have a rural emphasis with 65% in Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury and 35% in Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton and the larger villages?
2b	Have an urban emphasis with 70% in Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury and 30% in Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton and the larger villages?
2c	Have a greater urban emphasis with 75% in Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury and 25% in Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton and the larger villages?
2d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 3: Identifying the spatial distribution for development post-2016



How could longer term growth be accommodated in a sustainable manner?

5.7 After 2016 most of the sites currently identified for development will have been built out. Whilst there may still be some scope for accommodating growth in settlements where some capacity remains, further greenfield development may be required. However, in some locations environmental constraints will curb the potential for outward expansion. The amount of greenfield development required will depend on how much development is allocated to North Dorset in the final version of the Regional Plan. It may be that an increased level of growth is proposed for market towns across the region. It has also been suggested by the strategic planning authorities in Dorset that Gillingham could be able to accommodate an increased level of growth due to its relative lack of environmental constraints and its location well away from the major towns in the region. In the longer term, should we be seeking to

significantly reduce past levels of growth and achieve regeneration by maximising development on previously developed (brownfield) land, or do we need to maintain growth and expand onto greenfield land to meet our longer term needs? (For more detail on the levels of growth proposed for North Dorset in the future, please refer to the draft *South West Regional Spatial Strategy* and the documents on the Regional Spatial Strategy page of the Council's website).

Options:

To focus the requirement to identify land suitable for housing development post 2016 should the Council seek to:

3a	Redevelop brownfield land and regenerate Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton and the larger villages?
3b	Expand onto greenfield land beyond the edges of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, and Shaftesbury within the limit of environmental capacity?
3c	A mixture of Options a & b?
3d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 4: Accommodating growth without harming the countryside



The supply and development of previously developed land

- 5.8 Since North Dorset is a rural District, previously developed (brownfield) land (PDL) available for redevelopment is not in copious supply. The Local Plan target for development on PDL is 34%. Actual completion figures for housing development (including windfall) show that 35.6% of housing was completed on brownfield land between 1995 and 2006.
- 5.9 The draft Regional Plan sets a target for 50% of *all* development to be located on PDL across the region. The most recent estimate of the PDL available for development in North Dorset (NLUD, 2006) indicates that 50% of the post-2016 requirement for housing development (at 220 dwellings per annum) potentially could be accommodated on PDL. If development cannot be accommodated on PDL, then the only other option is for development on greenfield sites, most of which are likely to be in the countryside on the fringes of the larger settlements.
- 5.10 In addition to the land already identified as suitable for development, future growth should be managed to make the most efficient use of land. This can include both privately owned land and the re-use of publicly


owned land. Mixing different types of use in developments can also reduce demand for land, for example accommodation above shops.

Options:

How should land for development be identified?

4a	About 50% previously developed land and 50% greenfield in line with the regional target?
4b	About 35% previously developed land and 65% greenfield, which is below the overall regional target, but reflects past performance locally?
4c	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 5: Growth and Transport



How can poor transport infrastructure and high reliance on private cars be addressed?

5.11 Consideration of how movement within and between the District’s service centres and the rural area can be minimised and how the movement that does take place can be done in a sustainable manner need to be taken into account when assessing the need for growth.

5.12 The issue of transport and its role in local peoples lives is a recurring issue for local communities, as demonstrated by this brief commentary on the situation in Shaftesbury and the surrounding area: ‘Shaftesbury town’s economy, including the five major employers in the area, depends on both the town and the rural areas for its workforce, however public transport from the surrounding villages does not match work timings resulting in a high proportion of the work force having to rely on personal transport. Rural public transport between the villages and the town is limited, and access to the town for services, employment and recreation is highly dependent on personal transport. Provision for parking for work and for tourists is currently inadequate.’

5.13 Pressure on the transport infrastructure, and particularly the road network, is recognised as an important issue with extensive impacts on people’s quality of life and the environment. Although the District Council is not directly responsible for decisions regarding transport infrastructure it will work with partners, such as the County Council and the Highways Agency to negotiate solutions which take into account the local context.

5.14 The Local Transport Plan produced by Dorset County Council explains that the County Council is committed to tackling issues in North Dorset through: the production of an Area Strategy for North Dorset; re-focusing non-motorised transport provision to support commuting and short journeys in addition to nationally important tourist routes; accessibility improvements through demand responsive public transport schemes to provide comprehensive cover; and demand management through the enhanced role of market towns as service centres.

5.15 In addition to partnership working between the local transport authority and the local planning authority to achieve common goals, consideration needs to be given to how the local planning authority can best represent the community's needs to increase the opportunity of choice between travel modes.


5.16 One way the District Council can assist in the planning of transport demands and re-focusing a modal shift is to require green travel plans to be submitted with planning applications. Green travel plans require an assessment to identify the proportion of travel movement made by the various modes and aims to reduce car travel in favour of walking, cycling and public transport through mechanisms such as Planning Obligations.

Options:

Should green travel plans be required for:

5a	All development?
5b	Any development that may generate significant volumes of traffic of any kind?
5c	Any development that may give rise to an increase in car-based travel patterns?
5d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 6: Investment and planning obligations

 *How to fund affordable housing, community facilities and transport to be able to implement the District's housing strategy*

5.17 In order to make land available for the provision of services and facilities, such as affordable housing, community facilities and transport infrastructure, the Council is required to seek investment and provision through Planning Obligations that contribute towards mitigating impacts of development. However, the pressure from demand for land that is more profitable for other uses is great and this creates a risk that the current land used for services and facilities could be lost to other


development and that provision of services and facilities may not keep pace with development.

5.18 Currently, the District Council seeks funding and provision directly from development and through other authorities, such as the Local Transport Authority, Housing Corporation and the Government’s Liveability fund. In accordance with Government advice, this funding covers a range of infrastructure such as cyclepaths and footpaths, playing pitches, community halls, allotments and youth clubs. However, the individual sources of funding are insufficient to provide for all the needs of the District.

Options:

How can investment be secured:

6a	Rely on public funding?
6b	Maximise funding from development including negotiating for a wider range of infrastructure than takes place currently?
6c	A combination of both as well as searching for more innovative opportunities from other funding sources?
6d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 7: 	Climate change and renewable energy
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5.19 The contribution to and the effects of climate change can be mitigated, in part, by directing growth in a sustainable manner. This mitigation can be achieved by careful management to reduce the potential for pollution, carbon dioxide emissions and flooding (which may increase as a result of global warming). Planning future growth so that it: minimises the need to travel; incorporates sustainable construction methods; is not directly exposed to or contributes towards flooding; significantly contributes towards statutory targets relating to renewable energy, resource consumption/extraction and waste production/recycling; and, respects environmental capacity, will contribute to reducing the District’s ecological footprint.

Options:

To reduce the contribution to and effects of climate change and to promote renewable energy, should we:

7a	Seek to secure development that reaches best practice standards, such as BREEAM ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’, which are higher than the current statutory targets?
7b	Seek the provision of micro-renewable schemes (for example domestic wind turbines on new houses) as part of development

	proposals?
7c	Identify opportunities for renewable energy schemes?
7d	Suggest an Alternative Option

6.0 Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environment

Issue 8: The need to protect the environment



Protecting important environmental assets and resources

6.1 The Government is committed to protecting the largely undeveloped character of the countryside and also seeks to protect important environmental assets and natural resources.

These include:

- Designated wildlife sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);
- Nationally important landscapes, such as the Dorset and Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs);
- Historic landscape features, such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Registered Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Features of the historic built environment, such as Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas; and
- Natural resources, such as high grade agricultural land and sources of groundwater, which are (or have the potential to be) used for public water supply.

6.2 Although many of the designated sites listed above are already protected through the planning system, concern has been expressed about wider issues, such as: the deterioration of landscape quality; harm to biodiversity interests; and a lack of appropriate management.

Options:

Should the Council seek to conserve the environment:

8a	By focusing primarily on the protection of designated sites?
8b	By taking a wider view of environmental protection?
8c	Suggest an Alternative Option.

Issue 9: Impact of growth on the environment



Reconciling the need for growth with environmental protection

6.3 The Council will need to reflect its commitment to protect and enhance the environment in its Core Strategy, but it will also need to accommodate the requirements for new development, which may, in certain cases come into conflict with conservation objectives.

6.4 Examples of potential areas of conflict, which the community have already identified include:

- The lack of previously developed ('brownfield') land in the District creating pressure for 'greenfield' development;
- The demand for increased water extraction, which could place an increasing strain on water courses, particularly in periods of low rainfall;
- The impact of traffic from new development on the environment by requiring new and / or improved transport infrastructure;
- The need to design roads and junctions to maximise safety whilst minimising effects on the environment;
- Increased light pollution; and
- A growing need to improve recycling facilities and waste management.

Options:

To balance growth with protecting and enhancing the environment, should we:

9a	Prioritise the protection of environmental assets and resources above the development needs of the local community?
9b	Seek to protect environmental assets and resources, where possible when meeting the development needs of the local community?
9c	Suggest an Alternative Option.

Issue 10: The protection and promotion of green infrastructure



Green infrastructure's provision, management and maintenance

6.5 An area's 'green infrastructure' is the sum total of its open spaces and the green networks linking them together. This can include playing fields, areas for informal recreation (such as parks), nature reserves,

allotments, undeveloped floodplains and the rights of way network. An area's green infrastructure can contribute greatly to the quality of life of local people, particularly in urban areas.

- 6.6 Traditionally the value of these areas has been considered according to its primary function, but often green spaces have multiple functions and benefits. For example, the public footpath network is primarily a means of getting from A to B, but it also provides opportunities for enjoying the countryside and corridors for wildlife. Similarly, when planning new developments the Council has typically only sought to make provision for particular needs (such as playing field provision), rather than taking a more strategic overview of 'green space' and a more integrated approach to its delivery.

Options:

To meet the community's need for multi-functional green infrastructure:

10a	Is the Council's current approach to providing 'green space' adequate?
10b	Is there a need for a more integrated approach to the planning, delivery and maintenance of 'green infrastructure'?
10c	Suggest an Alternative Option.

7.0 Economic Prosperity

- 7.1 In recent years the local economy has performed well in relation to county and regional figures. Between 2000 and 2004 the estimated level of employment growth in North Dorset was found to be 5%, higher than that of the overall Dorset County Council Area (excluding Bournemouth and Poole), which grew by 3% in the same period. The estimated change in Gross Value Added (GVA), which indicates levels of profitability, over the same period shows that the total GVA of North Dorset grew by 27%, faster than the overall growth of the Dorset CC Area (25%) and the sub-region (Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole) as a whole (23%). However, the absolute level of GVA in North Dorset and in the county as a whole is below both the regional and national averages and the gap is widening. Part of the reason for the divergence of GVA between the county as a whole and the national headline figure is partly caused by significant outward commuting of potentially skilled workforce and is also caused by a higher proportion of elderly residents who are economically inactive.
- 7.2 The District provides a wide range of jobs in a variety of locations, while the majority of employment is located in the main towns of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham and Shaftesbury, particularly within the designated industrial and trading estates. Around 22,000 people are employed in the District, with roughly a fifth being employed in the manufacturing sector. Other major sectors include public administration, education and health, distribution, tourism and agriculture, as well as the Ministry of Defence.
- 7.3 High skill level occupations are forecast to increase strongly within the District from a low starting base, while low skill level occupations are set to fall, in line with national trends.

Issue 11: Location for new employment sites



The Council will need to allocate further employment land to keep pace with any new housing / population growth and to promote economic prosperity

- 7.4 There is a need to identify the most appropriate locations for employment growth in the District in order to support local communities as well as to improve economic prosperity. Sufficient land needs to be identified to attract new employers so that employment growth keeps pace with housing growth, as well as meeting the needs of existing employers. The location of these sites should, according to regional policy, be in and around the towns. On the other hand, the issue has been raised that employment in the rural area needs to be supported too.

- 7.5 As required by regional policy, the Council, in partnership with the County Council, has begun to work on identifying the strategic level of land required for the next 20 years, which will need to be translated into land allocations. The region's primary strategy is to allow growth in the towns to achieve development which is sustainable.
- 7.6 The current adopted Local Plan identified a total of 53.8ha of land for new employment growth between 1994 and 2011, of which 80% was located within or adjacent to the three main towns. In continuing the strategy of the Local Plan, in delivering sustainable communities, it is considered that the most appropriate location for the majority of employment development will be in the larger settlements of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham and Shaftesbury. However, the future role of other sites outside the main towns also needs to be considered.

Option:

To identify sufficient land suitable for development for employment use

11a	Should new employment sites only be designated within or adjacent to the three main towns of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham and Shaftesbury as these towns have the benefit of better access and facilities as well as allowing greater opportunity for people to live and work in the same place?
11b	Should existing employment sites (those identified in the current Local Plan which includes sites in smaller settlements) be extended where appropriate, to meet the employment land requirement?
11c	Identify other sustainable sites for employment use, such as in the larger villages or well located to transport routes.
11d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 12: Promote a diverse local economy



Maintain and enhance a diverse and sustainable local economy


- 7.7 It is anticipated that by identifying an adequate supply of land suitable for employment development, in the correct locations this will support those companies wishing to expand and those that may decide to locate within the District. This should help to promote the District to new businesses and in turn could lead to the increase of a more diverse and greater number of higher skilled jobs.
- 7.8 Although it is unlikely that future development on newly allocated employment sites will be of just one type (e.g. business units or offices) it will be important for the Council, in its objective to promote a sustainable economy, to be able to provide for a broad range of employment types.

7.9 Some employment uses can be viewed as being particularly ‘land hungry’ in terms of the number of jobs they support per hectare of land used. These include uses such as storage and warehousing. It may be prudent therefore for the Council, in its identification of land suitable for employment, to identify where certain employment uses will be promoted or controlled.

Option:

To encourage growth and diversity of demand for employment, should we

12a	Allocate new sites for employment without controlling the type of employment uses that will be permitted?
12b	Allocate new sites for particular employment uses where the type of employment use permitted will be strictly controlled?
12c	Allocate new sites for employment where part of the site is specifically allocated for particular employment uses and where its permitted use will be strictly controlled?
12d	Suggest an Alternative Option


<p>Issue 13: The retention of existing employment sites</p> <p> <i>The creation of a well balanced and appropriate supply of employment land is critical for the economic and social well-being of the District</i></p>

7.10 Due to the emphasis of developing housing on previously developed land (PDL - brownfield sites); some employment sites have been redeveloped for residential use. The protection of high-quality, market attractive land for employment uses from other competing uses is a key objective of this Council. The first stage of the Council’s ‘Employment Land Review’ (ELR) identified three sites which are undeveloped which should be removed from the Council’s employment land portfolio. However, the Review identified that the vast majority of current sites meet the needs of the market and are in sustainable locations, while three further sites were identified as requiring further investigation as to their future role. The Council views that the vast majority of employment sites currently designated should continue to be protected, while the three sites identified in the ELR may be suitable for mixed use development, in-line with national guidance. This would allow regeneration of those areas.

Options:

To protect land use identified as viable for employment

13a	Protect all committed and allocated employment sites?
13b	Protect all committed and allocated sites apart from those three sites listed in the 'Employment Land Review' which after further investigation may be more suitable for mixed use development?
13c	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 14:	Retailing Town centres and villages with a Local Centre need to be supported and improved in order to promote their role and function
	<i>Out of town retailing is often detrimental to the viability of town centres</i>

7.11 The Council will be undertaking a retail study in order to identify the 'health' of retailing in the District as a whole and the four main settlements of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton in particular. This work will also identify possible options to improve and expand the range of shops if it is found that the main towns are unable to support the local resident and working populations. The range and amount of shops in Gillingham in particular has been commented on and is an issue. This concern is backed by survey work which shows that the total number of shops in Gillingham is around half that of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), yet the population of Gillingham is higher than the combined population of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary).

7.12 It may be possible to continue to support the viability and vitality of existing town and local centres (including those in the villages) where they act in promoting sustainable communities. The promotion of mixed use development, which incorporates employment, leisure, retail and residential uses in the District's main towns and smaller settlements will aid in the creation of viable town and local centres, where diverse uses are already concentrated.

Options:

To enable retail centres to thrive, should we

14a	Retain the current retail hierarchy, supporting the towns of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton as Primary Retail Centres, and support Marnhull and Stalbridge as Local Retail Centres?
14b	Identify other settlements which may act as Local Retail Centres?
14c	Reassess primary and secondary shopping designations as a result of the recommendations of the forthcoming retail study?
14d	Formalise town centre designations following the recommendations of the forthcoming retail study in order to promote the 'town centres first' approach?
14e	Allocate suitable sites for retail or mixed use development to meet, in particular, identified retail needs in the main towns?
14f	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 15: Promoting a higher skilled residential employment base



Skills and employment opportunities are inherently linked. Improving the skills base is likely to attract higher skilled employment growth within North Dorset, increasing average wage levels.

7.13 Educational attainment and employment opportunities are inherently linked. The 2001 Census identified that the percentage of people aged 16 to 74 with no recognised qualifications (25%) in North Dorset was lower than the national and county averages of 29% and 26.2% respectively. In addition people with Level 2, 3 and 4 education attainment were all higher than the county average and, apart from Level 3 qualifications, higher than the national average.

7.14 Improving the general educational attainment of students as well as funding lifelong learning to fill the "skills gaps" in the District would be likely to benefit the local economy and may even result in more skilled, higher wage employers seeking to locate within the District.

Option:

To increase the opportunity to raise skills levels, should we:

15a	Introduce the requirement for a planning obligation to be made on all development in the District that will contribute towards a fund to develop employee's skills levels within the District?
15b	Set a threshold above which developer contributions have to be made towards developing employee's skills levels within the District?
15c	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 16: Homeworking

Homeworking is seen as an attractive option for an increasing number of people, placing a greater demand for both normal housing and live/work units. Homeworking can lead to both positive and negative outcomes.

7.15 With the advent of the internet, and broadband connections in particular, it is becoming increasingly popular for people to work either entirely or predominantly at home or be based from home. North Dorset, as a rural District, has a high level of homeworking with just over 14% of all people of working age being home workers, compared, for example, to 8.9% in Poole.

7.16 Homeworking is likely to result in people spending their money on everyday services and facilities closer to home, which is likely to sustain the local economy. However, demand for housing in the more rural areas of North Dorset is likely to increase, as people need to travel to work less often, or not at all, which could result in local house prices increasing. In addition, for those people who work from home for part of the time but still commute to a work establishment for the remainder of the time, it is likely that they will be more willing to live further from their place of work, involving longer but less frequent commutes.

Option:**To promote sustainable working patterns, should we:**

16a	Specifically promote homeworking through the greater emphasis on live/work units?
16b	Develop housing/employment policies in the LDF to allow homeworking where this is acceptable?
16c	Not specifically promote homeworking as it may lead to negative impacts particularly concerning the affordability of housing in the more rural areas
16d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 17: Tourism



The District has the potential to promote high-quality tourism accommodation and attractions

7.17 With a broad range of tourist attractions including numerous historical settlements, monuments and country houses, North Dorset is a popular destination for tourists. Issues surrounding tourism include the impact of increased tourism on the cultural and natural environments, as well as the social impacts of typically low wages and seasonal employment. Other issues concern the loss of quality accommodation in the District to competing uses (typically residential).

Option:

To meet the demand for high quality tourism should we:

17a	Support proposals to increase the quality of the tourism available, promoting investment in existing attractions and destinations?
17b	Promote more sustainable forms of tourism, for example: improving accessibility and reducing the need to travel; retaining visitor spending in the local economy; promoting the sourcing of materials locally; and, meeting the training needs of potential employees?
17c	Promote the retention of quality accommodation to support North Dorset as a quality tourism destination?
17d	Promote new tourism development where there is evidence that this can be appropriately accommodated, based on realistic, and well evidenced, measures of demand in the most locally accessible locations?
17e	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 18: Re-use of Buildings in the Countryside and Farm Diversification



In order to promote viable communities and to support agriculture, certain economic development in the countryside may be acceptable, managed primarily by local and regional planning policies.

7.18 Most future development will continue to be located within settlements allocated with a settlement boundary (see Issue 1) in order to deliver development that is more sustainable. However, Government Policy identifies that in order to maintain and promote viable rural economies certain development in the countryside can be appropriate.

7.19 The re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings for non-agricultural uses is promoted by national and regional policy and criteria for determining proposals will need to be set out in the final Core Strategy. In order to balance the needs of rural communities and the need to protect the District's natural environment, the re-use of existing buildings will need to be prioritised over the development of new buildings.

7.20 Food and drink is a largely successful industry in the South West. However agriculture, which has always been fundamental to rural and market town communities, is continuing to go through major changes. Diversification into other activities may help to support farming operations within the District, which may otherwise cease to be viable.

7.21 However, it will still be important to continue to manage changes that take place within the countryside in order to promote development which is appropriate in terms of its scale and impact within the rural environment.

7.22 Recently this has led to proposals for tourist accommodation, leisure activities, equestrian enterprises, etc. By supporting sustainable and appropriate rural diversification schemes, particularly where these are accessible by public transport, the Council would be able to promote a diverse local economy.

Option:

To enable sustainable re-use of buildings and rural diversification, should we:

18a	Promote the re-use of buildings for specific uses (e.g. tourism, business use) that will diversify the rural economy?
18b	Develop farm diversification policies to support farming enterprises, where this is acceptable in other respects?
18c	Set out criteria to ensure a balance between promoting a diverse and healthy rural economy and other objectives including the protection and promotion of the countryside?
18d	Suggest an Alternative Option

8.0 Balanced Communities

Issue 19: Affordable housing and house sizes



High house prices and low income levels mean that houses are not affordable and the size of properties built does not match need

- 8.1 It is important to meet local needs in the supply of housing whilst considering the needs of all sectors of the community and developing mixed and balanced communities.
- 8.2 The figure for those aged 60/65 in the District is higher than the national figure, but lower than the county average. The population breakdown shows a lack of young adults with many moving out of the District and indeed the county. The population profile is reflected in the household composition. Those living alone are mainly pensioners, again reflecting the loss of young adults.
- 8.3 There is a need for a mixture of tenures, allowing people to buy or rent properties and for new housing to provide for a variety of needs. For example, two bedroom properties for young people and supported housing for old and young and those with specific needs.
- 8.4 Development in the District has been at a high rate over the past 10 years. Gillingham in particular has received a high level of new development, much of it on greenfield sites allocated in the Local Plan. There has also been development in many villages, mostly being on small sites though often these have been larger properties. Generally, there is a concern that much recent development has been of 3 and 4 bed dwellings. The Annual Monitoring Report shows that while this has previously been the case, a higher number of 2 bed dwellings have been built than 4 beds in 2005/6. There was also an increase in the number of 1 bed dwellings in the same year. However, this has not had a great effect on the housing stock and house prices for smaller properties may be high due to their restricted supply. In spite of the high rate of development throughout the District, the needs for housing outstrip supply by 15:1 and there is an upward trend of families being accepted as homeless. For example, in Shaftesbury, homelessness has increased by 34% in the last five years.
- 8.5 The majority of properties in the District are privately owned with a low proportion of publicly rented property. There are concerns that the amount of publicly owned property has declined with people taking up the Right to Buy option. The housing stock is also affected by the number of second homes in the District and the higher number of empty properties. Second homes make up less than 1.5% of the housing stock,

a small proportion but double the national average. Both factors affect the availability of property to purchase and in the case of second homes where there may be additional purchasing power, the price of some properties may be affected.

- 8.6 It is recognised that the lack of affordable housing is an issue for the District. House prices are high and wages are low. North Dorset is one of the least affordable areas for first time buyers in the country. Whilst this is a problem throughout the District, there is some variation. The gap between income and house prices is smaller in Gillingham than it is in Blandford.
- 8.7 Whilst larger housing sites have provided a reasonable amount of affordable housing, as high as 40% in recent developments, much of the development in the District has been on smaller sites where there is no requirement for developers to provide for affordable housing, either on or off site. Under current policies many smaller sites fall below the 'policy threshold' for affordable housing provision.
- 8.8 Draft regional policy requires 30% of all housing developments across local authority areas to be affordable with up to 60% or higher in areas of greatest need. To meet the 30% requirement, it would be necessary to set a higher figure (of at least 35%) to be affordable on larger sites, as those below the threshold would deliver nothing. However, the lower housing provision figure for the District will have an impact on the amount of affordable housing which can be negotiated from proposals for new development. The regional strategy of concentrating development in the larger settlements will make it easier to meet the demand for affordable housing and for specific housing needs than if development is spread around the District on small sites.
- 8.9 National policy sets a minimum site threshold of 15 dwellings to trigger a requirement for affordable housing provision. It is possible to set lower thresholds, where viable and practicable, and set different thresholds across the plan area.
- 8.10 As can be seen in Issue 1, it is likely that settlement boundaries will be removed in the smaller villages, which will prevent the development of open market houses. There is still an issue about whether exception sites should be allowed in these villages for affordable housing and if so, where the sites should be located. These rural exception sites are only allowed where settlements have populations of less than 3,000. The selection of such sites will also depend on the commitment of a Registered Social Landlord.

Options:

To meet the needs of the community for increased levels of affordable housing and choice of tenure, should we:

19a	Negotiate for a higher proportion of affordable housing than in the past, based on the needs of the District?
19b	Negotiate affordable housing on smaller sites than previously?
19c	Negotiate for a financial contribution on the smallest sites, including proposals for sites of one dwelling?
19d	Require a mix of housing in terms of size and type to meet known local needs plus one of the above?
19e	Should rural exception sites be allowed only in the larger villages which have a range of facilities?
19f	Should rural exception sites be allowed adjacent to <i>or</i> within the smaller villages?
19g	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 20: Meeting the needs of all groups in society



There is a shortage of pitches for gypsies and travellers

8.11 Evidence shows that there is a demand for about 165 pitches for gypsies and travellers in the District in the period up to 2011. This includes the need for 100 temporary pitches for the Steam Fair over a two to three week period each year. A site should be provided for a short period each year close to the Steam Fair site to meet this particular need. To meet national requirements, Councils are required to make land available within or adjacent to settlements to meet the needs of the local people including gypsies and travellers.

Options:

To identify sufficient land suitable for Gypsy and Traveller pitches

20a	Should sites for gypsies and travellers be found in and around the towns where access to facilities is easier?
20b	Should sites be found in and around the villages, if these meet the needs of gypsies and travellers?
20c	Should sites be found around the rural areas?
20d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 21: The density of development



How can higher density development help to make the best use of land?

8.12 In recent years much development has taken place within the towns and villages of the District. Since the Government's priority is for development on previously developed land, this will continue in the future. Development is also required to make the most efficient use of land and in the past a minimum density requirement (of not less than 30 dwellings per hectare) has been set by national policy. Development at higher densities may encourage smaller dwellings to be built but at the same time it is important to ensure they are designed to a high standard and meet high standards of sustainable construction. Very high densities can lead to 'town cramming' and poorly designed schemes can both adversely affect the character of an area and reduce the quality of life for local residents.

Options:

To accommodate housing development whilst making efficient use of land, should we

21a	Continue to allow densities at 30 dwellings per hectare (dpha)?
21b	Allow lower densities than 30dpha to protect the character and amenity of areas but define other areas where density can be higher?
21c	Look for Greenfield sites when the housing targets cannot be met by the limited supply of brownfield sites and the introduction of lower densities in some areas?
21d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 22: Managing movements from new development



Separation of working and living environments creates the need to travel


8.13 Travel movements from development are minimised if development is placed in locations that have existing or potential for enhancement of infrastructure and services that bolster self containment. To maximise travel movement by walking, cycling and public transport major new development should be placed where a choice of travel modes is available. In some situations types of development that are travel-intensive, particularly at peak periods, should be located close to high frequency public transport services.

8.14 The ability to be able to walk or cycle from home to work significantly reduces the need for car travel. Placing living and working accommodation in close proximity to each other rather than in separate “estates” enables this. This is classed as mixed use development.

Options:

Do you feel that developments for living and working should be located:

22a	Together (“mixed use”)?
22b	On separate estates?
22c	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 23:	Environmental Design for Different Transport Modes
	<i>Impact from choice of transport can be mitigated partly through design</i>

8.15 The travel demand generated by a new development is quantified through a transport assessment. The assessment identifies the proportion of travel movement made by the various modes and aims to reduce car travel in favour of walking, cycling and public transport.

8.16 The balance of trips by different modes can also be significantly influenced by the form and internal layout of the development together with its relationship and connections with the setting in which it is placed. One spatial consideration in this design process is whether to allocate specific highway space dedicated to different modes or to use design solutions that involve different modes of travel using the same highway space.

Options:

Do you think that development designs should:

23a	Have separate lanes for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and other forms of transport, even if this not particularly efficient in terms of land use and providing effective routes?
23b	Have land-efficient shared space that provides convenient and safe shared routes for movement of all types of transport?
23c	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 24: Rural accessibility



Community ownership of Transport Plans

- 8.17 For many journeys in North Dorset, in particular in the villages and rural areas, buses or taxis are the only realistic alternative options to the private car. Bus services have, traditionally, evolved as being managed with vehicles travelling on predetermined routes to a prescribed timetable on the model of railway services where the passengers travel choice on both is reactive to the route and frequency offered.
- 8.18 In past decades the use of both buses and trains reflected established, fairly universal peaks of travel influenced by narrow windows of employment, school start and finish times, shop opening hours and the dependency of many travellers on public transport by virtue of not owning a car. Regular patterns such as this are no longer such a feature of current life. Working day patterns have become extensively varied – as have shop and service opening hours.
- 8.19 Unlike trains, there are more choices of routes for buses though in the recent past these have been restricted. It is now possible to have demand responsive transport making public transport more accessible than previously when buses followed a set route. These new services put the individual in the position of being a relatively proactive traveller on public transport. The increasing access – even by older generations – to travel information through personal computers and mobile phones is rapidly increasing the potential for people to use these new services.
- 8.20 There is an emerging opportunity for travellers in rural areas to be even more proactive. Travel planning has been based mostly on work places but now is being used in urban residential developments. The more successful of these involve car share schemes and the use of public transport together with the reduction in ownership of private cars.
- 8.21 Communities could help to shape their own proactive approach by exploring the possibility of community travel plans, by analysing what travel facilities they require and how they can be achieved by working together.
- 8.22 Parish Plans and Village Design Statements are clearly illustrating how communities can very successfully play an increasing role in shaping their own futures and perhaps this could be seen as a step forward, resolving some of the accessibility issues for their communities.

Options:

To help communities be proactive in accessing public and community transport services

24a	Do you feel land should be identified within your village or community that would make a good accessible, perhaps central, location as a main passenger collection point for demand responsive transport?
24b	Do you feel land should be identified within your village or community that would make a good connection route that does not exist at the moment for demand responsive transport to use?
24c	Suggest an Alternative Option

9.0 Quality of Life

- 9.1 Being sure that the community's voice is heard and that the community is involved in the decision making process contributes to the quality of life of the District's residents. It is hoped that through the Community Planning process and by contributing to the Issues and Options paper, people will feel that their views matter. There are other more tangible issues which relate to quality of life, such as the amount and quality of open spaces, the provision of facilities and access to them.

Issue 25: Quality of public spaces and design



How well designed are new developments?

Can design effect an improvement in anti-social behaviour?

- 9.2 There is a perception that some development has been poorly designed and planned and that there has been a lack of innovative and sustainably designed development. Some of the worry may stem from how enjoyable spaces are to use, how easy it is to find the way around and how secure people feel in those spaces. Noise, vibration and physical intimidation from traffic can add to a feeling of unease. Dislike of public spaces may also arise if there is evidence of litter, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. These have been raised as areas of concern, along with the fear of crime. The District has a relatively low crime rate but the perception of crime is higher. Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, the Council must take account of the impact of its work on crime and disorder and this requirement could be made more prominent in the work of the local authority.
- 9.3 There are, however, some good examples of well designed buildings and developments in the District, some of which have won national awards. The built and natural heritage is highly appreciated by local residents and there are obvious wishes to protect it. The Council has also produced advice for the villages and towns working groups who wish to produce a Village or Town Design Statement for their settlement, which can be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Options:

To protect our built heritage and encourage high standards of design, should we:

25a	Ensure there are policies which require high standards of design for all development including roads and road management schemes?
25b	Encourage all settlements with settlement boundaries to produce a Design Statement?

25c	Where policies are developed which refer to the regeneration of sites in, or adjacent to, the town centre, should mixed use development be promoted to ensure 24 hour natural surveillance?
25d	Should policies ensuring the implementation of “designing out crime” in all new development be developed to ensure the Council meets its legal requirements?
25e	Should the provision of leisure facilities be encouraged, especially those that appeal to young people, as well as require youth shelters, skate ramps and other facilities in residential development?
25f	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 26: Moving around without using a car



People rely on cars to make journeys

- 9.4 Development should also allow people to move around the area using pedestrian routes which are free from conflict with traffic. This is not always the case at the moment and the point has been raised that there is too much emphasis on using cars. Improved access gives opportunities to incorporate activity into daily lives, by allowing people to walk or cycle. The Government, via the Primary Care Trust and other organisations such as Sport England, support this concept. It also links with concerns over climate change and zero carbon initiatives.
- 9.5 There have been comments that facilities, including schools, are not easily accessible. It may be difficult to walk or cycle around a town on footpaths and cyclepaths, there may be little or no public transport to facilities in particular to the towns from the villages and no footpath or cyclepath linking the village to the town. This issue has been raised particularly at Gillingham, which has recently experienced high levels of housing growth.
- 9.6 With transport links from the rural area into the town being poor, there are fears that this has resulted in social exclusion for this part of the population, in particular for those living further away from the larger settlements and those without access to public transport. It is felt that transport solutions need to be more “joined up” and that there is a lack of co-ordination with employment, education and leisure transport provision.
- 9.7 There are hopes that the conversion of the railway line, parts of which have been carried out, between Sturminster Newton and Sturminster Marshall will have a significant impact on the settlements on the route, in particular, Blandford. Completion would allow an alternative travel route from a number of villages. This will provide a cycling and walking route

for day to day trips but also provide a recreational route. The District Council currently has a policy of seeking financial contributions from developers of residential sites towards provision of footways and cyclepaths, as set out in the Local Plan and in a Planning Guidance Note. This approach is likely to continue but the range and type of facilities will need to be updated.

Options:

To reduce reliance on unsustainable modes of transport, should we:

26a	Improve facilities for cyclists and pedestrians in the towns so that community facilities, open space, schools, employment and shopping areas can be accessed more easily?
26b	Locate new facilities of all kinds so that they are within walking and cycling distance of residential areas?
26c	Design new residential areas so that residents and visitors can move around easily without needing to use a car and locate them so they are accessible to facilities and the town centre?
26d	Encourage linking villages near to the towns with footpaths and cycleways including the protection of the old railway line from development to encourage its use as a trailway?
26e	Encourage forms of public transport which allow for people to get to all types of destinations?
26f	Seek contributions from developers for improvements to footpaths and cycleways to link their development with facilities, employment areas and town centres?
26g	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 27: Built Facilities



The growth of facilities has not kept pace with the growth of the population and does not meet the needs of the District

9.8 North Dorset's high growth levels have left facilities struggling to keep up. For example, in Gillingham there is no central community facility and the Leisure Centre needs replacing. Where facilities do exist, such as Shaftesbury Arts Centre, they may not be sufficient. In the villages, village halls may need to be improved so that they provide for all age ranges as well as providing a multi purpose facility. With a rural spread of villages over the District many villages aspire to upgrade their halls. For example, this has been raised as an issue in the Blandford area where it is felt that this is exacerbated by a lack of leisure facilities in the town itself and across the District there is a lack of transport to get to

those that are provided. The creation of more built facilities would provide space for the growth and change in demand for activities such as child care and life long learning.

9.9 Improved facilities have been requested from all over the District to cater for the needs of young people. These may be built facilities or open space and recreational facilities, including play areas. For example, Shaftesbury residents feel that while they have attractive and accessible open space, provision for teenagers is limited. The District currently has a policy of seeking contributions from developers of residential sites for a range of community facilities, set out in the Local Plan and in a Planning Guidance Note. This approach is likely to continue but the range and type of facilities will need to be updated.

9.10 The provision of educational facilities is undergoing transformation. The County Council has changed the three tier system of education to a two tier system for the Blandford and Shaftesbury areas. This has resulted in the need to expand some schools and the reuse of others. This process is not yet complete. In spite of this, it is possible some new education provision will be required to cater for growth, especially if the growth is concentrated in one or two areas of the District.

9.11 In the health sector the Dorset Primary Care Trust has recently been formed. The Trust is currently taking stock of its current provision of surgeries and hospitals and this information will be used to inform the requirements for health care facilities.

Options:

To enable the provision of facilities in accordance with the community's needs, should we:

27a	Protect existing community facilities from development for other uses?
27b	Ensure that where policies are developed for regenerating sites within or adjacent to town centre, they are for mixed development which includes sites for community use?
27c	Require developers of large sites to include community facilities where there is a need for them?
27d	Require developers of all sites to contribute to the provision of community facilities on sites allocated in the future as a result of community requirements?
27e	Option 27c or 27d and require facilities to be in place or planned prior to residential development taking place?
27f	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 28: Open spaces



Open spaces need to be protected and enhanced and new spaces provided

9.12 Open spaces are much appreciated by residents but it is felt that there is a need to protect these spaces and ensure that none are lost. The loss of spaces is a particular worry for Gillingham residents, coupled with a desire to have good management of existing spaces and the acquisition of new spaces. In Shaftesbury, there are concerns that opportunities for more formal recreational activities are limited, and across the District there is a need for better quality pitches, facilities and courts to complement the existing stock. These are needed to cater for the number of active sports clubs in the District and to ensure there is sufficient capacity for more informal matches to take place.

9.13 Some spaces are felt to be inappropriate and inaccessible. The Council commissioned consultants to carry out an Audit of Open Space and an Assessment of Local Need which will help to determine the open space requirements in the future. The District Council currently has a policy of seeking contributions from developers of residential sites for a range of recreational facilities, set out in the Local Plan and in a Planning Guidance Note. This approach is likely to continue but the range and type of open space will need to be updated.

Options:

To enable the provision of sufficient multi-functional open space, should we:

28a	Protect existing open space?
28b	Work with owners of open space to improve existing open space?
28c	Secure the improvement of existing open space through development where appropriate?
28d	Carry on seeking contributions from developers for open space and expand categories of open space to include green corridors including the railway?
28e	Develop a strategy on the provision of open space, concentrating on the provision of larger sites in the towns?
28f	Develop a strategy which focuses on smaller sites in the towns and villages?
28g	Examine the Audit of Open Space and determine with the community whether any spaces are inappropriate and are no longer suitable and then determine whether it is possible to use sites for another form of recreation or whether they should be redeveloped?
28h	Suggest an Alternative Option

Issue 29: Car parking



How much car parking should be allowed?

- 9.14 The availability of car parking has a major influence on the choice of means of transport. Even in locations well served by public transport this has a significant influence on how people choose to travel. Too much parking or poorly designed parking can reduce the density at which housing is built. This may mean that more land may need to be found for development. Under provision, on the other hand, can lead to cars being parked inappropriately and can lead to difficulties for access by emergency or service vehicles.
- 9.15 There are three components to the overall issue of provision and management of parking:
- 9.16 First, is the amount of car parking provided for dwellings. This must be enough to cater for the reasonable needs of individuals, allowing them to make a choice about the type of transport they will use for a specific journey. The choice will be influenced by where they live, where they are going and what choices of transport there are. The amount and location of parking provided, including for motorbikes and bicycles, must not cause clutter, inconvenience or danger. Parking must not hinder access by emergency or service vehicles and must also be secure.
- 9.17 Second, is the availability and efficiency of transport options for a particular journey. People may feel that they have no alternative to the car (and therefore will require parking at either end of their trip) if alternatives are not: available; easily accessible; convenient; or not competitive in terms of cost. This issue is covered in more detail under Options 2, 5, 6, 22, 23 and 24.
- 9.18 Third, is the parking standard applied at the destination of trips: This destination may be a place of work, a service facility such as a surgery, a place for shopping or a place for leisure and recreation. The degree to which a destination is accessible by non car transport coupled with the amount of parking available influences the individual's choice of transport to that destination. The balance of accessibility by non car modes and lower amounts of car parking must consider issues such as the ability of a market town to be commercially viable as a service centre serving a rural area or the proximity of a place of employment to public transport services and to routes for walking and cycling. At the same time, parking restraint must not exacerbate deprivation or exclude any part of the community. The location of car parking is important. It must be located to allow public transport, walking and cycling to take priority when considering journeys. Very low cost parking at public transport hubs can bring about a reduction in travel by the private car. This would need to be managed by low cost parking being available only to those travelling on

the public transport which serves the hub. They must also provide secure locations to park motorcycles and bicycles. Restraint and management of destination parking standards can be achieved by a combination of availability of parking spaces and the time based cost of purchasing use of that space.

Options:

Residential Parking

29a	Set parking standards for residential development which provide well designed and restrained parking throughout the District, promoting good design and efficient use of land?
29b	Set parking standards for residential development which provide well designed and restrained parking throughout the District but varies across the District depending on accessibility to facilities and other forms of transport?
29c	Set parking standards for residential development that allow high amounts of parking, recognising that this will have an effect on the living environment, quality of design and the environment in general?
29d	Suggest an Alternative Option

Destination parking

29e	Set parking standards for other development which limits the amount of parking available, looks to make dual use of car parks and promotes good design and efficient use of land?
29f	Set parking standards for other development which limits the amount of parking where other forms of transport serve the location?
29g	Set parking standards for other development which accepts an unrestrained amount of parking, recognising that this will have an effect on the living environment, quality of design and the environment in general?
29h	Suggest an Alternative Option