

# Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan

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# Basic Conditions Report

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Prepared by: Dorset Planning Consultant Ltd, on behalf of Sturminster Newton Town Council

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## Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Legal Requirements	1
Has the draft plan been submitted by a qualifying body?	1
Is what is being proposed a neighbourhood development plan making provision in relation to land or sites in the Neighbourhood Plan Area?	1
Does the proposed neighbourhood plan state the period for which it is to have effect?	1
Do any of the policies relate to excluded development?	1
Do any of the policies extend beyond the neighbourhood area or cover an area where there is a neighbourhood development plan already in place?	1
3. Consideration of National and Strategic Policies	3
National Planning Policy and Guidance	3
The Development Plan for the Neighbourhood Plan area	3
Conformity issues raised through the pre-submission consultation	13
4. EU and sustainability obligations	13

## Foreword

*The Town Council, Steering Group and the Working Group and many volunteers on the Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan have invested considerable time and resources to achieve what Historic England describe as “a most impressive document in its depth and scope of coverage” and “the best Plan of its kind that we have seen in the south west.” (and their adviser has commented on over 300 plans!)*

*In submitting this Neighbourhood Plan for its examination, much thought has been given to making sure that the basic conditions have been met. We have worked closely with the District Council to ensure that they consider the plan to be clear and precise, as it will be the Local Planning Authority’s officers that will use it in determining many of the planning decisions that affect the area. We have consulted closely with landowners, developers and the public to ensure the plan is aspirational yet flexible, so that development should come forward under what continue to be challenging economic times, and the town is well placed to secure project funding if it is available (but will not hold back development if it is not). And Sturminster Newton does have a good track record for achieving projects – you only need to see the Exchange to recognise that it doesn’t shy away from large projects. The distinctive character of the town and its surrounds have also shaped the plan– although not within the Dorset AONB, the heritage, river and rural areas are very highly valued by local residents and visitors.*

*We hope that this document and the background evidence provide the information needed to reassure the Examiner that the Plan meets the basic conditions. We would be happy to answer any questions or clarify points. If changes do need to be made, we would like the opportunity to shape these, rather than receiving a report that cuts out or makes possibly quite significant amendments that would undermine what we hope the plan will otherwise deliver.*

## 1. Introduction

When a neighbourhood plan proposal is submitted to the local planning authority, it needs to be accompanied by a statement, known as the basic conditions statement, which explains how:

- the plan meets the legal requirements in terms of its contents and coverage
- the plan has had appropriate regard to national policy and is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the area
- the plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, is compatible with EU obligations, and would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)..

## 2. Legal Requirements

### **Has the draft plan been submitted by a qualifying body?**

Yes – The Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared and submitted by Sturminster Newton Town Council

### **Is what is being proposed a neighbourhood development plan making provision in relation to land or sites in the Neighbourhood Plan Area?**

Yes - the Neighbourhood Plan proposal relates to planning matters (the use and development of land) and has been prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements and processes set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

### **Does the proposed neighbourhood plan state the period for which it is to have effect?**

Yes – The Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan makes clear that its end date is 2031, and therefore it will have effect from when it is made (2017) until 2031

### **Do any of the policies relate to excluded development?**

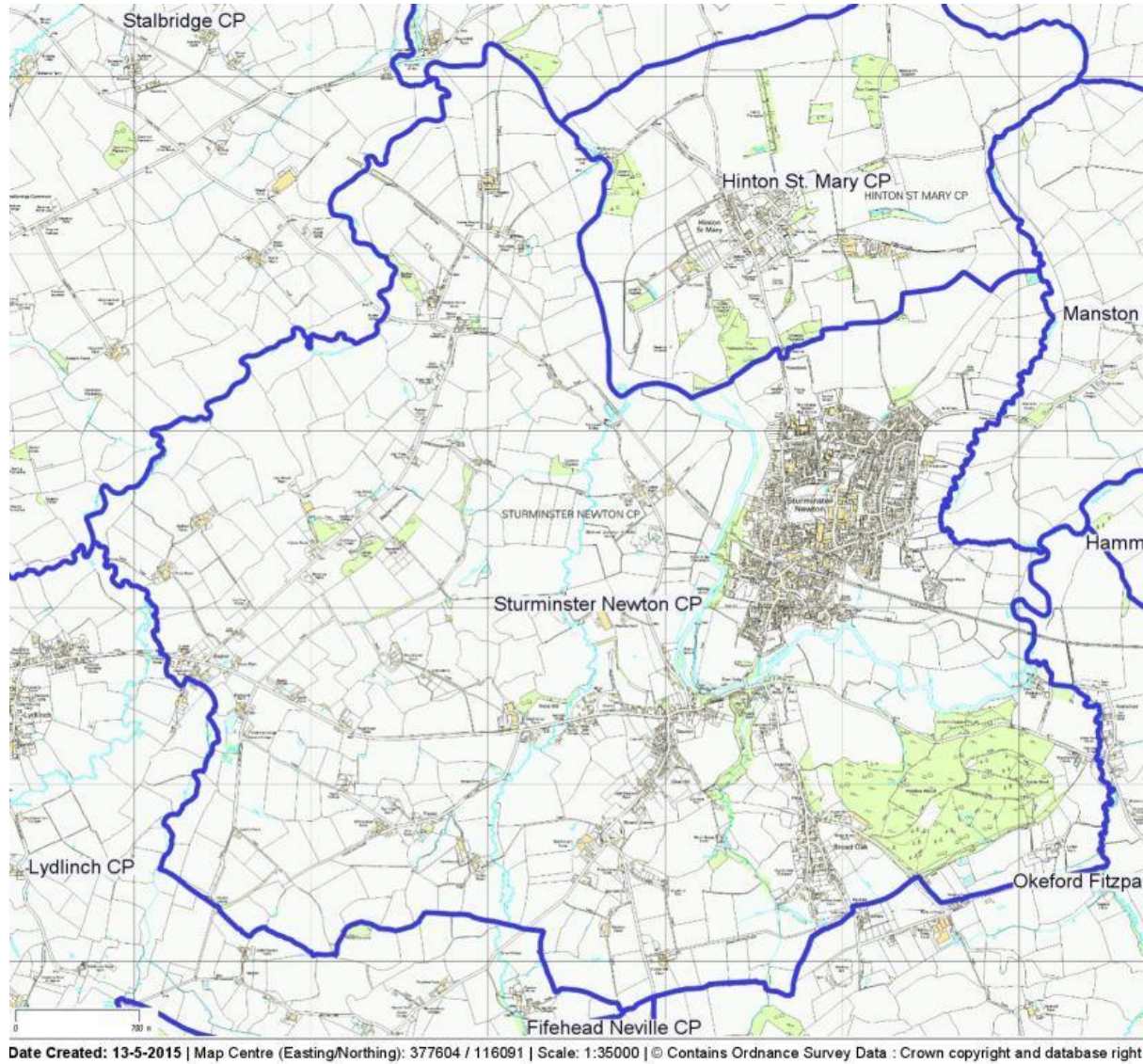
No - the Neighbourhood Plan proposal does not deal with county matters (mineral extraction and waste development), nationally significant infrastructure or development that falls within Annex 1 to Council Directive 85/337/EEC.

### **Do any of the policies extend beyond the neighbourhood area or cover an area where there is a neighbourhood development plan already in place?**

No - the Neighbourhood Plan proposal relates to the parish of Sturminster Newton (which is the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area) and to no other area.

The Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan area was designated by North Dorset District Council in February 2014. It follows the parish boundary, as shown in Map 1.

## Map 1 – Neighbourhood Plan Area



There are no other neighbourhood plans relating to the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Most of the neighbouring parishes do not have a Neighbourhood Plan Area designated, the exception to this being Okeford Fitzpaine, where the Parish Council is currently preparing a neighbourhood plan for their area.

### 3. Consideration of National and Strategic Policies

The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national policy and guidance from the Secretary of State and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan that covers the area.

The table starting on the following page briefly summarises how the Neighbourhood Plan has considered relevant national planning guidance

#### National Planning Policy and Guidance

National planning guidance comes primarily from the published National Planning Policy Framework (2012), but where appropriate reference is made to the online National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) and Ministerial Statements.

#### The Development Plan for the Neighbourhood Plan area

The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1, prepared by North Dorset District Council and adopted January 2016, contains the bulk of the development plan policies for the area. It includes topic-based policies, place-based policies and development management policies that together provide the strategic policy framework.

The 2016 adopted Local Plan's spatial strategy (Policy 2) identifies Sturminster Newton as one of four 'main towns' which will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development. The Local Plan makes clear that local communities can review settlement boundaries and allocate sites through their neighbourhood plans. Policy 19 sets out the strategic policy for Sturminster Newton. This identifies the main areas where development will take place.

(summarised in the first column) and the related strategic development plan policies (in the middle column).

Where concerns regarding compatibility with national guidance have been raised through the pre-submission consultation responses, further detail and discussion of the points has been provided.

The NPPG makes clear that in considering whether a policy is in general conformity, a view should be taken on whether the neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal supports and upholds the general principle that the strategic policy is concerned with, the degree, if any, of conflict and the rationale and evidence to justify that approach.

The neighbourhood plan period is proposed to align with the adopted Local Plan (i.e. to 2031).

Dorset County Council has a Minerals Strategy (adopted May 2014) that also forms part of the development plan for the area, together with the Waste Local Plan (adopted 2006). Neither the waste plan or minerals strategy contain proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan Area, other than defining minerals safeguarding areas and these are noted in the SEA.

Work is progressing on a review of the Local Plan, which will include the provision of site specific sites allocations and the review of the more detailed saved policies carried forward from the 2003 Local Plan. Key documents produced so far include the Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping and the update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. A call for sites was also undertaken, and the submitted sites have been shared with the Neighbourhood Plan group.

NPPF and other national guidance	Development plan	Approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan
<p><b>Plan making and decision taking (NPPF para 17, 183-185, 203-206)</b> Set out a positive vision for the future of the area, and provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies. <i>The NPPG makes clear that the policies and proposals are to be implemented as the community intended. A neighbourhood plan needs to be deliverable, and not subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that viability is threatened.</i> <i>Qualifying bodies should engage infrastructure providers in this process, and set out the infrastructure required to address the demands of the development identified in the plan.</i></p>	<p><b>Para 3.44-45</b> A neighbourhood plan for one of the four main towns will have to generally conform with the proposals for the growth of that town... [and] can allow greater levels of growth (by allocating additional sites for development) or include specific policies or guidance on how new development should be designed. <b>Para 3.50</b> Outside the defined boundaries of the four main towns, development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs. Such needs may be met through .... neighbourhood planning <b>Policy 19: Sturminster Newton</b> Sustainable Development Strategy: Sturminster Newton will continue to function as the main service centre in the rural west of the District through: development and redevelopment within the settlement boundary, development of the greenfield land at Market Hill to the north of the former livestock market, small greenfield extensions to the north and east of Sturminster; and development of North Dorset Business Park at Newton. All developments will need to reflect the policies, principles and design concepts identified through the Town Design Statement and design and development briefs produced by the local community.</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan includes a vision for the area. The planning policies contained in the plan have been discussed with the Development Management officers of the District Council to ensure that they provide a sufficiently clear basis for decision making. Changes have been made as a result to take on board their comments. Care has been taken to ensure that the policies are sufficiently flexible to allow for changing markets and viability, and the emerging drafts discussed with landowners, developers and service / infrastructure providers. The proposed allocations contained in the Neighbourhood Plan ensure the minimum target in the Local Plan is comfortably exceeded, and the reserve sites provide further flexibility to meet future needs. The Plan also confirms the delivery of the strategic sites through allocations -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The greenfield land at Market Hill to the north of the former livestock market is covered in <b>Policy 21</b></li> <li>– Greenfield extensions to the north and east of Sturminster are covered in <b>Policies 29 and 32</b> (and added to in Policies 30 and 32)</li> <li>– Development of North Dorset Business Park at Newton is covered in <b>Policy 38</b>.</li> </ul> <p>Changes to the settlement boundary under <b>Policy 8</b> are explained in the separate background paper, and do not reduce the estimated housing land supply. The key elements of the Town Design Statement have been embedded into the character area policies (<b>Policies 17, 23, 27, 31, 33, 36, 37</b>), the Station Road Brief has been reviewed and incorporated into <b>Policy 20</b>, and the North Dorset Business Park Design Brief has been considered in formulating <b>Policy 38</b>. Infrastructure requirements have been identified as part of the process, and a list of projects included in the plan to influence future funding bids and work priorities.</p>

NPPF and other national guidance	Development plan	Approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan
<p><b>Build a strong, competitive economy and prosperous rural economy (NPPF paras 18-22 and 28)</b></p> <p>Support economic growth fit for the 21st century and proactively meet business development needs</p> <p>Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including rural tourism and leisure developments, land-based rural businesses and local services and community facilities in villages</p>	<p><b>Policy 19: Sturminster Newton</b></p> <p>Employment needs in the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through the development of North Dorset Business Park (about 6.3 hectares) and the retention of Butts Pond Industrial Estate. Any development on North Dorset Business Park should be designed to reflect both the design and development brief and the masterplan for the site.</p> <p>Station Road area, Sturminster Newton is identified for mixed-use regeneration</p> <p><b>Policy 11: The Economy</b></p> <p>Existing employment sites and sites identified for future employment uses will be protected from other forms of development, but permission may be given for community uses, such as community halls, healthcare facilities, such as doctors’ and vets’ surgeries, education and training facilities; and small-scale retail, which is ancillary to a B Class use.</p> <p>Economic development in the countryside will be supported by enabling rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs, particularly through neighbourhood planning and the re-use of existing buildings, the retention and small-scale expansion of existing employment sites; the provision of certain forms of tourist accommodation, and equine-related developments.</p>	<p><b>Policy 38</b> Land at North Dorset Business Park provides guidance for the future development of the remainder of this key employment site, taking into account the design brief. The exact mix of uses is broadly in line with the strategic policies, but takes into account the semi-rural location and distance from the town centre in precluding uses such as community halls and healthcare facilities.</p> <p>There are no specific policies regarding Butts Pond, whose retention would be covered under the existing Local Plan policies. The text recognizes that in the future the area may lend itself to redevelopment that could encompass a variety of alternative uses appropriate to its location close to the heart of the town. However, this is only highlighting a consideration for a future review, and there is no policy change in the plan.</p> <p>The potential inclusion of a range of business uses as part of the Station Road regeneration scheme is included in <b>Policy 20</b>.</p> <p>Following feedback from local farmers <b>Policy 41</b> was drafted, which considers the re-use of redundant agricultural buildings. It broadly reflects the current planning system’s stance on the re-use of small, redundant farm buildings, but is not inhibited by the limitations placed through permitted development and provides slightly greater flexibility than Local Plan Policy 29.</p>
<p><b>Ensure the vitality of town centres (NPPF paras 23-27, 40, 67-68, 70)</b></p> <p>Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set</p>	<p><b>Policy 12 Retail, Leisure and other Commercial developments</b></p> <p>Within the town centre, developments for retail will be supported provided their type and scale will maintain or enhance the role and function of the</p>	<p>The Local Plan policies for the town centre were based on comparatively ‘old’ evidence, and therefore considerable work went into deciding what the appropriate approach should be to promote a strong and competitive town centre environment.</p> <p><b>Policy 15</b> defines the town centre area for the first time, and</p>

NPPF and other national guidance	Development plan	Approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan
<p>out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. This can be achieved by a range of measures including defining the extent of town centres, primary shopping areas, shop frontages and including policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations, allocating suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed, and recognising that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres. Planning policies should ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable. Improve the quality of parking in town centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure. Advertisements that may have an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings may need to be subject to control in the interests of amenity and public safety.</p>	<p>town and its catchment and respect its historic character. Other main town centre uses will also be supported provided this does not undermine the focus on retailing in primary shopping areas. The loss of retail frontage will be resisted within primary shopping frontages, and change of use away from an A-class uses will be resisted in secondary shopping frontages. The boundaries of town centres, primary shopping areas and shopping frontages can be defined through the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will work with local communities to take forward proposals for town centre enhancement and will seek to retain and enhance existing outdoor weekly markets. Shop fronts should be designed having had due regard to the Council’s advice on shop front design.</p> <p><b>Policy 11 The Economy</b> Supports the continued improvement of town centres as the main focus for retail, leisure and other commercial activities and specifically refers to the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road area.</p> <p><b>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure</b> Proposes to develop a strategy for off-street parking, focusing on Council and other publicly owned car parks.</p> <p><b>Policy 19 Sturminster Newton</b> Main focus for additional retail and other town centre uses will be the existing town centre and the Station Road area where any scheme should be designed in accordance with the design and development brief. Social infrastructure to support</p>	<p>includes sufficient land to allow for future investment and growth and a flexible approach that embraces the main drivers considered to be important to the town centre area. <b>Policy 16</b> defines the shopping frontages – these had previously been defined in the 2003 Local Plan, but the town centre has changed significantly since that time. Rather than differentiating between primary and secondary areas, the policy simply defines the main frontages where it is important that the ground floor remains in a use and layout that maintains footfall and a general feeling of activity and vitality. <b>Policy 18</b> provides more detailed guidance on shop front design, taking on board the general approach advocated in the District Council’s design guidance, but making it more specific to Sturminster Newton and the common issues and concerns raised. Public realm improvements, which would improve the visitor experience and support an expanded outdoor market, are covered in <b>Policy 19</b>. These evolved from testing and consulting on potential solutions, from which the key objectives were distilled. Their delivery will depend on funding availability, but are seen as critical in the future success of the town as an attractive destination. <b>Policies 20, 21 and 22</b> provide guidance on the main development sites within the town centre, which are close to The Exchange, and have been drafted to provide sufficient flexibility in what can be a rapidly changing market. They include consideration of the type of development that would support a thriving town centre, and the provision of sufficient and convenient public car parks, which is also important to the future success of The Exchange. The landowners have been engaged in the formulation of the policies for the area.</p>



NPPF and other national guidance	Development plan	Approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan
	growth will include the promotion of The Exchange building as a community and cultural hub	
<p><b>Promote sustainable transport (NPPF paras 29-41)</b> Focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable. Aim to minimise journey lengths. Protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes.</p>	<p><b>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure</b> Ensure that the necessary transport infrastructure is put into place to support growth, development and North Dorset's economy Supports the completion of the North Dorset trailway as a strategic walking and cycling route</p>	<p>A lot of thought has gone into ensuring the suitable provision of transport links to promote more walking and cycling, and ensure new development does not create problems on the road network. To this end the group has consulted closely with the County Council's rights of way and highways officers. The general <b>Policy 12</b> identifies the key routes that form a safe and convenient walking and cycling network, and <b>Policy 13</b> delineates and safeguards the future extension to the Trailway and makes clear what is required. Opportunities to improve the network through development are also identified through <b>Policy 12</b>. Rural recreational trails are safeguarded in <b>Policy 14</b>. Where appropriate highway specifications are also included in the site-specific policies.</p>
<p><b>Deliver a wide choice of high quality homes (NPPF paras 17, 47-55)</b> Identify sufficient land to meet the objectively identified needs for homes. To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances <i>The NPPG says that neighbourhood plans should consider providing indicative</i></p>	<p><b>Policy 6: Housing Distribution</b> Refers to Sturminster Newton (as one of the main towns in North Dorset) delivering at least 395 dwellings over the plan period. 25% of these houses should be affordable housing. <b>Policy 7: Delivering Homes</b> Says that all housing should contribute towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities. The Council will seek to support the delivery of about 40% of market housing as one or two bedroom properties and about 60% as three or more bedroom properties, with an emphasis on the provision of two and three bedroom properties. About 60% of affordable housing as one or two bedroom properties and about 40% as three or more bedroom properties. These proportions will</p>	<p>As mentioned above, the proposed allocations contained in the Neighbourhood Plan ensure the minimum target in the Local Plan is comfortably exceeded, and the reserve sites provide further flexibility to meet future needs. The potential supply is estimated at 504 (including 90 on the reserve sites) which more than exceeds a possible 15% 'uplift' to 457 for the plan period from the revised SHMA. This includes both brownfield and greenfield sites specifically allocated in the plan. Policy 7 on housing numbers and locations was criticized as potentially too restrictive, but the group has worked with NDDC to produce a revised draft that is considered acceptable. The revisions to the settlement boundary proposed through <b>Policy 8</b> do not remove any land that has been highlighted as forming part of the potential housing land supply. <b>Policy 9</b> sets out the housing types that will be supported. This makes reference to the Local Plan requirements, the main</p>

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<p><i>delivery timetables, and allocating reserve sites to ensure that emerging evidence of housing need is addressed. This can help minimise potential conflicts and ensure that policies in the neighbourhood plan are not overridden by a new Local Plan It also advises that housing policies should take account of latest and up-to-date evidence of housing need.</i></p>	<p>be the starting point for negotiations on all sites where 10 or more dwellings, although a different mix may be permitted if it can be soundly justified by local circumstances or viability considerations. On sites of less than 10 dwellings, a mix of house sizes appropriate to each specific site will be sought. The Council will support the provision of age-restricted housing for the elderly.</p> <p><b>Policy 8: Affordable Housing</b> Requires that development that delivers eleven or more net additional dwellings and which has a maximum combined gross floorspace of more than 1,000 square metres, including housing on mixed-use sites, will contribute to the provision of affordable housing.</p> <p><b>Policy 9: Rural exception affordable housing</b> Allows rural exception affordable housing schemes within or adjoining the built up area of smaller villages (but it is unclear whether Broad Oak would qualify. Such sites will not be allowed in the countryside adjacent to Sturminster Newton (which includes Newton).</p> <p><b>Policy 29 Re-use of buildings in the countryside</b> Permits the re-use of an existing building for housing provided it readily lends itself to residential conversion and subject to assessment criteria.</p>	<p>refinements being the potential for starter homes (in recognition of the national changes taking place), and a slightly greater emphasis on smaller homes to cater for older people on a range of incomes and some high quality larger homes, incorporating flexible / adaptable layouts for home working – which would allow a departure from the 40:60 split advocated by the Local Plan. It does not provide a specific target, particularly in recognition that some sites may suit certain types of housing better than others. More detail for the basis of this policy is provided in the housing supply background paper. At the current time there is little scope for the delivery of rural exception sites due to the restrictions put in place through the Local Plan. This was discussed as part of the rural areas consultation but there were no views that this needed to change.</p> <p>Following feedback from local farmers <b>Policy 41</b> was drafted, which considers the re-use of redundant agricultural buildings. It broadly reflects the current planning system’s stance on the re-use of small, redundant farm buildings, but is not inhibited by the limitations placed through permitted development and provides slightly greater flexibility than Local Plan Policy 29.</p>
<p><b>Require good design (para 56-66)</b> Secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity, to enhance and improve the places in which people live. Develop robust</p>	<p><b>Policy 7: Delivering Homes</b> Design and layout of housing development should be of a density that respects local character and amenity. Infilling within settlement boundaries, should respect the amenity of adjoining properties,</p>	<p>There are no specific densities set in the Neighbourhood Plan policies, and the provisional capacity estimates are deliberately not included in the policies as the actual number will depend on a whole range of factors relating to design and house types. There are a number of general policies relating to various</p>

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<p>and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Policies should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative, but it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. Proposals that can demonstrate how the designs have evolved to take account of the views of the community should be looked on more favourably</p>	<p>and local communities are encouraged to develop more detailed policies relating to infilling through Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p><b>Policy 24 Design</b> Development should be designed to improve the character and quality of the area within which it is located. The Local Plan emphasises the importance of an understanding of local context.</p>	<p>aspects of local character, including <b>Policy 1</b> on the design and character of buildings and their settings, the various Area Character policies that have been based on the detailed analysis in the Town Design Statement (and supplemented by character analysis of the rural areas). These are contained in <b>Policies 17, 23, 27, 33, 36, 37</b>. Specific features that are important to local character – views, locally important buildings, green spaces and trees, are also covered (<b>Policies 2 – 6</b>), and additional site-specific guidance is provided where appropriate for the site allocations.</p> <p>The plan makes clear in the supporting text that innovative approaches are welcomed, and where, for example, materials are suggested in <b>Policy 1</b> it is clear that these are examples and not a definitive list. The word ‘should’ rather than ‘must’ is used in recognition that there may be reasons why a certain approach or solution is not appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Promote healthy communities (NPPF paras 69-78)</b> Promote opportunities for social interaction through safe and accessible environments, deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services. Determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required and safeguard existing facilities unless there is a surplus or equivalent or better provision</p>	<p><b>Policy 14 Social infrastructure</b> Seeks to maintain and enhance the level of social infrastructure through retaining and improving existing facilities, and new provision where required. The Local Plan supporting text in particular notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the Exchange building</li> <li>– the medical centre at the Exchange</li> <li>– the community managed leisure centre, off Honeymead Lane</li> <li>– the recreation ground at the end of Ricketts Lane; the Railway Gardens, the Local Nature Reserve and fields at Butts Pond; the open space in the Rixon development; and the allotment sites off Filbridge Rise and to the rear of</li> </ul>	<p>The use and need of community facilities has been considered in detail and further evidence given in the background paper, and their importance subject to wider consultation. Important facilities have been identified in <b>Policy 10</b>, to give further detail to Local Plan policy 27, and includes the facilities noted in the Local Plan’s supporting text. The policies also provides some flexibility in recognizing that where there may be more than one facility providing similar services locally, the loss or reduction may be off-set by improvements elsewhere. Consideration of how best to support the ongoing viability of the Bull Tavern is included in the proposals for the adjoining land under <b>Policy 39</b>, which ties the development of this adjoining land to the pub improvements in order to secure the ongoing viability of this key community and heritage asset. The general standards regarding the provision of open space</p>

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<p>made. Seek opportunities to enhance public rights of way. Identify for special protection local green areas of particular importance / significance that are in reasonably close proximity to that community and do not comprise an extensive tract of land.</p>	<p>Chinnocks</p> <p>It also notes that the proposed growth will require some facilities to be extended or improved, in particular, the expansion of the High School and Primary School, upgrading and expansion of the leisure centre, further public open space provision and new allotments</p> <p><b>Policy 15 Green Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Refers to integrating new green infrastructure which is provided by strategic growth with existing infrastructure networks and taking forward strategic facilities such as the North Dorset Trailway. Neighbourhood Development Plans should consider measures that assist in delivering key green infrastructure benefits, including the designation of Local Green Space, where appropriate.</p> <p>The supporting text makes clear that the provision of outdoor sports and play space should be in line with the Fields in Trust standards. The requirement for allotments would equate to one standard allotment plot for every 60 people in a settlement.</p> <p><b>Policy 27 Retention of community facilities</b></p> <p>Supports the development of new facilities by possible change of use of part of the site while introducing viability tests before allowing changes which would result in a loss of an existing facility. Greater weight will be given to the retention of facilities listed as an asset of community value.</p>	<p>required in the Local Plan have been reviewed, and a slight modification made in <b>Policy 11</b> in relation to toddler play areas where local preference is to give greater priority improving the play offer for all ages at the War Memorial and Rixon Recreation Grounds, for which contributions will be sought, as opposed to a larger number of smaller sites. Reference to the delivery of allotments is included in <b>Policy 32</b>. <b>Policies 11 and 12</b> have also been worded to ensure that open spaces and routes are designed appropriately to enable social interaction. Opportunities to add to these trails is highlighted in <b>Policy 14</b>, as well as the completion of the Trailway (under <b>Policy 13</b>). A specific policy (<b>Policy 28</b>) has been drafted in recognition of the challenges and opportunities for the school and leisure centre improvements referred to in the Local Plan – and has been discussed with the relevant landowners and service providers of the sites involved, looking in more detail at the practicalities for the mix of uses and location. Local Green Spaces have been identified and assessed against the criteria contained in the NPPF, their value to the local community further gauged through consultation, and landowners contacted to ensure that they have been made aware of the proposed designation. These (together with other Important Open and Wooded Areas that don't meet LGS criteria) are listed under <b>Policies 4 and 5</b>. The policy wording has been drafted to make clear that there may be special circumstances where development could take place which would be acceptable because it would not undermine the purpose for that area's designation.</p>
<p><b>Meet the challenge of climate change and flooding (NPPF paras 93-104)</b></p>	<p><b>Policy 3 Climate Change</b></p> <p>Makes clear that new buildings should be designed to make best use of solar radiation and passive</p>	<p>Consideration given to climate change is outlined in the climate change background paper. There is limited opportunity to add detail or take a different approach to the Local Plan. As such,</p>

NPPF and other national guidance	Development plan	Approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan
<p>Minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to the impacts of climate change, and support the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources. Direct inappropriate development away from areas at highest risk of flooding, and avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere</p>	<p>cooling through the incorporation of passive solar design principles, and incorporate measures to meet the current national targets for energy performance. Development should incorporate measures to reduce water consumption, and measures to reduce the impact of excessive heat. Development should also avoid areas at risk of flooding and include measures to reduce flood risk overall.</p> <p>States that “Neighbourhood plans will be required to consider local community actions that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change.”</p> <p><b>Policy 22 Renewable energy schemes</b> Encourages appropriate renewable or low carbon energy schemes subject to a full assessment of the cumulative landscape and visual impacts.</p> <p><b>Policy 24 Design</b> States that proposals for development will be required to justify how the relevant aspects of development form address the relevant design principles and standards of the Local Plan and how the design responds to the local context.</p>	<p>the neighbourhood plan text refers to supporting and encouraging (but not requiring) high standards of efficiency and sustainability in construction. Within the design policies, it supplements the Local Plan by adding “Designs should allow for the future incorporation of renewable energy solutions where possible” in <b>Policy 1</b> – this is considered to provide a degree of flexibility, and its consideration can be readily included in the detailed design information requirements under Policy 24 of the Local Plan, as the design principles make specific reference to adaptability and energy efficiency.</p> <p>The Environment Agency and the County Council have been consulted to ensure flood risk is fully taken into account. Given the relatively high sensitivity of the surrounding landscapes and the good progress being made towards achieving the renewable energy targets in North Dorset, no further work was undertaken to identify specific areas for large-scale wind or solar energy development through the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan does take steps to consider how important views are defined and considered in <b>Policy 2</b>, recognizing that within the area such schemes could be particularly intrusive in wider views unless carefully sited, designed and potentially screened with landscape planting.</p>
<p><b>Conserve and enhance the natural environment (NPPF paras 109-125)</b> Protect and enhance valued landscapes (with great weight given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), geologies and soils (including the</p>	<p><b>Policy 4 The Natural Environment</b> Protects environmental assets which include valued landscape and other features which make the natural environment special. Development should be shaped by the natural environment so that its benefits are enhanced and not degraded. Landscape character will be protected through the retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely that impact must be</p>	<p>The general approach to protecting valued landscapes and wildlife is not duplicated in the Neighbourhood Plan. Consideration to such issues is contained in the Strategic Environmental Assessment that has informed the choice of sites and the inclusion of appropriate mitigation measures. The plan does place consideration emphasis on local character (see section on <b>good design</b> above), and this includes natural environment features as part of this. As a result of the pre-submission consultation the need for a</p>

NPPF and other national guidance	Development plan	Approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan
<p>best and most versatile farmland). Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Minimise impacts on biodiversity, including the loss of irreplaceable habitats and harm to protected species, and provide biodiversity gains. Prevent risk from soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability, and secure remediation where appropriate. Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.</p>	<p>mitigated and important landscape features incorporated in the development scheme. Nationally designated wildlife sites should not be harmed by development unless there are clear benefits that outweigh the impact. Also safeguards the best and most versatile agricultural land.</p>	<p>biodiversity appraisal has been more clearly stated in the relevant site-specific policies, in addition to specific landscape and biodiversity measures.</p>
<p><b>Conserve and enhance the historic environment (NPPF paras 126-141)</b> Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.</p>	<p><b>Policy 5 The Historic Environment</b> Seeks to protect the setting of heritage assets which could include a landscape which has been identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Covers reuse of heritage assets for housing purposes.</p>	<p>As with the natural environment, the general approach to protecting heritage assets is not duplicated in the Neighbourhood Plan. Consideration to such issues is contained in the Strategic Environmental Assessment that has informed the choice of sites and the inclusion of appropriate mitigation measures. The plan does place consideration emphasis on local character (see section on <b>good design</b> above), and this includes the identification of locally important buildings, which will also be suggested to the District Council for local listing. Specific heritage requirements are contained in site specific policies where appropriate.</p>

## Conformity issues raised through the pre-submission consultation

Pre-submission responses that specifically highlighted two main concerns regarding general conformity were:

**Policy 7 (was Policy 1)** – the District Council stated that interpreting the figure of 380 as a ‘target’ as opposed to a ‘minimum target’ could be considered to render the Neighbourhood Plan not in conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted local plan, both LPP1 Policy 6 and 19 setting out that 395 is a minimum target, and the inference that Sturminster Newton should not be considered for further ‘strategic’ growth. Gladman consider that this approach also does not have due regard to the NPPG statement that “blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence”. Gladman go on to suggest this aspect of policy 1 is deleted and a more positive policy included that would allow new homes, businesses or infrastructure adjacent to the existing settlement will be permitted provided that any adverse impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of development.

### *Neighbourhood Plan Response:*

Meetings were held with North Dorset District Council to discuss the issues raised and how the plan could be revised to overcome their concerns. The text was amended to clarify the housing provision, which significantly exceeds the minimum target, and also to provide clearer tests for the release of the reserve sites. Based on the revised wording the District Council have advised that they no longer consider there to be a conformity issue. The proposed approach advocated by Gladman would not be in keeping with the Local Plan strategy, and would to some extent replicate national policy for those circumstances where there is a housing supply shortfall (but even when there is sufficient housing supply planned for).

**Policy 4 (was Policy 11)** – evidence of the appraisal of local green spaces against the NPPF criteria – the District Council specifically queried sites LGS 2 and 20 (due to size) and LGS 25 (due to distance from the community it serves).

### *Neighbourhood Plan Response:*

All the sites were subject to a further review to check that they met the NPPF criteria. As a result a number of sites were altered, either removed (because they did not appear to be a particular value or local significance) or re-written as Important Open and Wooded Areas where they covered a large area (albeit that the NPPF does not set an exact limit).

## 4. EU and sustainability obligations

The ‘making’ of the Neighbourhood Plan must not breach or conflict, and must be compatible, with EU obligations, must not have a significant effect on a European site, and must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

No breaches or incompatibility with EU and European Convention of Human Rights law have been identified.

In response to the Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping consultation (email dated 20 August 2015), Natural England confirmed that they “do not consider that the plan is likely to have any adverse effect on either international or nationally designated wildlife sites or European Protected Species.” The District Council, in their screening determination dated May 2017, which was also subject to consultation with Natural England, concluded that a Habitats Regulation assessment would not be necessary.

The Environment Agency, in their response to the Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping consultation (letter dated 10 August 2015) noted that under the Water Framework Directive, the Stour and Moors Restoration Plan is looking to deliver in partnership favourable conditions for the riverine environment. This was taken into account in the Strategic Environmental Assessment objectives.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment that was undertaken identified the main potential issues that should be assessed in considering the possible effect of the Neighbourhood Plan, including harm to ecological interests, local landscape character, and the area's many heritage assets. Possible contamination, loss of productive farmland, flood risk and sustainable travel patterns were also key considerations, as well as promoting health and wellbeing through opportunities for housing, employment, education and training, healthcare, shopping and leisure activities

The Neighbourhood Plan's aims were assessed against the sustainability objectives, and this demonstrated that the plan should overall have a positive environmental impact, subject to further testing of the detailed policies.

The conclusions from the more detailed testing of policies was that there are no likely significant adverse impacts identified as a result of the assessment process, other than the potential cumulative impact in relation to the loss of productive farmland. Overall the policies should secure significant positive benefits particularly in terms of population and human health (most notably securing opportunities for further affordable housing, and the potential to accommodate new jobs, training and services and support the town centre) and material assets (securing improvements to key pedestrian and recreational routes and the retention and expansion of community facilities). On this basis it is reasonable to conclude that the Neighbourhood Plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.