

**The Implications of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the Level
And Distribution of Housing Development in North Dorset**

Supporting Document to

The Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper

May 2007

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This aim of this background document is to set out the implications of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the level and distribution of housing development in North Dorset. At the time of writing (May 2007) the draft RSS was in the process of being considered by the Examination in Public (EiP) Panel and there was considerable uncertainty about the level of housing development that North Dorset District Council (NDDC) would have to accommodate, particularly in the period post-2016.
- 1.2 In order to provide some guidance on potential options for the distribution of future development in North Dorset, this document sets out a number of numerical scenarios, based on the policies of the draft RSS itself, NDDC's comments on the draft RSS and the advice of the strategic planning authorities in Dorset (also known as the Section 4(4) Authorities) on how a higher level of development could be accommodated in line with the latest (2003) household projections.
- 1.3 These numerical scenarios are examined in the context of the policies that establish the main spatial strategy of the RSS. Regard has also been had to the 'commitments' (in the broadest sense) that existed in North Dorset at the end of March 2006. The document goes on to explain how the RSS will have a major influence on the choice of options available to the Council.

2 The Regional Spatial Strategy

- 2.1 The RSS will determine the level of housing development that each local planning authority in the South West will have to provide in the period 2006 to 2026. The draft RSS was submitted to Government on the 31st March 2006 and was subject to a 12-week period of public consultation from early June until 30th August 2006. The EiP into the draft RSS will take place in Exeter during the summer of 2007, with a report expected from the EiP Panel in October 2007. However, this report will then need to be considered by the Secretary of State and the final version of RSS will not be published until mid-2008.

3 The Need to Manage for a Lower Level of Housing Development

- 3.1 At the present time (May 2007) it is uncertain how much development NDDC will have to provide. However, whatever scenario is eventually approved, it is likely that the overall scale of development in North Dorset will be significantly lower than that which has been delivered since 1994 (i.e. 456 dwellings per annum (dpa) gross) and no more than the historic planned rate (i.e. 347 dpa gross for the period 1994 – 2011, as set out in the current Structure and Local Plans).

- 3.2 Oversupply against the current planned levels of housing development is a major issue in North Dorset. Monitoring shows that there is oversupply against the planned rates in all the Local Plan sub-areas of the District except Shaftesbury (i.e. in Blandford, Gillingham, Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural areas). The highest level of oversupply is in the rural area where, at the end of March 2006, it was running at 73% above the planned rate.
- 3.3 Concern about oversupply has been expressed by the Audit Commission in their Inspection Report of the Council's Planning Service produced in July 2006. Oversupply was one of the main reasons why the Council was assessed as only providing a fair, one-star service (albeit with promising prospects for improvement). Paragraph 2 of the report summary states that *"the Council provides a fair planning service because of the Council's previously relaxed approach to residential development which has led to housing oversupply and undermined the sustainability policies in the local plan."*
- 3.4 The Core Strategy will, therefore, need to manage for a lower level of housing development, both to reflect the lower housing figures in the emerging strategy of the draft RSS and to address concerns about oversupply, which are seen as undermining more sustainable patterns of development.

4 Housing Number Scenarios

- 4.1 Despite the current uncertainty about housing numbers, it is possible to consider the implications of four potential scenarios, which are:
- **Scenario 1** – the draft RSS housing provision figures remain unchanged;
 - **Scenario 2** – the draft RSS figures for the period 2006 – 2016 remain unchanged, but the figures post-2016 are increased in line with the Council's response to the draft RSS;
 - **Scenario 3** – the draft RSS figures are increased in line with the Section 4(4) Authorities 'pro-rata' scenario (Scenario 1) to meet the latest (2003) Office of National Statistics (ONS) projections;
 - **Scenario 4** – the draft RSS figures are increased in line with the Section 4(4) Authorities 'preferred approach' to meeting the latest ONS projections (including the significant expansion of Gillingham post-2016).
- 4.2 The numerical implications of these scenarios are set out in the table below.

Table 1 – Average Annualised Rates and Total Levels of Housing Development Required under Different Scenarios for Housing Provision						
	Rate 2006 - 2026	Rate 2006 - 2016	Rate 2016 - 2026	Total 2006 - 2026	Total 2006 - 2016	Total 2016 - 2026
Scenario 1	255	290	220	5,100	2,900	2,200
Scenario 2	270 - 290	290	250 - 290	5,400 – 5,800	2,900	2,500 – 2,900
Scenario 3	310	310	310	6,200	3,100	3,100
Scenario 4¹	315 - 325	290 - 310	340	6,300 – 6,500	2,900 – 3,100	3,400

5 Will the Housing Numbers Go Down?

- 5.1 The household projections that were produced by the ONS in 2003 indicated that the level of housing required in the region would be higher requiring 28,000 dpa across the region, rather than the 25,000 dpa originally envisaged. The new PPS 3: Housing, produced in November 2006 also requires regional planning bodies to have regard to the latest projections when formulating their RSSs. It is, therefore, very unlikely that the housing numbers in the draft RSS will be reduced following the EiP, although for 'remote rural areas' like North Dorset, which are not generally considered to be sustainable locations at the regional level, it is possible that the draft RSS figures will remain unchanged.

6 Housing Numbers 2006 - 2016

- 6.1 Whatever the outcome of the debate at the EiP, there is likely to be relatively little change to the housing provision figure for the period 2006 – 2016 for North Dorset. The 290 dpa figure for this period already includes an allowance for committed development and the draft RSS envisages a much lower rate being delivered in the mid- to long-term (i.e. 220 dpa post-2016).
- 6.2 Even if figures were increased in line with the Section 4(4) Authorities 'pro-rata' scenario in their advice, this would only increase the level of development by 20 units each year to 310 dpa. Similarly, if a partial review of RSS were to be undertaken and it was determined that the significant further expansion of Gillingham should take place, it would be difficult to put the detailed planning policies in place to start delivering this strategy much before 2016.
- 6.3 On the basis of the scenarios set out above, the minimum requirement for the period 2006 – 2016 is 290 dpa and the maximum is likely to be

¹ This scenario assumes that the proposed significant expansion of Gillingham would not start until after 2016. If expansion were to begin earlier it would increase the rate required by between 30 – 50 dwellings for each year prior to 2016.

no greater than 310 dpa. Over the 10-year period these annualised rates would require the provision of 2,900 or 3,100 dwellings in total. The difference between the maximum and minimum figures equates to only 200 dwellings over the 10-year period. It can be seen, therefore, that there is a relatively high degree of certainty about the level of housing development the Council will need to make provision for over the next 10 years.

7 Housing Numbers 2016 – 2026

- 7.1 There is much less certainty about the level of development the Council will need to make provision for post-2016. In the event that the EiP Panel takes the view that North Dorset is an unsustainable, remote rural area where there should be restraint on housing development, the figure of 220 dpa could be retained in the RSS.
- 7.2 If it is accepted that a certain level of growth is required to support the market towns and their hinterlands, then the annualised rate could be increased to somewhere in the range 250 – 290 dpa, as suggested by NDDC in its response to the draft RSS. If each authority in the region had to take its 'pro-rata' share of additional growth to meet the higher level of housing development required by the latest ONS projections, the figure could go up to 310 dpa. Finally, if the significant further expansion of Gillingham were to be agreed in a partial review of RSS, this would increase the annualised rate to 340 dpa, 150 dpa of which would be at Gillingham itself.
- 7.3 On the basis of the scenarios set out above, the minimum requirement for the period 2016 – 2026 is 220 dpa and the maximum could be as high as 340 dpa. Over the 10-year period these annualised rates would require housing provision within the range of 2,200 to 3,400 dwellings in total. The difference between the maximum and minimum figures is 1,200 dwellings for the second 10-year period, very much higher than the 200 dwellings difference for the first 10-years. It can be seen, therefore, that there is considerable uncertainty about the level of housing development the Council will need to make provision for in the 10 years after 2016.

8 The Spatial Strategy of the Draft RSS

- 8.1 Any option the Council puts forward for the distribution of housing in North Dorset must reflect the main spatial strategy set out in the RSS. The regional strategy will, therefore, have a major influence on the choice of options available to the Council.
- 8.2 Development Policy A of the draft RSS seeks to concentrate development in the main cities and large towns of the region, which are referred to in the document as "Strategically Significant Cities and

Towns” (SSCTs). There are 21 SSCTs in the region and the only ones in Dorset are:

- The Bournemouth & Poole conurbation;
- Dorchester; and
- Weymouth.

- 8.3 The draft RSS envisages that about 80% of all new jobs created during the period 2006 – 2026 will be in the 21 SSCTs of the region. Consequently it is also proposed to locate most of the region’s new housing at the SSCTs in order to be in close proximity to these jobs. The draft RSS proposes that about 15,000 (or 65%) of the total 23,000 dpa should be located in the SSCTs, which should help to make best use of urban brownfield land and reduce commuting. This leaves about 8,000 dpa (or 35%), to be accommodated in the more rural parts of the region, including areas such as North Dorset.

9 Development Policy B Settlements

- 9.1 Development Policy B encourages “*locally significant development*” in “*market towns*” and Development Policy C only allows “*small amounts of development*” in other “*small towns and villages*”. The RSS does not attempt to put the towns of the South West or North Dorset into either of these categories. However, the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA), through its involvement with major planning applications in Blandford and Shaftesbury (the proposed redevelopment of the Hall & Woodhouse Brewery site and land to the east of Shaftesbury respectively) has expressed the view that these two towns are “Development Policy B settlements”. Since Gillingham is larger than either Blandford or Shaftesbury, it is reasonable to assume that this town will also have Development Policy B status.
- 9.2 It is unlikely that any other settlements in North Dorset will merit Development Policy B status. Shaftesbury is the third largest town in North Dorset and its mid-2005 population estimate was 6,750 people. The next largest settlement is Sturminster Newton, whose population (3,560, mid-2005) is only 52% of Shaftesbury’s. Stalbridge, with a mid-2005 population of 2,680, is only 40% the size of Shaftesbury.
- 9.3 One of the key decisions the Council will have to make is how the overall level of development in the District set by the final version of RSS should be split between the three main towns (i.e. the Development Policy B settlements) and the rural remainder of the District, including Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the villages.
- 9.4 In the Core Strategy the Council will also need to determine how much development should be assigned to each of the three main towns. For the first 10 years of the RSS, current commitments will have a profound influence on the distribution of development between the towns, although regard must also be had to the role and function of the

settlements concerned. It is likely that by 2016 any current commitments will have been built out, so any planned distribution in the longer term can be based more on an analysis of the role and function of the settlements concerned and other relevant planning factors. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this document.

10 Development Policy C Settlements

- 10.1 A further decision the Council will have to make is to identify which settlements Development Policy C applies to. It will certainly apply to the two small towns of Sturminster Newton and Stalbridge and also to a limited number of larger villages, which act as local service centres. The Core Strategy would list these Development Policy C settlements. It is intended that these settlements would retain their settlement boundaries, as currently defined in the adopted Local Plan. The precise location of these boundaries would be reviewed through the preparation of the Small Towns and Large Villages Allocations DPD.
- 10.2 The Core Strategy will include a policy to protect the countryside allowing only development where a countryside location is essential or where it is justified as an exception to the general policy of restraint. Any settlement that did not fall within the scope of Development Policy C would be defined as part of the countryside, where the general policy of restraint would apply. In practice this means that settlement boundaries would be removed from many of the smaller villages in the District and they would be washed over with the countryside designation. In these smaller settlements market housing would not be permitted, as it would be contrary to the general policy of restraint in the countryside, although it is likely that affordable housing would be permitted under a rural affordable housing exceptions policy.
- 10.3 A separate document has been produced, which evaluates the settlements of North Dorset in terms of their population size and facilities (“Assessment of Settlements Based on Population and Community Facilities”). This document will provide a useful starting point for the debate about which villages should retain their settlement boundaries and which villages will be ‘washed over’ with countryside. The overall level of housing provision that is assigned to North Dorset in the final version of RSS will clearly have a major influence on the outcome of that debate.

11 The Remaining Potential for Housing 2006 – 2016

- 11.1 There is already a high level of existing ‘commitments’ (in the broadest sense) in North Dorset including:
- Unimplemented Local Plan housing allocations;
 - Extant planning permissions; and
 - Planning applications at an advanced stage of negotiation.

- 11.2 The overall level and spatial distribution of these 'commitments' need to be understood, as these factors will limit the scope of the options for future patterns of development, particularly in the period up to 2016.
- 11.3 Policy 2.4 of the Local Plan includes a list of the sites that are allocated for housing development for the period up to 2011. The remaining allocations (either wholly or partly undeveloped) have the capacity for about 1,140 dwellings. These sites are listed in the table below:

Site	Approx. Capacity
Site 'F' Off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford (remaining undeveloped part of the site)	210 ²
Site 'E' South of The Meadows, Gillingham	90
Land east of Shaftesbury	750 ³
Site 'C' N. of Livestock Market, Stur. Newton	90
Total	1,140

- 11.4 The RSS period started on 1st April 2006 and at that time there were outstanding planning permissions for 717 dwellings (net), distributed as follows:

Blandford	142
Gillingham	160
Shaftesbury	28
Sturminster Newton	106
Stalbridge	45
Rural Settlements	236
Total	717

- 11.5 Further permissions have been granted since these figures were produced and they will need to be taken into account in future assessments of housing land supply. Also a proportion of these consents will have been built out in the year 2006 / 07. These completions are surveyed in April / May each year. It is unlikely that figures for completions for the year 2006 / 07 will be available until June 2007 at the earliest.
- 11.6 Negotiations are at an advanced stage in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the Hall & Woodhouse Brewery site in Blandford. The proposed mixed-use scheme includes provision for about 190 dwellings on the site.
- 11.7 At Blandford the lowest level of housing provision that could be assigned to the town for the period up to 2016 is about 542 dwellings (based on figures at the end of March 2006). This includes:

² This figure includes an area of land where the Council has granted consent for 110 dwellings. The remaining undeveloped land outside this application has the capacity for approximately another 100 dwellings.

³ This is the total estimated capacity of the allocated site. The majority of the allocated site is covered by two planning applications for a total of 680 dwellings, which were the subject of a call-in inquiry in January 2007. The remainder of the allocated site has the capacity for approximately another 70 dwellings.

- About 210 remaining on the allocated site, Site 'F' off Shaftesbury Lane (including 110 dwellings, which the Council has already resolved to grant consent);
- 142 extant planning permissions; and
- About 190 dwellings on the Brewery site.

11.8 At Gillingham the lowest level of housing provision that could be assigned to the town is about 250 dwellings for the period up to 2016 (based on figures at the end of March 2006). This includes:

- About 90 on the allocated site, Site 'E' South of The Meadows; and
- 160 extant planning permissions.

11.9 At Shaftesbury the lowest level of housing provision that could be assigned to the town is about 778 dwellings for the period up to 2016 (based on figures at the end of March 2006). This includes:

- About 750 on the allocated site East of Shaftesbury (including 670, which are the subject of the recent call-in inquiry and a further 80 on the 'Hopkins land' to the north of the current application sites); and
- 28 extant planning permissions.

11.10 The lowest level of housing provision that could be assigned to the remainder of the District (including Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge, the villages and the countryside) for the period up to 2016 is about 477 dwellings (based on figures at the end of March 2006). This includes:

- About 90 on the allocated site, Site 'C' North of the Livestock Market, Sturminster Newton;
- 106 extant planning permissions at Sturminster Newton;
- 45 extant planning permissions at Stalbridge; and
- 236 extant planning permissions in the rural settlements.

11.11 In summary, based on figures at the end of March 2006, the minimum levels of provision for the three main towns and the remainder of the District, just to take account of existing 'commitments' (assuming that all extant consents are implemented), would be:

Blandford	about	542
Gillingham	about	250
Shaftesbury	about	778
Remainder	about	477
Total		about 2,047

11.12 On the assumption that all of these 'commitments' would be built out by 2016 provision only needs to be made for a further 853 dwellings for the 10 years until 2016, if the figure of 290 dpa remains unchanged in the RSS. This figure would increase to 1,053 dwellings in the event that the RSS housing provision figure was increased to 310 dpa.

12 Distribution between the Three Main Towns and the Rest of the District – 2006 to 2016

- 12.1 When deciding how the total housing provision figure should be split between the three main towns and the rural area, regard needs to be had to what is desirable to achieve, in the light of the spatial strategy of the RSS, and what is feasible to deliver, in view of the housing land supply situation.
- 12.2 In considering what is desirable to achieve the existing strategy of the Local Plan and the emerging strategy of the draft RSS need to be examined. The adopted Local Plan proposes “*major growth*” in the three main towns of Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury. It also proposes “*moderate growth*” in Sturminster Newton, “*limited growth*” in Stalbridge and permits infilling within the defined settlement boundaries of more than 50 villages. However, the supporting text to the draft RSS policies suggests that there should be greater concentration in the market towns (i.e. the Development Policy B settlements).
- 12.3 The supporting text to Development Policy B (paragraph 3.4.2) states that: “*these towns are places where locally significant scales of development should focus in future, with the bulk of district housing provision outside the SSCTs made in them.*” This approach is reinforced by the supporting text to Development Policy C (paragraph 3.5.2) which states that: “*the scale and nature of development in rural communities needs to be managed more carefully than has been the case over the last 20 years if the most sustainable approach to development is delivered across the region.*”
- 12.4 Policy 2.3 of the Local Plan indicates that 5,900 dwellings (gross) should be provided in North Dorset between 1994 and 2011. 1,260 of these should be in the rural area, with 640 in Sturminster Newton and 170 in Stalbridge. This gives a total of 2,070 dwellings (gross) to be located outside the three main towns, which would represent 35% of all completions. However, monitoring information shows that since 1994 a higher proportion than this has been built outside the three main towns. Table 4.1 in the draft SPD on Managing Housing Land Supply shows that 5,468 dwellings (gross) had been built in North Dorset between 1994 and 2006. 1,539 were built in the rural area, with 558 in Sturminster Newton and a further 156 in Stalbridge. This gives a total of 2,253 dwellings (gross) outside the three main towns, representing 41% of all completions.
- 12.5 Given the thrust of the main spatial strategy in draft RSS and the overprovision in Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural areas, the very least that the Council should be seeking to achieve is no more than 35% of all housing development outside the three main towns as envisaged in the current Local Plan. 35% of 2,900 equates to 1,015 dwellings in total.

- 12.6 What is achievable, at least in the first 10 years of the RSS period, will be strongly influenced by existing commitments. As set out above, provision needs to be made for a minimum of 527 dwellings in Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural areas combined, just to take account of extant permissions and unimplemented allocations. In addition to these sources of supply, there are also likely to be a number of priorities for further provision that need to be catered for. Possible examples could include:
- Housing as part of mixed use regeneration schemes in the centre of Sturminster Newton;
 - Affordable housing on rural exceptions sites within or adjoining settlements of less than 3,000 population; and
 - Housing as part of environmental improvement schemes for derelict or 'problem' sites, such as Bourton Mill or Pimperne Garage.
- 12.7 Taking these factors into account, and bearing in mind that a certain amount of windfall development will come forward within settlement boundaries (even if the number of settlements with boundaries is significantly reduced), it is unlikely that the level of development from these sources could be restricted to less than 200 further dwellings over a 10 year period. On this basis the absolute minimum level of development that could be realistically achieved outside the three main towns over the period 2006 to 2016 would be about 725 dwellings, or 25% of all housing developments.
- 12.8 A more restrictive approach in Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural areas would enable slightly more development to come forward in the three main towns. This could help to achieve a number of priorities, for example:
- Additional greenfield development at Blandford, to help deliver much needed affordable housing; and
 - Regeneration in central Gillingham to help deliver mixed use developments, including community facilities close to the town centre.
- 12.9 The options for the period 2006 to 2016 are, therefore fairly limited in scope. An option with the maximum rural emphasis (without breaching the spatial strategy of the RSS) would allocate about 1,000 dwellings (35%) to Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural area combined, with about 1,900 dwellings (65%) allocated to the three main towns. An option with the maximum urban emphasis (that would keep the level of development outside the three main towns to a minimum) would allocate about 700 dwellings (25%) to Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural area combined, with about 2,200 dwellings (75%) allocated to the three main towns.
- 12.10 If the average annual requirement was increased to 310 dpa, the maximum level of development within the three main towns could be increased to 2,400 dwellings in total. However, only 100 of the

additional 200 units could be allocated to Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural area combined without the level of housing outside the three main towns rising above 35% of all housing developments.

- 12.11 These maximum and minimum urban and rural emphasis options for the first 10 years of RSS are set out below.

Table 3: Numerical Maximum and Minimum Urban / Rural Emphasis Options for North Dorset 2006 - 2016				
	Average annualised rate 290 dpa		Average annualised rate 310 dpa	
	maximum urban emphasis option 2006 -16	maximum rural emphasis option 2006 -16	maximum urban emphasis option 2006 -16	maximum rural emphasis option 2006 -16
Total dwellings in 3 main towns	2,200	1,900	2,400	2,000
Total dwellings elsewhere	700	1,000	700	1,100

13 Distribution between the Three Main Towns and the Rest of the District – 2016 to 2026

- 13.1 Any extant planning permissions that currently exist are likely to have been built out before 2016. This means that there may be scope to further reduce the proportion of development outside the three main towns in the second 10-year period, if considered appropriate. Further work needs to be undertaken to establish how much this proportion could be realistically reduced, but for the purposes of this document it has been assumed that it would not be feasible or desirable for the proportion of all development outside the main urban areas to drop below 20%.
- 13.2 In order to comply with the spatial strategy of the draft RSS it would not be desirable to allocate more than 35% of all housing to areas outside the three main towns. On the basis of these maximum and minimum percentages, it is possible to generate a number of numerical options, as set out in the table below.

Table 4: Numerical Maximum and Minimum Urban / Rural Emphasis Options for North Dorset 2016 – 2026 (excluding the significant expansion of Gillingham Option)						
	Average annualised rate 220 dpa		Average annualised rate 250 - 290 dpa		Average annualised rate 310 dpa	
	maximum urban emphasis option 2016 - 26	maximum rural emphasis option 2016 - 26	maximum urban emphasis option 2016 - 26	maximum rural emphasis option 2016 - 26	maximum urban emphasis option 2016 - 26	maximum rural emphasis option 2016 - 26
Total dwellings in 3 main	1,760	1,430	2,000 – 2,320	1,625 - 1,885	2,480	2,015

towns						
Total dwellings elsewhere	440	770	500 - 580	875 – 1,015	620	1,085

- 13.3 The situation is more complex with Scenario 4 (significant expansion of Gillingham post-2016), because the proportion of development in the town of Gillingham would be 'ring-fenced'. The Section 4(4) Authorities' advice indicated that this would be about 150 dpa of the 340 dpa allocated to the District as a whole. This represents 44% of all housing development for the 10-year period. In the table below the maximum urban emphasis scenario assumes 20% of all housing outside the three main towns. The maximum rural emphasis scenario assumes 35% of all housing outside the three main towns.

Table 5: Numerical Maximum and Minimum Urban / Rural Emphasis Options for the significant expansion of Gillingham Option post-2016		
	Average annualised rate 340 dpa (of which 150 dpa at Gillingham)	
	maximum urban emphasis option 2006 -16	maximum rural emphasis option 2006 -16
Total dwellings at Gillingham	1,500	1,500
Total dwellings at Blandford & Shaftesbury	1,220	710
Total dwellings elsewhere	680	1,190

- 13.4 If Gillingham were to take this proportion of development in the period after 2016, there would be little scope for growth at Blandford or Shaftesbury, unless the proportion in the rural areas was towards the bottom of the 20 to 35% range. If 44% of all housing went to Gillingham, with 35% outside the three main towns, that would leave just 21% of the total housing provision figure (or 710 dwellings over 10 years) for Blandford and Shaftesbury. If the proportion in the rural area were reduced to just 20%, this would give Blandford and Shaftesbury 36% of the total housing provision figure (or 1,220 dwellings over 10 years).

14 The Distribution Between Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury 2006 - 2016 and Beyond

- 14.1 Table 3 above shows the levels of provision in the 3 main towns under the different urban and rural emphasis scenarios. If the 'commitments' at the end of March 2006 are subtracted from these figures, that gives

the remainder to be found in the period up to 2016, as set out in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Remainder to Find in the 3 Main Towns Under the Numerical Maximum and Minimum Urban / Rural Emphasis Options for North Dorset 2006 - 2016				
	Average annualised rate 290 dpa		Average annualised rate 310 dpa	
	maximum urban emphasis option 2006 -16	maximum rural emphasis option 2006 -16	maximum urban emphasis option 2006 -16	maximum rural emphasis option 2006 -16
Total dwellings in the 3 main towns	2,200	1,900	2,400	2,000
'Commitments' in the 3 Main Towns	1,570 (71%)	1,570 (83%)	1,570 (65%)	1,570 (78.5%)
Remainder to find in the 3 Main Towns	630 (29%)	330 (17%)	830 (35%)	430 (21.5%)

- 14.2 This shows that if the figure for North Dorset in the RSS remains at 290 dpa, then between 330 and 630 additional dwellings will need to be found in the ten year period up to 2016, whereas if the RSS figure goes up to 310 dpa, the 'residual requirement' will increase to somewhere in the range 430 to 830 additional dwellings.
- 14.3 These figures show that for the first 10 years of the RSS, the commitments that currently exist significantly limit the options for the distribution of further development between the towns. In apportioning the 'residual requirement' between the three main towns regard must be had to their role and function. However, at most the 'residual requirement' needed in the towns is likely to constitute no more than 35% of the total amount of development proposed in the first 10 years and this figure could be as low as 17% if the draft RSS figures remain unchanged and a strategy with a 'rural focus' is chosen.
- 14.4 One of the main outputs of the 'Issues and Options' stage will be the views of the local community on how any further development should be distributed. In putting forward its 'Preferred Option', the Council will need to assess the relative importance of the factors that emerge as being relevant to each of the three main towns. Some examples of possible factors are given in the table below.

Settlement	Possible Advantage of More Development	Possible Disadvantage of More Development
Blandford	Additional development could help to deliver much needed affordable housing in the settlement where the need is greatest	Additional greenfield development could impinge upon environmentally constrained areas, such as AONBs or the floodplain of the River Stour
Gillingham	If located close to the town centre, additional development could help to deliver regeneration	Additional development could exacerbate the problems associated with the town's very rapid growth over the past 10 years, for example the lack of community facilities
Shaftesbury	Additional development could help to make better use of redundant or underused sites in the town	Further development is not needed because Shaftesbury's needs will largely be met by the development proposed to the east of the town (if approved)

- 14.5 In the period 2016 to 2026, the number of dwellings required in the three main towns could be as low as 1,430 (if the post-2016 figure in draft RSS remains unchanged), or as high as 2,720 (if significant expansion at Gillingham were to be proposed through a partial review of RSS and a strategy with an urban focus was chosen).
- 14.6 In the period up to 2016, the bulk of housing development will be accommodated on sites that have already been identified and most of these are located within existing settlement boundaries. It should be noted however, that the Local Plan shows greenfield allocations as being within the defined boundaries of settlements. Whatever level of development the RSS eventually proposes for North Dorset in the longer term, it is likely to require the identification of new greenfield sites on the edges of the main towns and the redrawing of settlement boundaries to accommodate them.

15 Summary of Main Points and Conclusions

- 15.1 At the present time (May 2007) there is considerable uncertainty about how much housing development North Dorset will need to accommodate in the period 2006 – 2026. However, it will almost certainly be significantly lower than historic rates of delivery (456 dwellings per annum (dpa) gross 1994 – 2006) and no more than the historic planned rate (347 dpa gross 1994 – 2011).
- 15.2 The Council's Core Strategy will need to manage for a lower level of housing development, both to reflect the lower housing figures in the emerging RSS and to address concerns about oversupply, which are seen as undermining more sustainable patterns of development.
- 15.3 A number of numerical scenarios can be examined to assess the potential implications of the RSS for North Dorset based on:

- the policies of the draft RSS itself;
- NDDC's comments on the draft RSS; and
- the advice of the strategic planning authorities in Dorset (also known as the Section 4(4) Authorities) on how a higher level of development could be accommodated in line with the latest (2003) household projections.

15.4 There is a relatively high degree of certainty about the level of housing development likely to be required in North Dorset over the next 10 years. On the basis of the scenarios considered, the minimum requirement for the period 2006 – 2016 is likely to be no less than 290 dpa and the maximum is likely to be no greater than 310 dpa. Over the 10-year period these annualised rates would require the provision of between 2,900 and 3,100 dwellings in total.

15.5 There is considerable uncertainty about the level of housing development required in the 10 years after 2016. On the basis of the scenarios considered, the minimum requirement for the period 2016 – 2026 is likely to be no less than 220 dpa and the maximum could be as high as 340 dpa. Over the 10-year period these annualised rates would require housing provision within the range of 2,200 to 3,400 dwellings in total.

15.6 The main spatial strategy of the RSS will have a major influence on the choice of options for the distribution of development available to the Council. Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury are the only settlements in North Dorset likely to merit 'Development Policy B status', where "*locally significant development*" will be encouraged. Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and a limited number of larger villages are likely to merit 'Development Policy C status where "*small amounts of development*" are permitted. Any settlement that did not fall within the scope of Development Policies B or C would have its settlement boundary removed and would be subject to the general policy of restraint in the 'countryside'. Outside the Development Policy B and C settlements (i.e. in the 'countryside') market housing would not be permitted, although affordable housing may be permitted under a rural affordable housing exceptions policy.

15.7 Based on figures at the end of March 2006, the minimum levels of provision for the three main towns and the remainder of the District, taking account of existing 'commitments' (assuming that all extant consents are implemented), would be:

Blandford	about	542
Gillingham	about	250
Shaftesbury	about	778
Remainder	about	477
Total	about	2,047

15.8 On the assumption that all of these 'commitments' would be built out by 2016 provision only needs to be made for a further 853 dwellings for

the 10 years until 2016, if the figure of 290 dpa remains unchanged in the RSS. This figure would increase to 1,053 dwellings in the event that the RSS housing provision figure was increased to 310 dpa.

- 15.9 The options for the distribution of development in the period 2006 to 2016 are fairly limited in scope, due to existing 'commitments'. An option with the maximum rural emphasis (without breaching the spatial strategy of the RSS) would allocate about 1,000 dwellings (35%) to Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural area combined, with about 1,900 dwellings (65%) allocated to the three main towns. An option with the maximum urban emphasis (that would keep the level of development outside the three main towns to the minimum feasible) would allocate about 700 dwellings (25%) to Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural area combined, with about 2,200 dwellings (75%) allocated to the three main towns.
- 15.10 If the average annual requirement was increased to 310 dpa, the maximum level of development within the three main towns could be increased to 2,400 dwellings in total. However, only 100 of the additional 200 units could be allocated to Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural area combined without the level of housing outside the three main towns rising above 35% of all housing developments.
- 15.11 For the first 10 years of the RSS, current 'commitments' significantly limit the options for the distribution of further development between the towns. At most the 'residual requirement' needed in the towns is likely to constitute no more than 35% of the total amount of development proposed in the first 10 years and this figure could be as low as 17% if the draft RSS figures remain unchanged and a strategy with a 'rural emphasis' is chosen.
- 15.12 In the period 2016 to 2026, the number of dwellings required in the three main towns could be as low as 1,430 (if the post-2016 figure in draft RSS remains unchanged), or as high as 2,720 (if significant expansion at Gillingham were to be proposed through a partial review of RSS and a strategy with an 'urban emphasis' was chosen).
- 15.13 Up until 2016, most new housing will be located on identified sites within existing settlement boundaries. Whatever level of development the RSS finally allocates to North Dorset post-2016, it is likely to require the identification of new greenfield sites on the edges of the main towns and the redrawing of settlement boundaries to accommodate them.